

Meeting ACI Board – 27/01/2021

Travel restrictions & testing/vaccination strategies

ACI believes that the first half of the year is already “lost” for the aviation industry. The focus should therefore be on how to save the Summer, by starting working now on the coordination of the lifting of travel restrictions. The action of several DG is necessary to anticipate the situation and come up with solutions. ACI is in touch with several of them but the industry would welcome the creation of a task force bringing together the bodies concerned.

The Commissioner underlines the competency of MS when it comes to travel restrictions and underlined Commission’s action to establish and maintain the green lanes and to encourage lifting travel restrictions, as soon as the sanitary situation enables it. Transport workers are essential workers and the Commissioner confirmed the Commission’s commitment to do the utmost to prepare for the summer season. She explains that it is important to accelerate the vaccines’ rollout. It is also important to increase quality and production of rapid tests.

State aid (SA) & Financial support to airports

ACI has three main requests:

- Possibility of compensating for the damage suffered as long as restrictions to circulation are in place (whereas currently linked to total ban of flights)
- Possibility of compensating the uncovered fixed costs (current threshold up to 10 million euros not sufficient for big airports)
- Possibility to develop Air Connectivity restart scheme on a regressive basis until recovery of traffic: (CY for instance put it in place until June and pays to airlines a certain amount of euros per passenger transported). This is non-discriminatory and gives an incentive for a progressive return to connectivity.
- SA guidelines and use of RRF: several airport invest to be net-zero carbon by 2025. Based on existing guidelines, not eligible because more than 5 million passengers although it is a sustainability investment.

The Commissioner takes note but recalls that it depends on MS willingness to use the SA. Latest amendment of SA regime increases the threshold for uncovered fixed costs and extends it until the end of the year. In the longer term, revision of aviation SA guidelines will take place. The Commissioner invites ACI to submit concrete proposals and to also engage with MS on SA and RRF.

Sustainable & Smart Mobility Strategy

ACI notes that the SSMS foresees the revision of airport charge directive in 2021-2022. ACI underlines that even in 2022, the crisis will be far from over. Eurocontrol latest forecasts foresee that it is only in 2025-2026 that traffic will resume 2019 levels. In 2022, the market structure will not be stable. The current priority for the sector is to survive the crisis. The Commissioner confirmed that there is a need to first assess the consequences of Covid on the sector before revising the ACD.

Arrival Duty Free

Outside the EU, a lot of States allow it. Enabling it would increase EU revenues, create local jobs and help the industry. This implies VAT and excise duty revision. The Commissioner welcomes business ideas to recover from crisis. Yet, the feasibility needs to be further assessed together with DG TAXUD notably.

