



JOINT PRESS RELEASE

Travel and tourism stakeholders call on European governments to avoid holiday travel chaos

European travel is on hold again due to the erratic and reckless decisions of governments to reintroduce travel restrictions on vaccinated travellers despite scientific evidence that they have no impact on the spread of the Omicron variant in Europe.

Brussels, 17 December: Travel and tourism stakeholders react to the reintroduction of travel restrictions for fully vaccinated travellers by several Member States in response to the new variant Omicron. This has shattered plans for countless thousands hoping to cross borders to see friends and family over the holidays, and puts agents and operators in financial jeopardy yet again. Changing travel restrictions at very short notice weakens travel confidence and undermines all the efforts that have been done so far, including the EU Digital Covid Certificate, to lift movement restrictions for vaccinated and recovered people.

We urge governments to follow the Council conclusions of 16 December to “continue coordinated efforts to respond to developments based on the best available scientific evidence”. [New guidance](#) from the ECDC published yesterday indicates that the Omicron variant is now present across Europe and infections predominantly driven by community transmissions rather than travel-related cases. The ECDC recommends strengthening of Nonpharmaceutical Interventions (NPIs), such as avoiding large public or private gatherings, encouraging the use of face masks, teleworking, etc. There is no recommendation to reintroduce travel restrictions. This is in line with the previous assessment that travel restrictions are ineffective in reducing virus transmission, hospitalisations, or deaths.

Christmas and winter ski vacations represent an important tourism season. According to Eurostat 2018/19 data, 33.7% of all nights spent in tourist accommodation establishments in the EU27 were in the winter season (November to April included). Overnight stays in the EU27 in winter 2020-2021 dropped by 71% compared to winter 2018-2019. This is also an important period for planning the upcoming summer holidays. With erratic travel restrictions Europe will once again lose out on an important tourism season.

ENDS

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ECTAA is the European Travel Agents' and Tour Operators' Association. It represents a sector of some 70,000 travel agents and tour operators in Europe, which provide consultancy and sell transport, accommodation, leisure and other tourism services as well as combined products to leisure and business customers.

ETOA is the trade association for better tourism in Europe. We work to enable a fair and sustainable business environment, so that Europe remains a competitive and appealing place to live, work and visit. With over 1200 members representing most areas of the industry, we are a powerful voice at local, national and European levels. We welcome a range of tour operators and European suppliers from global brands to independent businesses.

HOTREC is the umbrella Association of Hotels, Restaurants, Bars and Cafés and similar establishments in Europe, which brings together 46 National associations in 35 countries, and is the voice of the European hospitality. HOTREC's mission is to represent and champion its interests towards the EU and international institutions, foster knowledge sharing and best practice among its Members to further promote innovation, and act as a platform of expertise for the hospitality sector.

WTTC is the body which represents the Travel & Tourism private sector globally. Members consist of CEOs of the world's T&T companies, destinations, and industry organisations engaging with Travel & Tourism. WTTC has a history of 25 years of research to quantify the economic impact of T&T in 185 countries. For over 25 years, WTTC has been the voice of this industry globally. Members are the Chairs, Presidents and Chief Executives of the world's leading, private sector Travel & Tourism businesses, who bring specialist knowledge to guide government policy and decision-making and raise awareness of the importance of the sector.