

Digital Green Certificate - Union citizens

2021/0068(COD) - 29/04/2021 - Text adopted by Parliament, partial vote at 1st reading/single reading

The European Parliament adopted by 540 votes to 119, with 31 abstentions, amendments to the proposal for a regulation of the European Parliament and of the Council on a framework for the issuance, verification and acceptance of interoperable certificates on vaccination, testing and recovery to facilitate free movement during the COVID-19 pandemic (Digital Green Certificate).

The matter was referred back to the committee responsible for inter-institutional negotiations.

The main amendments adopted by the plenary concern the following issues:

EU COVID-19 certificate

The regulation seeks to lay down a framework for the issuance, verification and acceptance of interoperable certificates on COVID-19 vaccination, testing and recovery for the purpose of facilitating the holders exercise of their right to free movement during the COVID-19 pandemic.

Members stressed that the certificate cannot be interpreted as establishing a direct or indirect right or obligation for persons to be vaccinated. Moreover, it should not in any case be used as a travel document. Possession of an EU COVID-19 Certificate should not be a precondition to exercise free movement rights.

The prospective holders should be entitled to receive the certificates in the format of their choice (either digital or paper-based). The certificates should be user-friendly and accessible to persons with disabilities.

The holder should be provided with clear, comprehensive and timely information on the use of the vaccination certificate, test certificate, and/or recovery certificate.

Vaccination and test certificates should be issued automatically. Recovery certificates would be issued on request and could also be issued in case of detection of antibodies by a serological test.

Union transport hubs, such as airports, ports, and railway and bus stations, where the certificates are verified should apply standardised and common criteria and procedures for their verification, on the basis of guidance developed by the Commission.

Avoiding discrimination

Issuance of certificates should not lead to differential treatment and discrimination based on vaccination status or the possession of a specific certificate. In this respect, Members stated Member States ensure universal, accessible, timely and free of charge testing possibilities in order to guarantee the right to free movement inside the Union without discrimination on grounds of economic or financial possibilities.

Member States should accept vaccination certificates issued in other Member States for persons who have received a vaccine authorised by the European Medicines Agency. They should also be able to issue vaccination certificates to EU citizens and their family members who have been vaccinated with a vaccine that has received a WHO Emergency Use Listing.

No additional travel restrictions

Member States should not introduce and implement additional travel restrictions such as quarantine, self-isolation or a test for SARS-CoV-2 infection, or any discriminatory measures for holders of certificates, upon the introduction of the EU COVID-19 Certificate.

National digital certificates and interoperability with the trust framework

As far as Member States decide to require national digital certificates for other purposes than free movement at a national level, those should be interoperable with the EU COVID-19 Certificate and respect its safeguards as defined in this Regulation, in particular to ensure non-discrimination between different nationalities, non-discrimination between different certificates, high standards of data protection and to avoid fragmentation.

Protection of personal data

Certificates should be verified to prevent fraud or falsification, as should the authenticity of the electronic seals included in the document. Personal data contained in the certificate should not be stored in the Member States of destination and no central database should be set up at EU level.

The list of entities that will process and receive the data would be made public so that citizens can know the identity of the entity to whom they can turn to for the exercise of their data protection rights.

Duration of application

The Regulation should apply for 12 months from the date of its entry into force. Four months after the date of entry into force and at the latest three months before the end of its application, the Commission should report on its application.

Affordable vaccines allocated globally

Members also stressed that COVID-19 vaccines need to be produced at scale, priced affordably and allocated globally. They are also concerned about serious cases of non-compliance with production and delivery schedules.