

This media release is sent on behalf of «Back in the Air».



Media release

Zurich Airport, 15 April 2021

Coronavirus

‘Back in the Air’ initiative seeks to restore freedom to travel

Switzerland’s travel and tourism industry and the economic segments that depend on it have all been severely hit by the coronavirus crisis. In response, representatives from the air transport, business and tourism sectors together with their social partners have met for a virtual ‘Back in the Air’ Summit, at which they formulated three key demands to restore travel freedom. These were formally presented on behalf of all the organizations involved to Swiss President Guy Parmelin on his visit to Zurich Airport today.

The coronavirus crisis has severely affected the Swiss travel and tourism sector and the further economic segments that depend on it. Bed nights in Switzerland have declined by 40%, while the country’s travel agencies have seen an 80% fall in bookings. Passenger volumes at Swiss airports have also slumped by some 75%.

As a result, many employees in the sectors concerned are currently on short-time working. And thousands of jobs are presently at risk – not only in air transport itself, but also in affiliated sectors and among the industry’s various suppliers. According to the Swiss government’s ‘LUPO’ Aviation Policy Report of 2016, the Swiss air transport sector has an economic impact of more than CHF 24 billion a year, which translates into an employment market impact of more than 138,000 full-time positions.

A well-functioning air transport sector is essential to landlocked Switzerland and its numerous international corporations. But the Swiss air transport system is a complex one: it cannot be ramped up in days, but requires a longer lead time along with clear and consistent parameters to ensure its safe and orderly operation. The Swiss economy and Swiss society need to be able to make their travel plans with confidence, too. Ever-changing rules cause uncertainty and severely limit travel freedom. Which is why, given the progress that is being made in vaccinating the Swiss population and the coming summer tourist season, prompt solutions are now required to offer Switzerland’s economy new prospects and perspectives.

‘Back in the Air’ Summit to restore travel freedom

It was with these ambitions in mind that some 50 representatives from the air transport, tourism and other business sectors and organizations, along with their social partners, got together to hold a virtual ‘Back in the Air’ Summit on Wednesday 7 April. The aim of the event was to work with employers’ and employees’ representatives to identify concrete action areas for the political



world and then use these to define the concrete actions needed to restore travel freedom. The industry is offering its collaboration and its expertise.

“The economic damage to the entire airport ecosystem is huge, because international air travel has been severely restricted for more than a year now,” says Stephan Widrig, CEO of Flughafen Zürich AG, the operator of Zurich Airport. “Along with the gradual normalization of domestic public life, we also need reliable rules now for travel, to make this plannable again for everyone.”

SWISS CEO Dieter Vranckx agrees. “As a business and industrial location and as an export nation, Switzerland relies on having well-functioning air transport services,” he explains. “Travel must be made possible and plannable again – responsibly, with an awareness and appreciation of the associated risks, and with due and full regard to the protection concepts required.”

The participants in the ‘Back in the Air’ Summit concluded their event by formulating three key demands:

A risk-based approach: No travel restrictions between countries with a similar risk of infection. Safety should be achieved through an extensive vaccination and test-and-trace strategy.

Vaccination and testing: Anyone who can prove that they have been vaccinated, have recovered from COVID-19 or have tested COVID-negative should be free to enter, leave or travel within Switzerland. A negative antigen test result should be considered adequate proof of no COVID infection.

Digital records: Records of vaccination, recovery and/or negative COVID test results should be digitalized, and should also be internationally standardized and recognized.

Key demands presented to Swiss President Guy Parmelin

Following an invitation by Cantonal Government Council President Silvia Steiner and Cantonal Director of Economic Affairs Carmen Walker Späh, Swiss President Guy Parmelin visited Zurich Airport this afternoon to gain his own impressions of the economic impact that the coronavirus crisis has had on enterprises which depend on the air transport sector. Andreas Schmid, Chairman of the Board of Directors of Flughafen Zürich AG, took the opportunity to present President Parmelin with the three key demands outlined above on behalf of all the ‘Back in the Air’ Summit participants.

In the wake of the handover, a media briefing will be held in Bern at 10:00 tomorrow (Friday) by the employers’, employees’ and business and industry organizations behind the ‘Back in the Air’ initiative. The event will see National Councillor Thomas Hurter (Aerosuisse), Daniel Lampart (SGB), Rudolf Minsch (economiesuisse), Sandrine Nikolic-Fuss (kapers) and Simon Wey (SAV) present to the media the actions which are required to restore travel freedom.

Media representatives can register at info@aerosuisse.ch, the event can be followed live at www.youtube.com/watch?v=nvQYUOhe1HU.



The 'Back in the Air' initiative is supported by:

AEROPERS

Aerosuisse

Aviationsuisse

Cargologic

CAT Aviation AG

Chambre de Commerce, d'industrie et des services de Genève

DER Touristik Suisse AG

easyJet Switzerland

easyJet Switzerland Pilots Association

Economiesuisse

Edelweiss Air AG

Flughafen Basel-Mulhouse-Freiburg

Flughafen Zürich AG

Genève Aéroport

Handelskammer beider Basel

HotellerieSuisse

Hotelplan

IG Air Cargo

Kapers

Komitee Weltoffenes Zürich

Pro Flughafen

Schweiz Tourismus

Schweizer Reise-Verband (SRV)

Schweizer Tourismus-Verband (STV)

Schweizerischer Arbeitgeberverband

Schweizerischer Gewerkschaftsbund

SEV-GATA

Skyguide

SWISS

Swiss Aviation Service Providers Association (SASPA)

Swiss Business Aviation Association (SBAA)

Swiss-American Chamber of Commerce

Swiss Travel Association (STAR)

Tour Operator

Travel Professional Association (TPA)

TUI

VPOD

Zürcher Handelskammer

Contacts

Swiss International Air Lines Ltd.
Media Relations
Phone: +41 44 564 4414
media@swiss.com

Flughafen Zürich AG
Corporate Communications
Phone: +41 43 816 9999
medien@zurich-airport.com

Genève Aéroport
Service communication
Phone: +41 22 717 7869
ignace.jeannerat@gva.ch