

VACCINATION GAP SERIOUSLY IMPACTS GLOBAL TOURISM



The tourism industry is closely interconnected globally. The fact that certain countries are significantly further ahead in vaccination rates is creating new inequalities and preventing global tourism from recovering across the board.

Covid vaccination is currently crucial for travel in 2021 and certainly still will be in 2022. The global travel community is reasonably unanimous on this, although there are of course still many differences in the design of travel regulations.

But "vax and relax" is not enough, because the problem is much more complex: it is not enough to achieve certain vaccination rates in individual countries - if these are not achieved in other countries, there is a threat of similar scenarios as with the delta variant, which raged particularly strongly in countries that had previously been well sealed off but had little vaccination coverage.

But this is precisely where enormous gaps open up. In third-world countries, the vaccination rate (fully vaccinated) is around 3 percent. In contrast, the so-called "high-income countries," where the vaccination rate already averages 60 percent, are sitting on more than 870 million doses of vaccine, of which an estimated 241 million will expire by the end of the year - with no plan to redistribute them. So, about a year after pharmaceutical companies began distributing Covid vaccines, it is clear where the vaccines primarily went. And this "vaccination gap" means not only health hazards for third world countries, but also slower recovery of the economy as well as global tourism.

More and more countries are opening their borders to those vaccinated and recovered (or even tested). But in countries where the general population does not have access to vaccination, new waves of covid are feared - especially those with new variants. If vaccination rates remain this low in many countries, it is more likely that new variants will develop - including 'variants of concern' such as the delta variant - which may prolong the pandemic and pose a threat to health systems around the world.

The tourism industry is extremely important especially in many second-and third-world countries, but its recovery is **slowed down because of a vaccine disparity that is preventable in itself.** This, in turn, can have negative effects on the travel industry worldwide, including in the "first world countries". In short, if vaccine equality is not guaranteed, global tourism recovery is threatened because there will continue to be uncertainty about what might come - which in turn affects the confidence of the end consumers.

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