

EU COVID-19 certificate must facilitate free movement without discrimination

- Universal, accessible, timely and free-of-charge testing needed across the EU
- EU COVID-19 certificates are not travel documents
- Member states should not impose quarantines/tests on certificate holders



The EU COVID-19 certificate will facilitate free movement across the EU © AdobeStock_Rido

On Thursday, Parliament adopted its negotiating position on the proposal for a certificate to reaffirm the right to free movement in Europe during the pandemic.

MEPs agreed that the new “EU COVID-19 certificate” - instead of Digital Green Certificate, as proposed by the Commission - should be in place for 12 months and not longer.

The document, which may be in digital or paper format, will attest that a person has been vaccinated against coronavirus or, alternatively, that they have a recent negative test result or have recovered from the infection. However, EU COVID-19 certificates will neither serve as travel document nor become a precondition to exercise the right to free movement, say MEPs.

The legislative proposal covering EU nationals was approved with 540 votes to 119 and 31 abstentions, while the one on third-country nationals passed with 540 votes to 80 and 70 abstentions. The vote took place on Wednesday, with results announced on Thursday morning. Both Parliament and Council are now ready to begin negotiations. The aim is to reach an agreement ahead of the summer tourist season.

No additional travel restrictions and free COVID-19 tests

Holders of an EU COVID-19 certificate should not be subject to additional travel restrictions, such as quarantine, self-isolation or testing, according to the Parliament. MEPs also stress that, in order to avoid discrimination against those not vaccinated and for economic reasons, EU countries should “ensure universal, accessible, timely and free of charge testing”.

Compatible with national initiatives

Parliament wants to ensure that the EU certificate works alongside any initiative set up by the member states, which should also respect the same common legal framework.

Member states must accept vaccination certificates issued in other member states for persons inoculated with a vaccine authorised for use in the EU by the European Medicines Agency (EMA) (currently Pfizer-BioNTech, Moderna, AstraZeneca and Janssen), MEPs say. It will be up to the member states to decide whether they also accept vaccination certificates issued in other member states for vaccines [listed by the World Health Organisation \(WHO\) for emergency use](#).

Data protection safeguards

The certificates will be verified to prevent fraud and forgery, as will the authenticity of the electronic seals included in the document. Personal data obtained from the certificates cannot

be stored in destination member states and there will be no central database established at EU level. The list of entities that will process and receive data will be public so that citizens can exercise their data protection rights under the General Data Protection Regulation.

Affordable vaccines allocated globally

Finally, MEPs underline that COVID-19 vaccines need to be produced at scale, priced affordably and allocated globally. They also voice concern about the serious problems caused by companies not complying with production and delivery schedules.

Quote

Following the vote in plenary, [Juan Fernando López Aguilar \(S&D, ES\)](#), Chair of the Civil Liberties Committee and rapporteur, said: “We need to put in place the EU COVID-19 Certificate to re-establish people’s confidence in Schengen while we continue to fight against the pandemic. Member states must coordinate their response in a safe manner and ensure the free movement of citizens within the EU. Vaccines and tests must be accessible and free for all citizens. Member states should not introduce further restrictions once the certificate is in force.”

Further information

[Adopted texts \(29.04.2021\)](#)

[Plenary debate \(28.04.2021\)](#)

[Procedure file \(EU citizens\)](#)

[Procedure file \(Third-country nationals\)](#)

[European Data Protection Board \(EDPB\) and the European Data Protection Supervisor \(EDPS\): Joint opinion on the Proposals for a Digital Green Certificate \(6.4.2021\)](#)

[EP Research Service: At a glance : Digital green certificate](#)

[EU COVID-19 certificate: extracts from the joint debate \(28.4.2021\)](#)

[European Commission: Agreement on technical specifications for the Digital Green Certificate \(22.4.2021\)](#)


[Webinar with lead MEPs ahead of the adoption of the mandate \(26.04.2021\)](#)

[Committee on Civil Liberties, Justice and Home Affairs](#)

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