



NETWORK FOR THE EUROPEAN PRIVATE SECTOR IN TOURISM

To:

Commissioner Breton, responsible for Internal Market

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CC:

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Brussels, 20th May 2020

NET letter to Commissioner Breton – Follow-up Tourism and Transport Package

NET supports the coordinated approach proposed by the European Commission on 13 May 2020 and calls on Member States to follow it closely. Member States should avoid taking unilateral decisions and should immediately inform the EU and the other Member States about relevant decisions taken at national and regional level with a possible impact on travelers and those selling travel and tourism services.

As a follow-up on the proposed package, we would like to present the below ideas / comments, also in line with our letter dated from 8 May 2020.

Commission Communication on Transport and Tourism

NET welcomes the Commission Communication on “*Tourism and transport in 2020 and beyond*” [COM\(2020\)550 final](#).

- *Interactive map*

Specifically, NET welcomes the creation of a dedicated website, including an **interactive map** to provide information to travelers, namely on the situation of the borders (land, sea, air); what services are available (e.g. hotels, restaurants, cafés, museums; holiday parks and campsites); travel restrictions; public health and safety measures, areas to go in case of health issues and available tourism services. This will facilitate business planning as well as travel planning of prospective visitors.

All government institutions should be made aware that they can find the information in the website (e.g. embassies, police, consumer clubs, Ministries of Foreign Affairs, automobile clubs)

Nevertheless, companies, especially micro enterprises and SMEs should not face extra burden, by needing to provide information.

NET also recommends that the website is up and running as soon as possible, even if holding limited information at the beginning, otherwise business and travelers will not benefit.

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Information should be up-to-date and verifiable, providing official source websites where possible.

- *Joint promotion*

NET encourages the idea of developing joint promotion activities for Europe and of organising B2B networking events. Nevertheless, a limited amount of funds should be allocated from the MFF budget line for tourism for this purpose. The vast majority should be allocated for the sustainable development of the industry and improvement of the services offered.

- *Vouchers*

- NET very much supports the patronage voucher systems – where consumers buy vouchers in restaurants, bars, hotels and exchange the vouchers for a service at a later stage. NET also supports the idea of an online platform to link the pledgers with suppliers in the tourism sector. Nevertheless, consumers should be protected against insolvency.

- *Estimated loss for NET members:*

- Hotels, restaurants, cafés, estimate a loss of 80-90% of turn-over during Q1 2020¹
- Cruise lines: estimated at c. 90%
- Coach tourism: down by 100%
- Travel agents and tour operators: estimated loss between 70%-90%
- Holiday parks and campsites: estimated loss between 90-100%
- Attractions industry such as theme parks, museums, zoos, aquaria, indoor/family Entertainment Centers, etc.: estimated loss between 90-100%.

Restoring freedom of movement

NET fully supports the Commission Communication on “*Towards a phased and coordinated approach for restoring freedom of movement and lifting internal border controls*” [C\(2020\) 3250](#). We believe that a coordinated approach is part of the way forward to lifting the EU internal border controls on a first phase and the external border controls, on a second phase.

NET supports the criteria proposed by the Commission, based on the epidemiological situation; ability to apply containment measures and economic and social considerations. We also welcome the non-discriminatory criteria on people, location and between transport modes. There should not be stricter rules applied to private coaching than those in force on public transport.

Nevertheless, we continue being very concerned with the organisation of travel arrangements by some Member States. We are of the opinion that tests should be done before travelling - to avoid quarantine procedures and to minimise risk of contaminating other travelers.

We are also of the opinion that if Member States follow the Commission criteria, quarantines can be avoided. But, in case they are in place, repatriations should be immediately organised.

¹ The Commission Communication refers to a loss of 50% for hotels (page 9 – of the [COM Communication](#)), which we consider is underestimated

Restoring tourism activities safely and gradually

NET considers positive that the European Commission issued guidance for the progressive resumption of tourism services and for health protocols in hospitality establishments [C\(2020\) 3251 final](#) that can be easily understood by all travelers in all countries.

We consider important that the Commission mentions the criteria is not mandatory – in fact all companies need to strictly follow any related legislation applicable at national level.

We also think it is positive that the guidelines are based on WHO orientations and on the advice provided by the European Centre for Disease Control and Prevention.

The way forward

Financing

NET welcomes all the mechanisms already deployed by the EU to help the tourism sector comply with the crisis (e.g. State Aid; SURE; European Investment Fund; Coronavirus response instrument initiative).

Nevertheless, companies in the sector are still facing **liquidity problems** on a daily basis. On top of this, consumer trust will take time to be rebuilt. Therefore, **financial support is needed in the long run**.

Moreover the proposed zero-interest loans are important and should be granted that way. This is not the time for governments to impose interests on payback of help schemes.

As a result of the COVID-19 outbreak and also due to the need to apply social distancing in terms of dispersing tourists across Europe, part of the Recovery Fund needs to be allocated to the improvement of existing infrastructure as well as the development of new infrastructure in less known destinations across Europe.

As recommended in our previous letter, NET proposes the European Commission to issue **guidelines** explaining Member States the existing possibilities for financial support covered by EU funding. We also recommend that **best practices of State Aid** that work quickly and efficiently for travel and tourism businesses are shared. The objective is that governments are reassured that if they advance the financial support now in their respective countries, they will be financially supported in the future.

Finally, we look forward to a recovery plan that includes:

- **Tourism as part of the Marshal Plan** (20% of the financial aid dedicated to tourism)
- **Budget line on tourism** - the aim should be, as mentioned before, to help the industry offer quality and sustainable products and services; to develop a skilled workforce; to help companies access and use aggregate tourism data to be able to provide a more attractive offer; to help companies comply with the EU Green Deal, amongst others.

Digital

We are pleased to send you our position paper on digitalisation enclosed to this letter and would be happy to present it in detail to you or your colleagues on another occasion.

Sustainability

Providing a sustainable touristic offer continues to be one of our main goals. Energy efficiency and the lowering of the carbon footprint are additional objectives to achieve. Therefore, a budget line on tourism is needed to help our companies become even more environmentally friendly.

Collective passenger transport should also be prioritised versus the use of private passenger cars as the most efficient way for decarbonisation and decongestion of road transport.

In conclusion, we count on your support to help us “Invent tomorrow’s tourism”.

Signed on behalf of the NET group by

HOTREC President, Mr. Jens Zimmer Christensen

What is NET?

NET is a network of representative trade associations from the private sector in European tourism. NET’s purpose is to develop common goals for industry and work with policy-makers and other partners to achieve them. Tourism is central to Europe’s economic prospects. It contributes more than 10% of EU GDP and provides about 12 million jobs, largely in small and medium sized enterprises. Between them, they make up the third largest socio-economic activity in the EU.

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