



EUROPEAN COMMISSION
DIRECTORATE-GENERAL FOR MOBILITY AND TRANSPORT

Directorate E - Aviation
The Director

Ref. Ares(2020)2084054 - 16/04/2020

Brussels,
MOVE.E1 - [REDACTED] - move.ddg2.e.1(2020)2111779

[REDACTED]
International Air Transport Association

[REDACTED]
Airlines For Europe

[REDACTED]
Airlines International Representation in Europe

[REDACTED]
Airports Council International Europe

[REDACTED]
European Airport Coordinators Association

Dear colleagues,

As you are no doubt aware, on Monday 30 March the EU adopted an amendment to the slot regulation as a contribution to providing relief to airlines in the current challenging period¹.

The waiver adopted by the Council and the European Parliament is significant – it exempts air carriers from the slot utilisation rules not only for the entire summer season but also a part of the Winter 2019/2020 season. In addition, the Commission is empowered to prolong measures into the upcoming winter season if the circumstances justify it.

The adoption of this Regulation demonstrates that the current period is not ‘business as usual’. We need to ensure, however, that despite the current circumstances airlines, coordinators and airports each make their contribution to ensuring that our airport capacity is used optimally during and after the crisis period. The purpose of this letter is to provide information on how DG MOVE will be monitoring the situation and our expectations during this period.

¹ Regulation (EU) 2020/459 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 30 March 2020 amending Council Regulation (EEC) No 95/93 on common rules for the allocation of slots at Community airports (OJ L 99, 31.3.2020, p. 1–4)

It is essential that in the current circumstances there is complete transparency regarding the use and availability of slots. This means that airlines should promptly inform slot coordinators of the release of slots as soon as they have cancelled operations or adjusted timings. As mentioned in the seventh recital to the regulation, it is possible that other airlines could find a use for such slots on an ad hoc basis. Moreover, when we move into the exit and recovery phase and traffic starts to resume, this transparency will be essential for airports and service providers so that they can bring mothballed capacity back into service at the right time. In turn, this will facilitate the resumption of traffic for airlines without undue problems. I note that EUACA has called on airlines to provide timely information on any service changes to coordinators and I would wholeheartedly support this call. In order for the current waiver to function as envisaged by the legislator and for airlines to preserve their historic slots as intended, the cancellation of a service in an airline's schedule must be followed immediately by a return of the slot to the coordinator. This is set out in Article 10a(3) of the Regulation as amended and it applies to any slots with a date later than 8 April. Any other changes, such as retimings, change of equipment, etc., must similarly be communicated without delay. Again with a view to providing visibility to airports, service providers as well as passengers, cancellations and the corresponding slot returns should not happen later than 2 weeks before the planned operation unless they are for reasons unrelated to the general decline in demand for air transport (for example, technical problems with an aircraft).

Coordinators obviously play a central role in the operation of airport coordination. I call on them to ensure accessible and transparent information so that all parties are able to access the most up to date information. In particular, coordinators should monitor in a structured way slot handback in a format which provides an overview of the situation across Europe with a view to helping inform the Commission on the necessity for the extension of measures into the Winter 2020/2021 season.

Airports and service providers are responsible for ensuring that the correct level and type of capacity is available at the right time for airlines. With this in mind, I encourage airports to use all the mechanisms available to communicate proactively with their users on their capacity planning, so that airlines have a clear view on the infrastructure they will have available at such time as normal traffic starts to resume.

Finally, I would make a kind request to all parties: please be ready to provide any information to DG MOVE which can provide insight into the likely evolution of traffic levels in the Winter 2020/2021 season. This is so that we can be prepared to report on the situation before September as required by the Regulation and ensure the appropriateness of any follow-up measures for Winter 2020/2021. I ask you to send this information to my colleagues [REDACTED] and [REDACTED]

Let me take this opportunity to thank each of you in advance for your understanding on this matter. I feel sure that working together we can do our bit to ensure that our sector returns to 'business as usual' as soon as possible.

Yours sincerely,

[REDACTED]
(Signed electronically)