AUSTRIAN AIRLINES CALLS FOR COMPREHENSIVE COVID-19 TESTING TO REPLACE GENERAL LANDING AND ENTRY BANS

News / Airlines

Last Friday the Austrian Federal Government allowed landing bans for flights from 18 countries to expire. These bans did not apply in other EU member states. Nevertheless, the many different travel regulations in the European Union make it more difficult for people to travel freely and for airlines to reliably plan flight schedules. At a press conference, Austrian Airlines CEO Alexis von Hoensbroech called for comprehensive COVID-19 tests to be carried out on all passengers from high risk countries as a means of alleviating this situation.

“The freedom to travel is an important cornerstone of our modern-day society which should not be curtailed in the long term. Whoever is healthy and not infected should also be allowed to travel”, Austrian Airlines CEO von Hoensbroech stated.

Because of the duration of the coronavirus crisis and the increasing uncertainty on the part of passengers, it makes good sense to introduce health checks on a global basis for people travelling

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by air. This can only be ensured by carrying out comprehensive COVID-19 tests on travelers from high risk countries. “We are advocating an international solution”, von Hoensbroech emphasizes. “No other means of transport offers as good an opportunity for health checks as the aviation sector. This possibility is exactly what we should leverage in order to facilitate travelling in times of the coronavirus without compromising health protection. This approach is also in the interests of passengers because a further step towards ensuring freedom of travel is also a further step towards returning to normalcy”, he adds. According to Austrian Airlines experts, public authorities and governments are now called upon to collaborate with the airlines in order to introduce safe, practical and cost-effective testing methods and to coordinate them on an international level.

Recently Lufthansa CEO Carsten Spohr joined other airline CEOs form Europe and the U.S. in a letter sent to U.S. Vice President Mike Pence and Ylva Johansson, EU Home Affairs Commissioner, demanding a U.S.-EU testing program to once again enable airlines to operate transatlantic flights. The testing program should replace entry bans and quarantine regulations. Austrian Airlines CEO von Hoensbroech also supports such a solution. “Good flight connections between the USA and Europe are essential for a strong ethnic and economic interdependence between our continents. For this reason, flight connections should be resumed as quickly as possible - of course by optimally combining the freedom to travel with the protection of people’s health”, Mr. von Hoensbroech concludes.

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