Travel and tourism stakeholders' position on Digital Green Certificate Trilogues & Council Recommendation on travel coordination

In its latest Communication updating the New Industrial Strategy (05.05.2021), the European Commission recognised that tourism was "hardest hit" by the COVID-19 crisis and that mobility "would face a slower and more uneven recovery". It is time to support the travel and tourism ecosystem, which is vital for the broader restart of the European economy.

As travel and tourism associations, we welcome the proposal on a digital green certificate (DGC) to restore EU freedom of movement. We also see it as a useful tool to facilitate international mobility for leisure and other purposes, whilst containing the spread of COVID-19.

However, we believe that beyond ensuring that the certificate is genuine and valid, the systems in place should allow checks against the travel requirements at destination. This would facilitate the full digital integration of the certificates, therefore reducing the average time needed to check a passenger's documentation at the gate/terminal/station (currently up to 2 min in aviation). Failure to do so would result in significant capacity issues, compromising the efficient flow of passengers – at airports in particular – and potentially resulting in additional health safety risk. Providing this information would also help passengers navigate the requirements ahead of their journey.

In this context, the undersigned travel and tourism stakeholders are **urging the Council, Parliament and Commission to reach a swift agreement in trilogues** to ensure the adoption of the legislative framework before the end of June.
We support many of the amendments proposed by the Council and the European Parliament:

Parliament amendments:
- **Waiving of additional travel restrictions for DGC holders**: Member States should accept every type of certificate issued (vaccination, negative test or recovery) and should not impose any additional measures such as quarantine or further testing on travellers presenting a valid DGC of any type. Moreover, any need for verification of certificates established by this Regulation should not justify, as such, the temporary reintroduction of border controls at internal EU borders.
- **Affordable tests**: Member States should ensure universal, accessible, timely and free of charge access to COVID-19 testing possibilities and fully recognise antigen tests. All recognised tests should be made available in all transport hubs.
- **Standardised procedures for verification of the DGC**: The Commission should develop guidance for transport hubs (such as airports, ports, and railway and bus stations) with standardised, common criteria and procedures for DGC verification.
- **EU COVID-19 Certificate**: We welcome the new proposed name for the certificate, as it would clarify its function as well as the limited duration of these health credentials.

Council amendments:

- **Mutual acceptance of COVID-19 certificates / documentation issued by a third country**: Member States are strongly encouraged to accept valid vaccination certificates issued by other Member States covering vaccines authorised under the World Health Organization (WHO) emergency list.

As the epidemiological situation improves and vaccination rates pick up in all European countries, travel restrictions should be lifted between most areas that do not present a high risk in terms of COVID-19 infection rates or variants of concern. For this reason, the travel and tourism industry warmly welcomes the European Parliament's proposal to waive additional travel restrictions for certificate holders.

However, taking into account the Council position – and in view of reaching a quick compromise, **industry stakeholders would understand if the waiving of travel restrictions for DGC holders was not adopted as this stage, as long as this would be positively addressed in the Council Recommendations on coordination of travel restrictions.** Among others, the following elements should be considered:

- Member States should lift travel restrictions for vaccinated, recovered or negatively tested persons travelling within the EU as well as third-country persons travelling to the EU.
- Possible further restrictions such as quarantines should remain limited to travel from "dark red" areas (i.e. those with very high incidence or variants of concern).
- Member States should revise the thresholds for determining areas within the EU as orange / red / dark red upwards, considering that these criteria were established before the vaccination roll-out. High-risk groups are now increasingly protected.
- White List: Member States should revise the threshold of 14-day cumulative COVID-19 case notification rate from 25 to 100 to expand the list of countries from which non-essential travel is permitted to the EU, as per the proposal adopted by the Commission on 3 May.
- Member States should harmonise the age threshold for children under which testing requirements are waived. This would facilitate family travel to and within the EU by establishing clear rules.
- Member States should clarify travel requirements for transit passengers and ensure timely information to passengers.

The travel and tourism industry counts on a **strong commitment from the Member States to implement the Council Recommendation**, updated with the elements listed above. It is noteworthy that the European Council had committed back in December 2020 to strengthen this coordination, "in particular in preparing for a gradual lifting of restrictions and a return to normal travel, including for cross-border tourism, when the sanitary situation allows".

We stand ready to support Member States in implementing the EU COVID-19 Certificate and the Council Recommendation to restore freedom of movement. Time is of the essence.