



**EUROPEAN COMMISSION**  
DIRECTORATE-GENERAL FOR MOBILITY AND TRANSPORT

Directorate E - Aviation  
**The Director**

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Mrs. Isabel Díaz Ayuso  
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Dear President Díaz Ayuso,

Thank you for your letter of 16 October, in which you have laid out your analysis of the risks arising from air travel, to which I am replying on behalf of President Von der Leyen. It is generally agreed that movement of people, including travelling, can facilitate the spread of COVID-19 where preventive measures are not strictly adhered to, and in that context, it is useful to note that the local healthcare system of Madrid is able to identify incoming travellers contaminated by COVID-19.

Travel restrictions may have a positive impact on delaying an epidemic, but only if they are implemented during the early stages. They also have significant economic, legal and ethical implications. It is therefore essential that while allowing people to move within or between countries, there are measures in place to minimise the risk of re-introduction or sustained community transmission.

The EASA ECDC COVID-19 Aviation Health Safety Protocol, to which you made reference, is the result of in-depth work carried out by the lead aviation and health specialists in Europe. These operational guidelines currently offer an effective risk mitigation, coupled with the necessary efficiency and flexibility so that the objective of a safe and harmonised resumption of aviation in Europe can be achieved. To date, 50 airport organisations, representing more than 150 airports, and 51 airlines representing more than 40% of the EU air traffic have endorsed the EASA Aviation Industry Charter for COVID-19, which caters for the effective implementation of these guidelines. By signing the Charter, airlines and airports pledge that they will abide by the guidelines, coordinate with national authorities, and report regularly on implementation of these guidelines, including on any issues and opportunities for improvement to EASA and ECDC.

I wish to highlight that the Protocol is a living document. Thanks to the feedback on the measures in the light of operational experience, EASA will monitor on a monthly basis the implementation of the Protocol to assess its effectiveness and efficiency. This data-driven feedback may result in adjustments and improvements to the guidelines.

As regards your proposal for regulating at Union level health measures to limit the virus transmission, I need to stress that the definition of national health policies, including the organisation and conduct of health services, are the responsibility of Member States. It may therefore vary from one Member State to another. Member States are competent to decide on the most appropriate measures to safeguard public health and fight against COVID-19. Currently, the Commission is working on a possible testing protocol for aviation, as a further step in addressing both the risk of transmission of the virus, and the disruptions experienced by citizens and businesses. This is also the results of the agreement, at the EU Health Security Committee of 17 September 2020, recommending a common EU testing approach for COVID-19, as a follow-up initiative of the 15 July Commission Communication on short-term EU health preparedness for COVID-19 outbreaks.

Our efforts to address the sanitary risks linked to air travel continue. The European Commission is committed to acting in a timely and appropriate manner, with the aim of preserving the health and safety of air passengers and staff, and of local communities during and beyond this crisis.

Yours faithfully,

(e-signed)  
Filip CORNELIS