

28 September 2020

Joint Statement of the EU Tourism Ministers

We, the Ministers responsible for Tourism of Austria, Croatia, France, Greece, Italy, Luxembourg, Malta, Portugal, Slovenia, and Spain, acknowledge that the COVID-19 pandemic has caused an unprecedented health emergency across the European Union (EU) and globally. The protection of public health has become an overriding priority for both the EU and its Member States. Throughout the COVID-19 crisis, Member States have adopted different response measures, depending both on their domestic epidemiological situation and other related factors.

While it remains the responsibility of each Member State to enact the measures it sees fit in order to control the pandemic, a coherent European response is critical. However, it is essential to avoid a fragmented approach as seen earlier in the year as well as to preserve freedom of movement between all Member States as well as the integrity of the Single Market and the Schengen area. On a European level, efforts to coordinate these measures have commenced.

We Ministers for Tourism welcome the recent efforts of the Commission, and Member States to find ways in which to support ongoing and coordinated EU action, and the readiness of the Presidency to lead this process, which enables us to ensure the protection of public health while allowing freedom of movement necessary for the maintenance of tourism. Such a process requires not only the general political will of EU/European Economic Area countries, but also the collaborative efforts of all EU Member States in order to preserve tourism flows within the European Union and third countries. Progress, however, so far is limited. As a result and for this purpose, we consider it is essential:

1. To urgently conclude the negotiations on a coordinated approach to the restriction of free movement in response to the COVID-19 pandemic, including a common cartography of risk areas at the sub-state level. Furthermore a common framework for internal measures to be triggered in response and timely communicated to the countries concerned to offer clarity and predictability to all stakeholders and citizens.

In that particular, it is our view that:

- The avoidance of indiscriminate measures, in particular refusals of entry, to all travellers entering an EU Member State from another Member State is of the utmost importance to limit the negative consequences of the pandemic on the tourism and economic activity in general. It is therefore imperative that the right of free movements of people between all Member States and within the integrity of the Schengen area is preserved to the extent possible: the general principle must be not

to restrict free movement but to take the necessary measures to enable European citizens to enjoy this right with maximum security and health safety.

- Measures by any member states aiming to control the pandemic and imposing restrictions on travellers from other member states should be taken at regional level whenever possible, and specifically for the island regions of the EU, in any case in compliance with Member States constitutional legal order. Such measures must be non-discriminatory and proportionate.

2. To make the best and effective use of the financial tools and programs created by the Multiannual Financial Framework 2021-2027 and Next Generation EU: the next-long term EU budget should necessarily support the tourism industry's recovery, given the serious situation and the major loss of employment in the sector. To that purpose, we should use the funds created by Next Generation EU to help companies in the tourism industry learn to stay competitive in a new, dynamic and changing environment.

3. To boost the collaboration among the Commission, Member States and all other public and private stakeholders so as to maintain Europe as the world's leading tourism destination and to build a more resilient, competitive and sustainable sector.

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Nikolina Brnjac, Minister of Tourism and Sport, Croatia.

Jean-Baptiste Lemoyne, Minister of State for Tourism, French Nationals Abroad and Francophonie, attached to the Minister for Europe and Foreign Affairs, France.

Harry Theoharis, Minister of Tourism, Greece.

Dario Franceschini, Minister for Cultural Heritage and Activities and for Tourism, Italy.

Lex Delles, Minister for Tourism, Luxembourg.

Julia Farrugia Portelli, Minister for Tourism and Consumer Protection, Malta.

Rita Marques, Secretary of State for Tourism, Portugal.

Zdravko Počivalšek Minister for Economic Development and Technology, Slovenia.

María Reyes Maroto Illera, Minister for Industry, Trade and Tourism Spain.