

U.S. TRAVEL BAN WILL NOT PREVENT FURTHER VIRUS SPREAD



The U.S. president announced a travel ban for people coming from the Schengen zone for 30 days. The impact on the airlines is already worse than 9/11 and will be further exacerbated by this. Critics, however, point out that the ban is not likely to prevent any virus spread.

USA de facto closed its borders for a period of 30 days starting on Friday 13 March for travelers from the Schengen countries, i.e. European countries, excluding the UK and Ireland. Of course, this is not a closure per se, but **a quarantine obligation to which U.S. citizens coming from these countries are theoretically subject**. With the difference that U.S. citizens can simply sit at home in quarantine if suspicion is confirmed during the screening. This is a possibility that most travelers do not have since quarantine is not allowed in hotels and without an adequate private quarantine dwelling, one would otherwise be sent to quarantine centers. And no one wants to feel like a refugee, so the entry activity comes to a standstill for the time being.

The fact that the UK and Ireland are excluded from this rule is astonishing and can only be explained by economic interests according to experts.

“The U.S. travel ban against the EU Schengen is a politically motivated, and largely ineffective measure,” said Alberto Alemanno, a professor of EU law at H.E.C. Paris Business School. This measure will not prevent further coronavirus cases. “The ban is inherently inconsistent. It exempts U.S. citizens, legal residents, as well as countries such as the U.K. that has almost 500 confirmed cases,” Mr. Alemanno said, adding that most European countries covered by the ban had fewer cases.

Nevertheless, entering the U.S. via Great Britain or Ireland will not be easy, because the travelers will have to fill out a self-declaration form of their whereabouts during the 14 days before entering the U.S.

How will the flights be affected? The "Travel Ban" is not a "Flight Ban", but the expected slump in demand will of course force the airlines to massively reduce the U.S. offer until further notice. The involved airlines call centers are overloaded. More information is being provided via websites or social media. United announces that they will comply with U.S. government directives; regarding flight plan changes and the rules for ticket changes and waivers. Delta Air Lines has adjusted its rebooking fees and will no longer charge such fees for all flights from Europe including the UK/Ireland until May 31.

It is not yet clear whether, for example, transit flights are still permitted, i.e. a trip to Costa Rica via a U.S. airport. This is still being clarified, according to the airlines. It is only clear that American military personnel in Europe should not return to the USA for the time being. It is equally clear that the current situation already exceeds the decline in demand from 2001/2002 after 9/11. Imagine that: According to "Flightglobal", there are currently about 560 daily flights between Europe and the USA, with about 160,000 seats per day. This means that in the next 30 days there will be about 17,000 flights with 4.8 million seats, most of which are now on the brink of collapse.

Another picture of the magnitude of the decision is provided by this statistic: According to the US Travel Association, in March 2019 alone, around 850,000 people from Europe (excluding Great Britain/Ireland) travelled to the USA. And Easter was not even included in this figure. Easter falls late again this year, from 9 to 13 April, i.e. still during the "Travel Ban" period. **The spring and Easter holiday travel to the USA is traditionally quite large and is now being hit hard.** This also has an impact on the U.S. tourism industry, on which 15.7 million jobs in the USA depend.

It remains to be seen whether, conversely, there will be entry stops for U.S. citizens coming to Europe. It is not unthinkable because the coronavirus cases in the USA are also currently exploding and various European countries are already rejecting citizens from countries with high incidence rates.

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