The EU Digital COVID Certificate: a global standard with more than 591 million certificates

Brussels, 18 October 2021

Today, the Commission adopted a report on the EU Digital COVID Certificate and its implementation across the EU. The report shows that the EU certificate has been a crucial element in Europe's response to the COVID-19 pandemic, with more than 591 million certificates generated. The certificate, which covers COVID-19 vaccination, test and recovery, facilitates safe travel for citizens, and it has also been key to support Europe's hard-hit tourism industry. The EU Digital COVID Certificate is a success worldwide: it has set a global standard and is currently the only system already in operation at international level. 43 countries across four continents are plugged into the system, and more will follow over the coming weeks and months.

As said by President Ursula **von der Leyen** in her 2021 State of the Union Address, the EU Digital COVID Certificate shows that *"When we act together, we are able to act fast."*

The success of the EU Digital COVID Certificate system in figures:

- EU Member States have issued more than **591 million EU Digital COVID Certificates**

- **43 countries are already connected to the EU system**: 27 EU Member States, 3 European Economic Area (EEA) countries, Switzerland, and 12 other countries and territories. In total, the Commission was approached by **60 third countries interested in joining the EU system**. Beyond the ones already connected, technical discussions are ongoing with 28 of these countries.

- The air transport sector greatly benefited from the EU Digital COVID Certificate, which became operational just in time for the summer peak travel period. The association of Airports Council International (ACI Europe) reported that in July 2021 a total passenger volumes more than doubled compared to July 2020. ACI Europe attributes this change to the rollout of the EU Digital COVID Certificate along with the easing of travel restrictions.

- According to an EU Parliament's Eurobarometer survey, about **two thirds (65%) of respondents** agreed that the EU Digital COVID Certificate is the safest means for free travel in Europe during the COVID-19 pandemic.

- **20 EU Member States** also use the EU Digital COVID Certificate for domestic purposes, such as for the access to large events and restaurants, cinemas and museums, with an additional national legal basis.

Members of the College said:

Commissioner for Justice, Didier **Reynders**, said: *"The EU Digital COVID Certificate system has helped mitigate negative economic effects during the pandemic. It gave travellers the confidence to travel safely in the EU and boosted travel this summer. Europe has swiftly and successfully set an innovative, privacy-friendly global standard, in times of crisis, with many countries around the globe interested in joining the system."*

Commissioner for Internal Market, Thierry **Breton** added: *"In record time, the European Union has set up a digital, secure and interoperable COVID certificate system. This has been a key driver for the recovery of the tourism ecosystem and its many small and family-owned businesses across Europe. Beyond that, the EU system is adopted by countries around the world, demonstrating how Europe can set global standards through decisive and coordinated action",*

Commissioner for Health, Stella **Kyriakides** underlined: *"The EU Digital COVID Certificate is a symbol of an open and safe Europe. The quick roll-out of the system, not just in the EU but internationally, is an example of the EU cooperating and delivering in extraordinary circumstances. It is a strong European tool that has allowed us to move towards the reopening of our economies and societies and the exercise of free movement in a safe and coordinated way."*

The Commission's work on the EU Digital COVID Certificates was led by Commissioner Didier

Reynders in close cooperation with Vice-Presidents Vera **Jourová** and Margaritis **Schinas** and Commissioners Thierry **Breton**, Stella **Kyriakides**, and Ylva **Johansson***.

Next steps

The Commission will continue to monitor closely the validity of vaccination and recovery certificates as well as the use of antibody and rapid antigen tests for recovery certificates, and reconsider options once new scientific guidance is received.

Technical work to improve the functionalities of the EU Digital COVID Certificate system will continue within the framework of the eHealth Network. The Commission will:

- Continue its efforts to connect additional countries to the EU system;
- Work with Member States at technical level to implement the EU Digital COVID Certificate Regulation
- Seek guidance from ECDC and European Medicines Agency (EMA) on relevant developments as regards the scientific evidence.

By 31 March 2022, the Commission will submit another report on the application of the Regulation. This report may be accompanied by a legislative proposal to extend the period of application of the Regulation, taking into account the evolution of the epidemiological situation. The Commission does not exclude that it will put forward such a proposal already at an earlier stage, in order to ensure that the necessary legislative procedure can be concluded sufficiently in time.

Background

On 14 June 2021, the European Parliament and the Council adopted Regulation on the EU Digital COVID Certificate. The Regulation requires the Commission to submit a report to the European Parliament and to the Council by 31 October 2021.

The Regulation sets out a common framework for the issuance, verification and acceptance of interoperable certificates for COVID-19 vaccination, test or recovery certificates to facilitate free movement of EU citizens and their family members during the COVID-19 pandemic. It is accompanied by Regulation (EU) 2021/954, which extends the EU Digital COVID Certificate framework to third-country nationals who are legally staying or residing in a Member State's territory and who are entitled to travel to other Member States in accordance with EU law.

On 31 May, the Commission proposed an update to the Council Recommendation on the coordination of free movement restrictions in the EU, which were put in place in response to the COVID-19 pandemic. As the epidemiological situation was improving and vaccination campaigns were speeding up all over the EU, the Commission proposed that Member States gradually ease travel measures, including most importantly for the holders of the EU Digital COVID Certificate. The Council agreed to the updated Recommendations on 14 June.

More information

Report on a framework for the issuance, verification and acceptance of COVID-19 vaccination, test and recovery certificates

Annex to the report

EU Digital COVID Certificate webpage

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