

## Press Release



29 June 2021

### Fragmented EU Digital COVID Certificate verification will undermine smooth summer travel for EU passengers

- At least 10 different approaches among 27 member states under review ahead of 1 July Digital COVID Certificate (DCC) implementation deadline.
- Airlines and airports urge member states to develop online national portals to process and verify passengers' DCCs digitally, from home ('off airport').
- Duplicate checks and lack of verification tools provided to airlines will cause unnecessary airport queues and longer processing times if not addressed by member states.

Ahead of the 1 July deadline for Member States to implement the EU's Digital COVID Certificate (DCC) system – the crucial enabler for the restoration of freedom of movement within Europe – airlines and airports are warning of major operational risks due to the inconsistent approach by member states in applying the DCC across Europe. In a [letter](#) sent yesterday to EU heads of state, the industry urged leaders to harmonise DCC verification standards and protocols, to avoid unnecessary airport queues and ensure a smooth passenger experience.

While the European Commission has worked closely with industry and delivered in record time the adequate framework allowing for common and fully interoperable DCCs, no less than 10 different national approaches and solutions are currently under review across the EU. Combined with a lack of full and effective integration of the DCC in the passenger journey, as well as duplication of document checks (average check-in processing times, for example, have increased 500 per cent to twelve minutes per passenger<sup>1</sup>) – the current state of play threatens the success of this summer's air travel restart and will undermine free movement of citizens across the EU. These issues have just been flagged by the European Commission, which yesterday issued recommendations and guidance to EU states to address them.

In particular, verification of the DCC must take place well in advance of departure and ahead of passengers arriving at the airport ('off airport'), together with Passenger Locator Forms (PLFs) and without duplication of checks.

“With the peak summer travel season upon us, the EU thankfully now has a number of tools and measures available to enable and support the restarting of air connectivity, alongside travel and tourism. We need member states to urgently implement these tools in a harmonised and effective manner. We view these as essential prerequisites to travel, to avoid long passenger queues and waiting times which

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<sup>1</sup> Source: IATA.



would create new health hazards and inevitably result in operational issues for airports and airlines”, said the four associations in their joint letter to heads of state.

To ensure a smooth travel restart, airlines and airports continue to urge all member states to:

- Develop a state portal to facilitate DCC verification directly by national authorities and limit health data processing by airlines. This online verification – when done off-airport through the state portal – should result in a standard signal such as a QR code provided by the passenger to the airline to facilitate the issuance of the online boarding pass.
- Ensure that the state portal for DCC verification also integrates the verification of the PLF form, ideally using the EU Digital Passenger Locator Form ([dPLF](#)) allowing the seat number to be provided after check-in.
- Ensure that the remaining DCC verification taking place at airports for holders of paper DCCs can be conducted using one single verifier app.
- Refrain from requesting DCC verification on arrival, as it would “serve little medical purpose, and could lead to unnecessary queuing” – as recognised in the EASA–ECDC Aviation Health Safety Protocol.

European aviation remains one of the sectors hardest hit by the pandemic. According to the latest EUROCONTROL forecast, aviation is not expected to make a full recovery before 2024<sup>2</sup> at the earliest. Passenger traffic across the EU/EEA/Swiss airport network was still down by -77 per cent<sup>3</sup> in early June compared to pre-pandemic levels. Similarly, the recovery in air connectivity is proceeding at a slow pace, with over 5,600 air routes<sup>4</sup> lost this month compared to June 2019. On the other hand, the desire to travel is strong, with 61 per cent of Europeans surveyed wanting to travel between now and the next two months. In addition, passengers support digitalisation processes: 89 per cent want globally standardised COVID-19 test or vaccination certifications.<sup>5</sup>

\*\*\*ENDS\*\*\*

#### Media contacts:

**ERA:** Paula Bangle, paula.bangle@eraa.org, +44 1276 485558  
**A4E:** Jennifer Janzen, jennifer.janzen@a4e.eu, +32 499 828294  
**ACI EUROPE:** Paul O’Kane, paul.okane@daa.ie, +353 866 09022  
**IATA:** Corporate Communications, corpcomms@iata.org, +41 22 770 2967

#### Note to editor:

#### About A4E (Airlines for Europe)

Launched in 2016, Airlines for Europe (A4E) is Europe’s largest airline association, based in Brussels. The organisation advocates on behalf of its members to help shape EU aviation policy to the benefit of consumers, ensuring a continued safe and competitive air transport market. With more than 720 million passengers carried in 2019, A4E members account for more than 70 per cent of the continent’s journeys, operating more than 3,000 aircraft and generating more than EUR 130 billion in annual turnover.

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<sup>2</sup> Source: EUROCONTROL.

<sup>3</sup> Source: ACI EUROPE.

<sup>4</sup> Source: ACI EUROPE & OAG.

<sup>5</sup> Source: IATA/Rockland Dutton Passenger Survey.



Members with air cargo and mail activities transport more than 5 million tons of goods each year to more than 360 destinations either by freighters or passenger aircraft. Follow us on Twitter @A4Europe.

**About ACI EUROPE (Airports Council International)**

ACI EUROPE is ‘the Voice of Europe’s airports’, representing more than 500 airports in 46 countries. ACI EUROPE’s members account for over 90% of commercial air traffic in Europe, welcoming 2.4 billion passengers and handling 21.2 million tons of freight. ACI EUROPE’s member airports committed in 2019 to achieve Net Zero CO2 emissions for operations under their control by 2050.

**About European Regions Airline Association (ERA)**

Founded in 1980, European Regions Airline Association (ERA) is a non-profit trade association representing around 60 airlines and a 150 companies involved in European air transport and is the only association representing the entire spectrum of companies involved in European aviation. The association promotes the interests of European airlines by lobbying European regulatory bodies on policy matters, promoting the social and economic importance of air transport and its environmental commitments.

**About IATA (International Air Transport Association)**

The International Air Transport Association (IATA) is the trade association for the world’s airlines, representing some 290 airlines or 82% of total air traffic. We support many areas of aviation activity and help formulate industry policy on critical aviation issues.

