

## **COVID: Europe needs a coherent, responsible approach to free movement of people**

As the COVID crisis subsides, and countries across Europe start to reopen their borders, we are concerned that the approach hitherto has been fragmented and creates confusion in the public and among commercial operators in the tourism and retail sector.

Apart from the drastic impact of the lockdown on non-food shops, the hospitality and catering sector and the traders supplying them, the near-disappearance of tourism and cross-border travel has severely affected shops, both food and non-food, in town centres and other areas which rely on tourism for much of their revenue, as well as shops in border areas and duty-free shops in airports.

We share with member state governments the priority of avoiding a second wave of COVID infection. But, as Home Affairs Commissioner Ylva Johansson pointed out recently, closing borders is not as effective in stopping the spread of disease as people continuing to observe strict hygiene and social distancing rules.

If people are able to move around inside a member state while observing these rules, moving across a border, whether for tourism or to shop in a neighbouring country should not make any real difference to the risk of infection.

We therefore ask the Commission to provide further guidance to member states to:

- Adopt a more coordinated approach of border opening and allowing freedom of movement of people, while providing for continued observance of hygiene rules and for action to contain any renewed infection in a particular region.
- Adopt a balanced, risk-based return to the Treaty's four freedoms and to a more normal pattern of cross-border movement to allow tourism to restart and consumers to shop across borders if they wish.

In addition to this guidance, we ask the Commission to ensure that EU recovery measures and their implementation ensure that support is focused on the ecosystems most severely affected by the crisis – which the Commission identified were tourism, hospitality and retail.

This also means ensuring that town centres already suffering before the crisis from the closure of shops and restaurants and cafes are given direct support to create an attractive environment for visitors, supporting and supported by an ecosystem comprising tourism, hospitality and retail.

---ENDS---

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