



EUROPEAN COMMISSION
DIRECTORATE-GENERAL FOR HEALTH AND FOOD SAFETY

Health systems, medical products and innovation
Digital Health and European Reference Networks

Brussels,

SANTE.DDG1.B3 [REDACTED] (2021)1450567

Subject: Reply to your position paper indicating support for a digital travel pass

Dear [REDACTED]

On behalf of Commissioner Breton, I would like to thank you for your letter of 20 January 2021, in which you express support to the development of digital vaccination certificate solutions and the reuse of digital systems proposed by the travel industry. Considering the ongoing vaccination efforts, this is a highly relevant and important topic. I am aware of how the exhibition industry has been one of the sectors hardest hit by the pandemic and the restrictions imposed on public activities by many countries in an effort to prevent the further spread of the virus and its new variants.

We all sincerely hope that the current public health crisis of an unprecedented scale would be over as soon as possible. The EU Strategy for COVID-19 vaccines¹ has allowed the Commission and Member States to facilitate a broad portfolio of vaccines and promising vaccine candidates, and the vaccination efforts are underway. This will gradually help alleviate the impacts of the ongoing pandemic.

In its meeting on 21 January 2021, the European Council highlighted the importance of work on a standardised and interoperable vaccination certificate for medical purposes. Subsequently in its meeting on 25-26 February 2021, the European Council called for work to continue on a common approach to vaccination certificates in the EU.

The Commission is aware that as part of their vaccination efforts, the majority of Member States are issuing vaccination certificates already now or are preparing to do so in the future. Many Member States have legislation that covers the issuance of the certificates, and some are also running national projects targeting their delivery to citizens in a digital form. Since the beginning of the COVID-19 pandemic, the Commission has been supporting Member States through different platforms on the exchange of best practice and the use of common standards, including through the eHealth Network and the Health Security Committee.

¹ <https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/?qid=1597339415327&uri=CELEX%3A52020DC0245>

Continuing this support, the Commission presented a legislative proposal for a Digital Green Certificate² that would support not only proof of vaccination, but also the results of tests, and information on COVID-19 recovery. In addition, the Commission is continuing closely collaborating with Member States, the World Health Organisation, the European Centre for Disease Prevention and Control (ECDC) and the European Medicines Agency an approach that respects data protection, security and privacy, and which can also work with paper versions of the certificates.

A number of ethical, political and scientific questions related to the use of vaccination certificates are still open. The potential use of vaccination certificates as a tool for the gradual removal of restrictions is depending on the existence of strong scientific evidence about the impact of vaccines on the transmission of Covid-19. Currently, only limited evidence exists on this. However, as new information is emerging almost every day, we need to closely monitor the updated recommendations of the WHO, ECDC, public health authorities and other organisations.

In the meantime, and following the conclusions of the European Council, the European Commission has been working together with the Member States in order to develop a first set of guidelines aiming at the interoperability of vaccination certificates as well as test results and certificates of recovery. They have been published on the Commission's website³. Further work is being conducted by the eHealth Network in collaboration with EU agencies and other institutions and with the WHO. The goal is to establish a trust framework and to develop better mechanisms for mutual recognition and interoperability of vaccination certificates.

Finally, I would like to thank you once again for your letter that highlights the importance of interoperable and standardised vaccination certificates.

Yours sincerely,

(e-signed)



² https://ec.europa.eu/info/sites/info/files/en_green_certif_just_reg130_final.pdf

³ https://ec.europa.eu/health/ehealth/covid-19_en