

COMMITTEE ON TRANSPORT AND TOURISM

TRAN/D/2020/25927

Mr. Peter Altmaier
Federal Minister of Germany for Economic Affairs and Energy

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Mr. Thomas Bareiß
Parliamentary State Secretary at the Federal Ministry for Economic Affairs and Energy

German Presidency of the Council of the EU

Scharnhorststraße 34-37
10115 Berlin
Germany

Subject: About the tourism sector in those difficult times

Dear Minister,
Dear Parliamentary State Secretary,

Germany has taken on the Presidency of the Council of the EU in the midst of very challenging times, and the best wishes to you and your teams are in order.

The Members of the European Parliament's Committee on Transport and Tourism (TRAN) view EU tourism policy as a key part of its responsibilities. A dedicated group of TRAN Members, the Tourism Task Force, advocate taking concrete steps towards establishing a broad, EU-wide Strategy for the development of sustainable tourism. The challenging situation, in which the tourism sector finds itself, in the midst of the ongoing COVID-19 crisis, urges us to seek unprecedented and creative solutions.

On 19 June 2020, the EP adopted a Resolution on transport and tourism for 2020 and beyond (2020/2649(RSP)): https://www.europarl.europa.eu/doceo/document/RC-9-2020-0166_EN.html

On 20 July, MEPs met with the Commission representatives to further analyse the proposals put forward in this Resolution, and to devise a common approach towards solutions that could be proposed to the Member States.

However, some Member States' unilateral actions as well as the lack of uniform criteria in dealing with this unprecedented crisis have had negative implications for companies and agents within the tourism industry, a sector that represents 9,1% of the European Union's GDP. Many companies face bankruptcy, thus leading to a risk of further increasing unemployment. The partial lifting of restrictions that took place over the summer season has helped the sector, yet has not begun to sustainably address the problems caused by COVID19. Many Member States happened to have well-honed best practices in place, but in the absence of common EU-wide initiatives (such as political and direct financial support), the sector will continue to ail badly.

Against this backdrop, we trust that the Council Presidency analysed in-depth the current situation of the Tourism industry, even as it stands under the threat of a possible 2nd wave of COVID19. We must urgently devise new, creative compromise solutions in support of the companies and people operating in this sector. Critically, we must assess whatever failed to work, and what options would work out well in the near future.

The European Commission's recent proposal for a Council recommendation significantly supports what the European Parliament's has been advocating since the beginning of the pandemic: that all measures taken by Member States which in some way restrict free movement because of the coronavirus pandemic, must be coordinated and clearly communicated at the EU level. The criteria used must be common and transparent, as well as all the information provided to travellers. All restrictive measures must be applied throughout, without discrimination of nationality, in airports, ports and at other hubs and modes of transport and transit. The definition of risk zones must hew to pre-established criteria and be adopted by all. The same uniform criteria on non-essential travel could be adapted at the external borders of the EU, without hampering public health and safety, provided that the epidemiological situation in each respective third country is fully taken into account.

We call upon the German presidency to endorse such a coordinated approach when discussing and adopting this Council recommendation in the coming weeks.

Furthermore, it is essential that Member States consider the tourism industry in the drawing up of their national recovery plans. Additional financial support to the tourism sector must be provided on the basis of the share that the travel and tourism sector contributes to a Member State's GDP, the outermost regions being also taken into account. Please be reminded that the EP has firmly called for a dedicated budget line for sustainable tourism in the next multiannual financial framework and immediate support to micro and SMEs.

The free movement of European citizens is one of the EU's foundational pillars, and only together can we ensure that it remains so.

Wishing you the very best success for your Presidency,

Yours sincerely,



Chairwoman of the TRAN Committee
Karima DELLI

Tourism Task Force Steering Group Members:

Cláudia Monteiro de Aguiar
(EPP Group)

István Ujhelyi
(S&D Group)

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