



## Note from the Presidency

Brussels, 7 January 2021

### COVID-19 | IPCR Working Level Roundtable

Monday, 11 January 2021 at 10h00

Dear Colleagues,

The next IPCR Working-level Roundtable focusing on border issues is scheduled for Monday, 11 January at 10h00 and will be divided between information items and discussion items, as follows:

#### Information items

We will be updated by the European Commission on the **measures at the external and internal borders and COVID-19 free movement restrictions**, including the implementation of [Council Recommendations 2020/912](#) on the temporary restriction on non-essential travel into the EU and the possible lifting of such restriction and [Council Recommendation 2020/1475](#) on a coordinated approach to the restriction of free movement in response to the COVID-19 pandemic. The update will also focus on the recent developments motivated by the emergence of a new variant of SARS-Cov-2 of concern in the UK and the measures taken by Member-States to prevent its spread.

We will also be updated by the Commission and the European Union Aviation Safety Agency (EASA) on the recent developments on the **Passenger Locator Form Initiatives**, namely the inauguration of a dedicated platform for the exchange of passenger travel data based on existing national digital platforms and the Joint Action on the European Digital PLF. We will be briefed on the main outcomes of the pilot-project and testing phases and focus on the progress achieved so far, particularly during the festive season in December. Participating Member-States will be invited to share their experiences.



### Discussion items

We will then proceed with the **periodic review of Annex I of the [Council Recommendation 2020/912](#), last amended by [Council Recommendation 2020/2169](#), on the temporary restriction on non-essential travel into the EU and the possible lifting of such restriction**. Annex I contains the list of third countries whose residents should not be affected by a temporary external borders restriction on non-essential travel into the EU. The latest amendment to the list was made on 17 December 2020 with the removal of Uruguay due to the deterioration of the epidemiological situation in that country. Following this last periodic review, an emergency procedure was put in place to ensure continuity during the Christmas break and the transition between Presidencies. Currently, the list includes the following countries: Australia, Japan, New Zealand, Rwanda, Singapore, South Korea, Thailand and China, as well as its special administrative regions of Hong-Kong and Macau. The Presidency, after having considered the latest updates from ECDC and EEAS on the evolution of the epidemiological situation around the world, doesn't see the need to propose any further changes. The Presidency will continue to monitor the situation and, in line with the Recommendation, will carry out the next periodic review on 25 January.

We will then address a **coordinated approach to travel and transport in response to the SARS-CoV-2 variant observed in the UK**. As you know, on 21 December an emergency meeting was convened at IPCR working-level following the emergence of a new variant of the COVID-19 virus and the rapid increase of a large proportion of connected cases in parts of England. Most EU Member-States have taken precautionary measures to halt the spread of this variant. On 22 December the Commission adopted a Recommendation on a coordinated approach to travel and transport measures - [C\(2020\) 9607 final](#). While it is important to take swift temporary precautionary action to limit the spread of the new strain of the virus, essential travel, transit of passengers and supply chains should be facilitated. The risk we now face is a multiplicity of new and non-harmonised restrictive requirements, even though the Member-States have stressed the need for a coordinated approach. We would like to invite Member-States to share their latest updates on the measures currently in place and their plans for their future management after having analysed the Commission's



Recommendation. The Presidency seeks to establish a common approach to travel and transport from the UK to the EU while ensuring the concept of "green lanes" remains effective.

Finally, on the basis on an update by the Commission on the written input already provided by Member-States, we will discuss the Commission's non-paper "**Draft proposal for a Council Recommendation amending Council Recommendation 2020/912 on the temporary restriction on non-essential travel into the EU and the possible lifting of such restriction**" of 8 December 2020. The Commission has presented the non-paper during the IPCR Roundtable on 9 December. At the time, Member-States considered that given the upcoming festive season the timing to advance work on the lifting of restrictions to free movement wasn't appropriate. Now we should focus on the preparations for the gradual lifting of restrictions and a return to normal travel, including for cross-border tourism, for when the sanitary situation allows, in line with the European Council Conclusions of 10-11 December. The Commission will elaborate on its future plans and the timeframe for the next steps.

We are looking forward to meeting you again on Monday, 11 January and to the fruitful discussions ahead.

On behalf of the Portuguese Presidency COVID-19 | IPCR Team,

Paula Vicente