



# ATW

AIR TRANSPORT WORLD



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The new hygiene rules

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# Editorial



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## Quarantine quandary

**I**t will be a long time before air travel returns to pre-crisis levels, but international services will take far longer than domestic to restore. IATA believes international volumes will only return to what had been forecast before the pandemic by 2023 or 2024, perhaps two years after domestic services.

The main reason for the lag is national quarantine rules that are being implemented and which restrict entry of foreign arrivals or make them conditional on lengthy self-isolations.

It is understandable that the air transport industry, severely mauled and brought to a near standstill, is against such quarantines. For as long as they stay in place, they will be a strong deterrent against international travel for crews, business travelers and tourists. Even more than the fear of catching the virus while onboard a long flight will be the fear of being trapped far away from home.

But it is also understandable that governments, without a vaccine or even widespread, rapid testing, want to protect their citizens and not risk new infection spikes after terrible battles to control the spread within their borders. The air transport industry must respect those quarantine decisions even though they will make it far harder for airlines to come through, or even survive, the crisis.

Some sort of compromise is urgently

needed to reduce the gap between finding a vaccine and enabling international travel. So-called "immunity passports" are not yet possible scientifically.

Potentially, however, an international "trusted traveler" program could be established that depends on widely available, reliable and rapid testing combined with tracking.

This will not be easy or cheap. But some individuals and corporations might be willing to pay for such a service on top of their ticket. That's one option, though it still depends on efficient testing being available—a difficult "if" when many countries still do not have tests for most of their own citizens.

Governments must, therefore, invest heavily in fast-tracking testing and establishing mutual recognition agreements between those countries or regions where such testing becomes a "visa" for a traveler to enter and exit.

Making this a priority will ensure a country does not fall behind those without quarantines in terms of air connectivity, trade and tourism.

Ultimately, governments must also protect the jobs and economic futures of their nations. The quarantine dilemma is a real and difficult one but closing borders to trade and tourism—even for a short time—severely damages a country's ability to climb out of recession. Near-term solutions must be found. **ATW**





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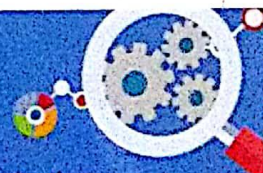
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