



## EU Digital COVID Certificate: Commission adopts binding acceptance period of nine months for vaccination certificates

Brussels, 21 December 2021

Today, the Commission adopted rules relating to the EU Digital COVID Certificate, establishing a **binding acceptance period of 9 months (precisely 270 days)** of vaccination certificates for the purposes of intra-EU travel. A clear and uniform acceptance period for vaccination certificates will guarantee that travel measures continue to be coordinated, as called for by the European Council following its latest meeting of 16 December 2021. The new rules will ensure restrictions are based on the best available scientific evidence as well as objective criteria. Continued coordination is essential for the functioning of the Single Market and it will provide clarity for EU citizens in the exercise of their right to free movement.

The **EU Digital COVID Certificate** is a success story of the EU. The Certificate continues to facilitate safe travel for citizens across the European Union during these times of the pandemic. So far, **807 million certificates** were issued in the EU. The EU Digital COVID Certificate has set a global standard: by now 60 countries and territories across five continents have joined the system.

The new rules for intra-EU travel harmonise the different rules across Member States. This validity period takes into account the [guidance](#) of the European Centre for Disease Prevention and Control, according to which booster doses are recommended at the latest six months after the completion of the first vaccination cycle. The Certificate will remain valid for a grace period of an additional three months beyond those six months to ensure that national vaccination campaigns can adjust and citizens will have access to booster doses.

The new rules on the acceptance period of vaccination certificates apply for the purposes of travel. When introducing different rules to use the certificates at national level, Member States are encouraged to align them to these new rules to provide certainty for travellers and reduce disruptions.

In addition, today the Commission has also adapted the **rules for the encoding** of vaccination certificates. This is necessary to ensure that vaccination certificates showing completion of the primary series can always be distinguished from vaccination certificates issued following a booster dose.

Boosters will be recorded as follows:

- **3/3** for a booster dose following a primary 2-dose vaccination series.
- **2/1** for a booster dose following a single-dose vaccination or a one dose of a 2-dose vaccine administered to a recovered person.

### Members of the College said:

Stella **Kyriakides**, Commissioner for Health and Food Safety, said: "*A harmonised validity period for EU Digital COVID Certificate is a necessity for safe free movement and EU level coordination. The strength and success of this invaluable tool for citizens and business lies in its coherent use across the EU. What is needed now is to ensure that booster campaigns proceed as quickly as possible, that as many citizens are protected by an additional dose and that our certificates remain a key tool for travel and protection of public health.*"

Didier **Reynders**, Commissioner for Justice, said: "*The EU Digital COVID Certificate is a success story. We should keep it that way and adjust to changing circumstances and new knowledge. Unilateral measures in the Member States would bring us back to the fragmentation and uncertainties we have seen last spring. The acceptance period of nine months for vaccination certificates will give citizens and businesses the certainty they need when planning their travels with confidence. It's now up to the Member States to ensure boosters will be rolled out swiftly to protect our health and ensure safe travelling.*"

Commissioner for Internal Market, Thierry **Breton**, said: "*The EU Digital COVID certificate has*

*become a global standard. By reflecting the latest scientific insights on boosters, the certificate remains an essential tool to combat the different waves of the pandemic. Together with the large-scale production and supply of vaccines, the certificate will help Member States accelerate the roll-out of boosters – a necessity to protect public health, while preserving the free movement of our citizens.”*

## **Background**

To facilitate safe free movement during the COVID-19 pandemic, the European Parliament and the Council adopted, on 14 June 2021, the [Regulation on the EU Digital COVID Certificate](#). When this Regulation was adopted, reliable data about how long people would be protected after the primary series of a COVID-19 vaccine was not yet available. As a result, the data fields to be included in vaccination certificates do not include data concerning an acceptance period, unlike the data fields included in certificates of recovery. Up until now, it was, therefore, up to Member States to set rules on how long to accept vaccination certificates in the context of travel.

As COVID-19 vaccine booster doses are now being rolled out, recently more and more Member States have adopted rules as to how long vaccination certificates indicating the completion of the primary vaccination series should be accepted. These take into account that vaccine-induced protection from infection with COVID-19 appears to be waning over time. These rules either apply to domestic use-cases only or also to the use of vaccination certificates for the purpose of travel.

The Delegated Act is consistent with the approach adopted by the Commission in its proposal for a new [Council Recommendation on a coordinated approach to facilitate safe free movement during the COVID-19 pandemic](#), from 25 November 2021. Vaccination certificates will be accepted by Member States for a period of nine months since the administration of the last dose of the primary vaccination. For a single-dose vaccine, this means 270 days from the first and only shot. For a two-dose vaccine it means 270 days from the second shot, or, in line with the vaccination strategy of the Member State of vaccination, the first and only shot after having recovered from the virus. Under these new EU rules for intra-EU travel, Member States must accept any vaccination certificate that has been issued less than nine months since the administration of the last dose of the primary vaccination. Member States are not able to provide for a shorter nor for a longer acceptance period.

Member States should immediately take all necessary steps to ensure access to vaccination for those population groups whose previously issued vaccination certificates approach the limit of the standard acceptance period. As of yet, no standard acceptance period will apply to certificates issued following the administration of booster doses, given that sufficient data regarding the period of protection is not yet available.

The acceptance period will not be encoded in the certificate itself. Instead, the mobile applications used to verify the EU Digital COVID Certificates will be adjusted: If the date of vaccination is longer than 270 days ago, the mobile application used for verification will indicate the certificate as expired.

To allow for sufficient time for technical implementation of the acceptance period and for Member States' booster vaccination campaigns, these new rules should apply from 1 February 2022.

## **For More Information**

[Commission Delegated Regulation on the validity of vaccination certificates issued under the EU Digital COVID Certificate framework](#)

[Commission Decision amending Implementing Decision \(EU\) 2021/1073 laying down technical specifications and rules for the implementation of the trust framework for the EU Digital COVID Certificate](#)

[Factsheet on the new Commission proposal to ensure coordination on safe travel in the EU](#)

[Factsheet COVID-19: Travel and health measures in the EU](#)

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