

CER Letter on the Commission's tourism recovery strategy

Brussels, 4 May 2020



To:
Thierry Breton, Internal Market Commissioner
Adina-Ioana Vălean, Transport Commissioner

Dr Libor Lochman
Executive Director

Cc:
Mariya Gabriel, Education and Youth Commissioner

Dear Commissioner Breton, Dear Commissioner Vălean,

CER, the Community of European Railway and Infrastructure Companies, is supporting your call for a recovery strategy to build a more resilient and sustainable tourism ecosystem by accelerating the green and digital transition¹.

The current situation offers an unprecedented opportunity to re-think tourism in light of more sustainable consumption patterns that would leverage the rail sector's contribution to the achievement of the European Green Deal whilst giving railway passenger operators a much needed stimulus to recover from the economic losses they have suffered during the crisis.

Europe's rail passenger service has been severely hit by the current COVID-19 crisis, and in particular international passenger service has come to an almost standstill. Currently, railways are undertaking tremendous efforts in measures to restore confidence in rail travel.

With a holistic recovery strategy for tourism, the Commission could support both struggling sectors, tourism and transport, in particular public transport modes, whilst keep on track with its environmental goals. In Europe, a successful recovery of the tourism sector will necessarily depend on the sector's capability to build confidence and to avoid capacity bottlenecks that might result from the COVID-19 related economic downturn.

For the Commission's works on the recovery strategy to build a more resilient and sustainable tourism and the health and safety protocols to guide operation of tourism facilities across the EU, CER would like you to consider the following:

- A coordinated exit strategy for the recovery of European tourism must go hand in hand with lifting of current border limitations for international rail passenger services.
- A coordinated approach to introduce health & safety measures for travellers is key to ensure effective communication, guarantee health and restore trust in leisure travel across the EU. Should the health & safety protocols envisaged by the Commission to guide operations of tourism facilities also include transport, all modes of transport must be consulted to ensure alignment between protocols for the tourism sector and health & safety guidelines that are in preparation for each transport mode. Such alignment is

¹ Your introductory speech of the video conference with the ministers of tourism (27 April 2020)

key to avoid inconsistencies and ensure a smooth communication of health and safety measures to travellers.

- A resilient and sustainable recovery of the tourism sector also requires spreading visitors across all destinations in Europe. Rail enables travellers to access a greater number of places, including remote and peripheral destinations, and helps to reduce the risk of overcrowding while supporting the economic recovery of rural areas.
- Railway companies are ready to work with partners and destinations to deliver more sustainable multi-modal travel connections to accelerate the green transition of the tourism ecosystem.
- A speedy recovery of international rail passenger and tourism services would also secure the continuity of programmes like DiscoverEU, to foster European values and greener mobility among young generations. The Commission should explore links between such programmes and its recovery strategy.

Finally, CER supports your proposal for a European tourism summit at the end of the year, and is ready to join the Commission and relevant stakeholders to build a roadmap for the recovery of a greener tourism sector.

We like to highlight that railway undertakings have shown a remarkable resilience to the crisis, and run passenger services throughout, despite staggering economic losses, to keep essential travel possible. An effective plan for the recovery of European tourism must necessarily rely on sustainable transport modes that can respond to changed travel behaviour and meet dynamically changing demand for leisure travel connecting destinations all across Europe.

Yours Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to be 'E. Keller', written in a cursive style.