

Interferry welcomes easing of travel restrictions in advance of summer travel

European Commission issues guidance on relaunching of transportation links

Trade association Interferry welcomes the European Commission's guidance on the gradual relaxation of travel restrictions during the COVID-19 pandemic and relaunching of transportation links that will go into effect in advance of this summer's travel and tourism season. Earlier, Interferry had issued its own 'best practice' guidelines for the safe resumption of passenger ferry services once local authorities provided the green light.

"We welcome the growing signs in Europe and beyond that COVID-19 lockdown restrictions are starting to be eased," says Interferry CEO Mike Corrigan. "The global ferry industry is prepared to contribute to the safe reopening of non-essential travel."

Interferry recognises that countries and regions will lift restrictions for non-essential travel at a time that reflects where they are in addressing the COVID-19 global pandemic. "We hope the EC's positive response to ferry operator guidelines can provide other administrations around the world the confidence that ferry operators stand ready for an orderly and closely-monitored restart of passenger services."

Interferry says it is cautiously optimistic there will be a tourist season, albeit on a largely regionalised basis where 'staycations' will likely be at the centrepiece of this summer's travel options. Reopening ferry services to non-essential travel is crucial for the viability of many ferry companies.

"Passenger traffic has been virtually non-existent during the pandemic, with operators reduced to maintaining lifeline supplies of essential goods in the face of ever-mounting financial losses," offers Corrigan. "Ferries are likely to be a prime choice of transport mode for leisure travellers as restrictions loosen up, given the ability to adhere to physical distancing and the many safety measures the industry has adopted."

Measures developed by Interferry and its members are widely reflected in guidance announced in the European Union executive arm's May 13 announcement. Transport commissioner Adina Valean had earlier expressed appreciation for suggestions during a dedicated conference call with Interferry representatives including regulatory affairs director Johan Roos and the CEO's of operators Attica Group, Brittany Ferries, FRS and Stena Line.

Interferry's priority guidelines for terminals and onboard include social distancing markings, reduced passenger capacity, controls on numbers admitted to shops and dining areas, a ban on open buffets, card-only payments, intensified cleaning and disinfection regimes, removal of the recycling mode in air conditioning systems and passengers being allowed to stay in their vehicles on short-distance voyages – all supported by extensive signage and repeated PA announcements.

About Interferry

Interferry is the ferry industry's global voice, with more than 260 member companies in 40 countries. The association is a key representative on regulatory and policy matters, notably through consultative status at the International Maritime Organization, and also facilitates networking and communications among its members.

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