



26 March 2020

Dear Member,

Today, the European Commission published a [guidance document](#) recommending operational and organisational steps to support air cargo operations during the current COVID-19 crisis, aimed at ensuring that essential transport flows keep moving. The European Commission calls on Member States to implement the measures as a matter of urgency. Below, you will find a summary of the main points included in the Commission's guidance document, which is attached to this Circular.

In its communication, the European Commission recognises the importance of air cargo for the supply chain and acknowledges that continued and uninterrupted air cargo services are of essential strategic importance for the EU. It further recognises the problematic situation caused by the almost entire cancellation of passenger flights, considering that approximately 50% of all air cargo is carried in the hold of passenger aircraft, as well the inability for all-cargo flights to currently compensate for the loss of cargo capacity on passenger aircraft.

To ensure continuity of air cargo operations, the European Commission has set out a number of recommended operational measures, which it invites Member States to implement in order to facilitate air cargo transport and help reduce additional costs, with the understanding that these exceptional measures will be temporary for the duration of the COVID-19 crisis. The guidelines include recommendations on, *inter alia*, removing or showing flexibility in night curfews or slot restrictions at airports, and also special measures for air cargo personnel.

The Commission notes that any restrictions incompatible with Union law must be lifted, and also calls on all third countries to refrain from unnecessary restrictions on air cargo operations, in particular those incompatible with agreements in place.

Considering that the existing situation is threatening the functioning of critical supply chains, the following measures have been set out, which the European Commission calls on Member States to implement as a matter of urgency:

- **For transport from outside the EU, granting without delay all necessary authorisations and permits**, including, where legally possible,

temporary traffic rights for additional air cargo operations, even when conducted with passenger aircraft;

- **Temporarily removing, or applying flexibly, night curfews or slot restrictions** at airports for essential air cargo operations;
- **Facilitating the use of passenger aircraft for cargo-only operations**, including for the re-positioning of air cargo flight crew, medical staff and anyone involved in the transport of goods regardless of the transport mode;
- Ensuring that air cargo crew as well as handling and maintenance personnel are qualified as critical staff in cases of lockdown or curfew;
- Ensuring that, where possible, **sufficient cargo capacity is maintained when regional airports are closed for economic reasons or considering keeping airports open for air cargo only**, and in any case **ensuring that open airports maintain sufficient air cargo handling capabilities** to ensure timely treatment and delivery;
- **Exempting from travel restrictions asymptomatic transport personnel**, including aircrew, engaged in the transport of goods;
- **Exempting from containment measures asymptomatic aircrew, cargo personnel and airport personnel working on the ramp**, if adequate health protocols are in place;
- **Allowing fast-track ad-hoc exemptions** to address unforeseen situations such as sudden and unforeseen emergency operations;
- Allowing ramp personnel to do their work both safely as well as efficiently, by **providing staff with guidance on health precautions in an air cargo environment** and support them with appropriate supplies of hygiene products;
- **Encouraging that cargo and express airlines exceptionally reserve capacity for the supply of essential goods**, in particular medical and emergency supplies, and apply reasonable shipping rates for such supplies.

With regards to the operational measures, the Commission notes that all of the above measures should apply to EU citizens and third country nationals alike if they are essential to provide free movement of cargo to and inside the EU.

As a next step, the Commission will, in close cooperation with the Member States, consider all practical steps to encourage third countries to apply these principles,

including through engagement with the International Civil Aviation Organisation (ICAO), with the international aviation partners and with the international air transport industry.

It is also noteworthy that the Commission included a reference to the [joint statement of the European Competition Network](#) of 23 March 2020, which highlights that the EU's competition authorities "will not actively intervene against necessary and temporary measures put in place in order to avoid a shortage of supply". Moreover, this joint statement also makes clear that the competition authorities will not hesitate to take action against air cargo operators taking advantage of the current situation by cartelising or abusing their dominant position.

The European Commission will continue to monitor the situation, and will provide further guidance, as appropriate.

In view of the publication of this guidance, we invite the Members of the Air Freight Institute to participate in a **conference call tomorrow, 27 March from 8.00-9.30** at the latest, to discuss the state of play and further steps to be taken by CLECAT. While realising that this is on very short notice, we would appreciate your attendance, if possible. You will receive a separate calendar invite containing the call-in details for tomorrow's conference call.

Best regards,

Constantino Canu
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Attachments

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- [Ci068Air_European Commission Guidelines_Facilitating Air Cargo Operations During Covid-19 Outbreak.pdf](#)

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