

# [Press release – Tourism in COVID-19 crisis: MEPs demand clear action plan to help the sector](#)



MEPs reiterated, in a debate with Internal Market Commissioner Thierry Breton, that the tourism sector needs more support in the ongoing COVID-19 crisis through specific measures, funding, increased EU-level coordination and a targeted roadmap. The demand for a sector-specific recovery plan and strategy was echoed across the political spectrum.

## **Protecting the tourism sector**

Commissioner Breton acknowledged that tourism was the first sector hit by the coronavirus and it is likely to be the slowest to recover from the crisis. “We have to come up with a strong response,” explained Breton. “Tourism is our priority and we are trying to do as much as we can with the existing funds.”

Beyond providing safety via short-term financing, the Commissioner said that tourism should benefit extensively also from the long-term crisis recovery plans, which will be funded through the next long-term EU budget (2021-2027). He is supporting the idea of a dedicated budget line “with the depth and firepower we need for the sector to get over this crisis”.

The Commissioner also added that the ultimate goal is to reform and reinvent the tourism sector and proposed to hold a European Tourism Summit for sustainable tourism this autumn.

## **Certainty on travel restrictions needed before summer holidays**

Several MEPs also asked for more certainty regarding travel and movement restrictions that could continue in the coming months, including possible

bans on visiting beaches because of social distancing rules. The Commissioner explained that sufficient guarantees for safety and security are needed before such restrictions are lifted. He added that the work on facilitating travel is ongoing and there will be more clarity ahead of the summer.

On the questions regarding passenger rights and vouchers being offered by companies following cancelled bookings, the Commissioner assured MEPs that passenger rights remain protected and member states can already support their tourism businesses by providing liquidity for companies, including to cope with travellers' demands for reimbursement.

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## **Background**

Members of the Tourism Task Force of the Transport and Tourism Committee [called on the Commission to present a tourism rescue action plan](#), which ensures timely national and European assistance for the travel and tourism sector, including via national compensation schemes and financial aid instruments, and establishes a crisis-management mechanism for the sector.

European Parliament noted in its [resolution on EU coordinated action to combat the COVID-19 pandemic and its consequences](#) that the transport and tourism sectors have been severely affected and suggests that a prevention and management mechanism be developed for the tourism sector at EU level to protect our workers, help our companies and ensure passenger safety.