



Brussels, 1 October 2020

Joint Statement: Europe needs predictable and harmonised approaches to travel rules under COVID

In her State of the Union speech on 16 September, Commission President von der Leyen said:

“We must tear down the barriers of the Single Market. We must cut red tape. We must step up implementation and enforcement. And we must restore the four freedoms – in full and as fast as possible. The linchpin of this is a fully functioning Schengen area of free movement.”

The Commission has proposed a Council Recommendation (COM(2020) 499) with some helpful ideas on a common approach to dealing with a possible second wave of COVID-19 or future pandemics and avoid piecemeal border closures based on widely differing criteria for assessing risk.

Ahead of the European Council this week, the organisations below call upon Europe’s leaders to agree to establish such a common approach.

We fully support measures to contain the spread of the virus and the need for action by national governments to protect their citizens. However, the actions of some governments in maintaining major restrictions on European citizens moving from other EU member states can often seem haphazard, and ultimately damaging to the European economy. It makes little sense in terms of containing the virus to prevent travel from another member state with a similar level of infection if the member state taking that action still allows travel within its borders.

Such restrictions also affect the free movement of goods and services. At the start of the pandemic, we saw essential products, produce and service providers held up where borders were almost completely closed or people delivering these supplies and services subjected to unreasonable restrictions. The EU moved quickly to lift most of these restrictions, but we are concerned to ensure that in, any major new wave of infections, the same common, rules-based approach is adopted and supply chains kept open in a responsible and appropriate manner.

The present uncertainty about a new wave of infections needs action again at EU level. We therefore ask the Commission and European leaders to look at agreeing quickly the ideas set out in the draft Recommendation and to apply them consistently in their member state, so that there are:

- Common procedures and timescales for alerting citizens of changes in countries from and to which travel needs to be restricted
- Harmonised criteria for triggering such restrictions
- Harmonised criteria for choosing from and to which member states travel needs to be restricted
- Common definitions of a health crisis requiring border restrictions.

-ENDS-





Signatories

Libor Lochman
Executive Director
CER

Pekka Pesonen
Secretary General
Copa-Cogeca

Ben Butters
CEO
Eurochambres

Christian Verschueren
Director-General
EuroCommerce

Véronique Willems
Secretary General
SME United

Marco Digioia
Secretary General
UETR