



[Check Against Delivery]

Speech by Commissioner Breton on the Tourism & Transport Package

Brussels, 13 May 2020

Thank you Margrethe.

Le 10 mars, dans cette salle de presse, nous présentions une nouvelle stratégie industrielle pour l'Europe.

C'était trois jours avant que l'Organisation mondiale de la santé ne déclare l'Europe le nouvel épicode de la pandémie.

Deux mois plus tard, la crise du coronavirus n'a pas diminué l'importance de mettre en œuvre cette stratégie. Au contraire, elle renforce la nécessité de définir ensemble et de bâtir une économie plus verte, plus numérique et plus résiliente. Cela vaut aussi pour le secteur du tourisme.

Et les recommandations que nous présentons aujourd'hui s'inscrivent bien dans la double perspective de la gestion de la crise, priorité absolue, et de la préparation pour l'avenir.

You have a number of Commissioners presenting the different elements of the package to you today, so I will try to be very brief.

Millions of SMEs and family-run businesses working in accommodation, restaurants, passenger transport and travel agencies risk bankruptcies and job losses. That is the reality of this ecosystem.

They urgently need to go back to work, and they all want to go back to work. And we all urgently need to them to go back to work. Because our entire European economy depends on it.

At the same time, us individuals, we all need a break from confinement. We want to enjoy a summer holiday. We would like to see our families and friends even if they live in another region, in another EU country.

But we want to be able to do so while staying healthy and safe. Because we know that the virus will stay with us for some time.

It's a difficult balance to strike. There are no simple answers. And we won't find them all today, because this will be an ongoing process.

Without going into the details that Margrethe already outlined and my colleagues will expand on, I would like to emphasise a few points:

- First, we cannot prescribe when country A or B decides to open up for tourism. Member States will progressively lift border restrictions. This will happen gradually, and not all at once. That reflects the different situation of course in each country, and we need to accept it.
- But, second, we are helping Member States and businesses to get prepared. Member States need to have sufficient capacity in terms of hospitals, testing, surveillance and contact tracing. The hospitality sector needs to know what health protocols they will need to comply with and what material they will need to welcome guests. This includes of course very practical things like cleaning and disinfecting frequently touched surfaces, providing masks, having spare rooms for potential contaminated guests, and so on.
- This will reassure tourists that they are safe and can choose their destination within the EU knowing that they will find the same level of precaution and preparedness. And that they will not be discriminated against, wherever they come from in the EU. That is very important.
- Financial risk is also an element that we need to mitigate to give consumers confidence. That is the logic behind our recommendation on vouchers as an alternative to cash reimbursement.
- And our citizens and businesses need information. That is why we are setting up a dedicated website with a map combining real-time information related to tourism. The website could be called reopening EU. This will also help our businesses draw inspiration from innovative solutions found by others.

Because ultimately, to manage this virus, Europe needs creativity. We have seen that innovation and responsibility among the many businesses that have converted their production lines to produce masks

or ventilators. And we are starting to see that innovation among small restaurant and hotel owners, as well towns across Europe.

Beyond managing what will remain a difficult 2020 summer season, we need to start preparing for the future.

As for all other industry ecosystems, the recovery will have to be green, digital and resilient.

We need to work collectively – EU institutions, the industry, regions and cities, stakeholders – on how to achieve this, learning from the crisis, paying particular attention to SMEs, anticipating new trends and consumer patterns related to it.

Therefore, we will organise a European tourism convention to start designing the European tourism of tomorrow and start preparing a roadmap a sustainable, innovative and resilient European tourism ecosystem. In other words, a 'European Agenda for Tourism 2050'.

So that we emerge stronger from this crisis.

SPEECH/20/878