

EUROPEAN TOURISM ASSOCIATIONS CALL FOR COVID COORDINATION



According to the ECTAA (European Travel Agents and TO Association) and other industry associations, the booking rates in European tourism destinations are still at least 30 percent below the 2021 levels, which they blame primarily on uncoordinated covid measures across Europe - and are now calling on European authorities to finally make travel predictable and safe again.

In recent weeks, Europe has again been in the grip of the pandemic, following a surge in covid cases, especially the latest and highly transmissible variant, Omicron. **The panicky reactions of governments on both sides of the Atlantic have been unavoidable and, as was the case during the same period last year, have led to a quasi-stagnation of travel.** Now the major associations have had enough: several European tourism organizations, led by the ECTAA, have called on governments across the continent (again) to align travel regulations to avoid a patchwork of rules.

Travelers and businesses need a stable and coherent European framework to be able to travel again and prepare safely for spring, a statement said. While the European Commission announced in December that the Digital Covid Certificate (DCC) would be valid for nine months in the EU without a booster vaccination, several EU countries - including France, Italy, Denmark and Malta - decided to shorten the validity of vaccination certificates to seven or three months for national use. A number of countries have also introduced additional testing requirements that apply to vaccinated/recovered EU travelers, which runs counter to current European Council recommendations.

"Not this way," concludes the associations, which are concerned about the renewed patchwork of regulations across Europe. The travel industry as a whole supports the European Commission, which says that a harmonized period of validity for the DCC is "a necessity for the safe free movement of persons and coordination at EU level." Indeed, the Commission recommends that EU member states apply the same DCC validity period for travel within the EU and at the national level, but the discrepancies with this are glaring.

Similarly, states should adhere to the Council's recommendations, which are agreed upon and updated from time to time, to ensure that travel between member states is always possible on equal terms throughout the EU.

The associations also note that the Covid 19 pandemic has led to the largest global recession since World War II. The data show that the EU economy has underperformed the United States and China from 2019 to date, with forecasts confirming that the recovery is unlikely before 2023. **Southern European countries have been particularly hard hit, and there is no doubt that the travel and tourism industry has been hit harder than others.**

Although the pandemic has been raging for two years, several EU member states do not act unilaterally by enacting a different DCC validity period and different rules for children and young adults under 18. This would directly impact families planning to travel during the winter vacations and later in the spring, or the planning of future trips and vacation bookings by individual travelers and businesses.

In addition to ECTAA, the signatories of this Europe-wide appeal are organizations such as Airlines for Europe (A4E), ACI Europe, Cruise Lines International Association (CLIA), the European Regions Airline Association, ETOA and the European Travel Retail Confederation.

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