



# Considerations on Quarantine

## Summary

- Prior to the COVID-19 outbreak, air transport supported 65.5 million jobs around the world and \$2.7 trillion in GDP. The closure of international borders and the shutdown of international aviation has brought much of this economic activity, and that of other aviation-dependent sectors to a standstill;
- Governments around the world are now looking to restart their economies and reopen borders while managing the risk of an increase in new cases;
- Imposing quarantine requirements on arriving passengers will act as a complete brake on the resumption of tourism and other sectors that depend on inbound air travel. IATA research suggests that over 80% of prospective travelers would not travel to a destination that mandated a 14-day quarantine period;
- The following measures would reduce the risk of importing COVID-19 while creating less of a barrier to economic restart:
  - Discouraging symptomatic passengers (or passengers who suspect that they may have been exposed to COVID-19) from traveling – airlines are already offering significant flexibility to passengers to rebook where appropriate;
  - Health declarations, symptom screening and temperature checks prior to travel;
  - For travelers from higher risk countries, testing prior to travel could provide an additional layer of protection, providing suitable tests are widely available.
- In addition, the following measures mitigate the risk of transmission in case an infected passenger does travel:
  - Contact-tracing;
  - Multi-layered biosafety measures during the air travel journey, as recommended by the International Civil Aviation Organization (ICAO);
  - Safe travel protocols for the hospitality industry, such as those promoted by the World Travel and Tourism Council (WTTC).

## Background

In normal times, air transport facilitates \$2.7 trillion in GDP and supports 65.5 million jobs globally. Of these, 36.7 million jobs and almost \$900 billion in GDP are in tourism. 58% of international tourists arrive in their destination country by air.

The closure of international borders and the shutdown of international aviation has therefore brought tourism, including business tourism such as meetings, conventions and events, to a standstill along with other aviation-dependent sectors of the economy.

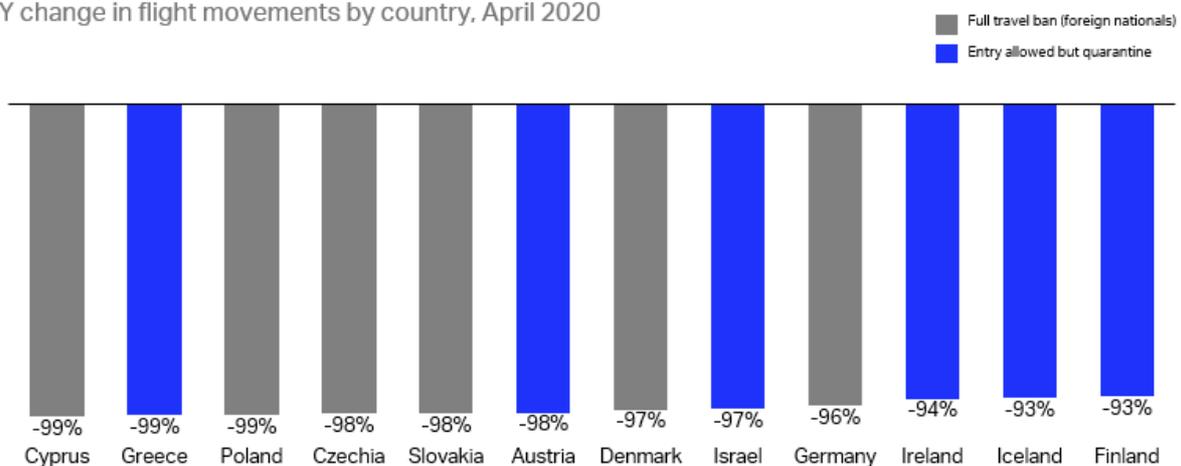
Governments around the world are now looking to restart their economies and reopen borders while managing the risk of an increase in new cases. This paper considers why quarantine is not compatible with that policy objective and discusses alternative strategies that can enable cross-border economic activity to resume safely while managing the associated public health risks.

## Quarantine: A brake on economic restart

A recent IATA analysis illustrated that imposing a quarantine requirement on arriving passengers has had the same practical effect as keeping borders closed. Therefore, this measure is incompatible with an objective to restart cross-border economic activity, such as international tourism.

### Countries that have put in place quarantine requirements have experienced similar drop in traffic to countries with full travel bans

YoY change in flight movements by country, April 2020



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This finding is supported by a survey of recent air travelers, conducted by IATA in June 2020 which showed that:

- 85% of travelers were somewhat or very concerned about being quarantined while traveling,
- 83% of recent travelers would not consider traveling if it involved a 14-day quarantine period, and
- 65% of those surveyed responded that quarantine should not be necessary if a passenger tests negative for COVID-19.

## Strategies to reduce the risk of importing COVID-19

IATA proposes that the following measures would reduce the risk of importing COVID-19 while creating less of a barrier to economic restart than a quarantine requirement.

## Discouraging symptomatic passengers from traveling

In these uncertain times, airlines want their customers to be able to book with confidence. Moreover, carriers do not want to be a vector for transmission of COVID-19; they want to minimize the risk of COVID-positive passengers travelling and want passengers to have an incentive to do the right thing by staying at home if they suspect that they might be unwell.

Therefore, a majority of airlines are currently offering considerable booking flexibility to consumers who test positive for or are suspected to have COVID-19, or who are close contacts of a suspected or confirmed COVID-19 case.

## Public Health Risk Mitigation Measures prior to travel

Many countries have been using a questionnaire to ask travelers about symptoms (usually fever, cough, breathing difficulties) as an added measure to detect people possibly suffering from COVID-19.

Health Declarations: Where health declarations are required, self-declarations that can be completed prior to travel should be encouraged as they contribute to passengers arriving at the airport ready to travel and thus minimizing congestion. Contactless, electronic tools, such as government web portals and mobile applications, should be encouraged to avoid paper forms.

The harmonization of the data elements to be included in health declarations will facilitate the deployment of automated, paperless solutions and favor the direct exchange of information between passengers and authorities, minimizing any data privacy issues that could result from airlines being required to handle such data.

Health screening: Screening could include temperature measurement and visual observation conducted by health professionals. Such screening could identify potentially high-risk persons that may require additional examination prior to travel. Moreover, measures such as temperature screening controls could also deter passengers who are feeling unwell from traveling, something they might have otherwise done.

Research undertaken during the COVID-19 outbreak has indicated that passengers are reassured by temperature screening undertaken in airports. Where health screening is implemented, states should ensure that it is conducted in accordance with the protocols of the relevant health authorities.

## Testing, for travelers from countries perceived as higher risk

For countries with similar levels of new infections, health declarations and health screening along with effective measures to mitigate transmission risk during travel and in-country may be sufficient. However, for travelers from countries where the rate of new infections is significantly higher than in the arrival country, the receiving state may judge that an additional layer of protection is needed and require a COVID-19 test.

Where a test is required, there are several criteria that need to be met in order to be considered as effective and do not constitute a barrier to travel:

- Tests are widely available and can be conducted at scale;
- Results can be delivered quickly;
- The test performs at a high-level of accuracy, both in terms of sensitivity and specificity to minimize false negatives and false positives.

Any testing should be carried out prior to travel, in accordance with the standards set by the relevant health authorities. Testing prior to travel will reduce congestion at airports and avoid passengers who test positive, and their close contacts, from traveling to the airport reducing the risk of transmission either at the airport or on ground transportation. It will also enable those passengers who need to change their travel plans to do this remotely.

Data transmission related to the sharing of results with the arriving state should be between passengers and governments. The reliability of any test should be certified by reputable national or international authorities, whether scientific, therapeutic, or public health (e.g. FDA in the US or Institut Pasteur in Europe) and states should work together to encourage mutual recognition of testing.

## Strategies to reduce the risk of transmission of COVID-19

### Reducing the risk of transmission during the air travel journey

The ICAO Council Aviation Recovery Task Force (CART) has recommended a temporary risk-based and multi-layered approach to mitigate the risks of transmitting COVID-19 through air travel. These recommendations are summarized in ICAO's Take-Off guidance. These measures, which cover the airport and onboard experience, are closely aligned with EASA guidance. IATA encourages states to adopt and implement these recommendations.

### Contact-tracing

Although the prime objective of mitigation strategies is to prevent anyone traveling while infectious, an important back-up to this is the ability to rapidly identify and trace the contacts of anyone who is discovered to have been infected, either during travel or in-country.

Measures to assist and facilitate such tracing have been employed as part of arrival procedures in some countries. They could be as simple as providing contact details for follow-up if required. In many cases these have made use of technology such as mobile applications which, with the user's consent and subject to data privacy concerns being addressed, allow their movements and even their close contacts to be traced and tracked. The use of such technologies may be a condition applied by governments to allowing international travel during restart.

Contact tracing has been deployed to good effect in South Korea, where the COVID-19 outbreak has generally been contained while avoiding the need for a generalized lockdown of the economy. There appears to be some evidence that contact-tracing may be less effective in very crowded or densely populated urban areas.

However, it could be a powerful tool to restart tourism (including business and tourism) for which hotels and resorts represent a more controlled and more easily monitored environment, especially in combination with other safe destination protocols.

### Reducing the risk of transmission in the arrival country

Mirroring the efforts undertaken within aviation, the Travel and Tourism sector as a whole has developed, adopted and implemented a series of protocols and best-practices to reduce the risk of transmission of COVID-19 in-country and therefore enable a safe resumption of global tourism.

For example, the World Travel and Tourism Council (WTTC), has coordinated with its Members, governments, health experts and other industry associations, to develop a suite of recovery protocols in order to enable safe tourism and restore traveler confidence. Areas of the industry covered by the protocols include: hospitality, attractions, retail, tour operators, and business tourism such as meeting, conventions and events (MICE).

## Conclusions

- As an increasing number of countries pass the peak of the COVID-19 outbreak and count the economic and social cost of lockdown, governments are looking to restart their economies and reopen their borders;
- For countries that depend on inbound tourism, quarantine requirements are incompatible with a resumption of inbound traffic;
- A balanced set of measures to enable borders to reopen and international travel to resume while managing the risk of a significant spike in new infections will include both measures to reduce the risk of importation and the risk of transmission.
- Measures to reduce the risk of importation include: measures to incentivize symptomatic passengers not to travel; health screening and, for high-risk countries, COVID testing;
- Measures to reduce the risk of transmission include: the multi-layered suite of biosafety measures set out in the ICAO Take-Off guidance; contact-tracing and safe destination protocols.