



EUROPEAN COMMISSION  
DIRECTORATE-GENERAL FOR MOBILITY AND TRANSPORT



Brussels  
MOVE/HH



*By e-mail only*

**Subject: S21 Slot Waiver**

Dear



*De M*



Thank you for your letter of 16 October 2020 to [redacted] to which [redacted] has asked me to reply.

As you rightly point out the COVID-19 pandemic has had a catastrophic effect on aviation. While such an effect could not be entirely avoided in the fight against the pandemic, uncoordinated and rapidly changing actions taken by Member States to contain the spread of the pandemic such as border closures, flight bans, quarantines and other restrictions have been an important part of the reason why air traffic decreased to such an extent.

It is difficult to predict what air traffic will look like by the summer of 2021, however we do see that Eurocontrol forecasts for next year are rather pessimistic and the forecasts by ACI and IATA are being revised downwards. The new recent round of lockdowns in the EU is impacting airlines' ability to operate their schedules. In light of these forecasts, it is premature to exclude any relief measures for the summer 2021 scheduling season. The Commission must already now reflect on how to address the summer in terms of slot relief to prepare the necessary steps because a legislative amendment may be a lengthy process, and certainty on slot allocation rules before the start of the season is crucial for all stakeholders.

I fully agree that the benefits of the slot relief must be weighed against its costs because the effects of relief influence the market beyond the scheduling season to which it applies. Further, airlines that are able to use slots should be rewarded and slot-hoarding should be prevented. That is why we have promoted a set of behavioural conditions for airlines to benefit from the slot waiver. Looking forward, my services are exploring the idea of phasing out the slot relief, *inter alia*. One way of doing this would be to adapt the slot use rate in line with what the market can sustain. The rate could be set depending on forecast air traffic levels with the aim to start encouraging airlines to use their slots or give them up, while providing a buffer of protection against sudden measures and



circumstances that have a temporary effect on consumer demand for air travel outside the airlines' control.

I would like to thank you and your colleagues for being available to exchange with DG MOVE officials on this matter as we aim to come to a balanced decision taking into account the views of the broadest possible range of stakeholders.

Yours faithfully,

XIAO GUO AND ALL DR. HES,

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