

European Union Digital COVID-19 Certificate

12 Jul 2021 | Pratham Arora, Risk Intelligence Consultant



I. WHAT IS THE EUDCC?

The EU Digital COVID Certificate, formerly known as the **Digital Green Certificate**, and commonly called the **Green Pass**, is a digital document that acts as proof for an individual's COVID-19 related status, facilitating free movement within the EU. As of 1 Jul 2021, it became available in all member states, as well as Iceland, Liechtenstein, and Norway. Furthermore, Switzerland, San Marino, and Vatican City are technically ready to connect to the system.

All EU citizens and their family members as well as non-EU nationals staying or residing in the Member States and who have the right to travel to other Member States, would be eligible to receive them free of charge. The certificate would contain only a minimum amount of information necessary and will be linked to a common portal for verification.

There are three types of certificates available:

VACCINATION	RECOVERY	TEST
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Includes vaccine product and manufacturer, number of doses, date of vaccination. • These certificates will be issued to individuals who have been inoculated with one or two doses of ANY COVID-19 vaccine. • "Fully Vaccinated" status depends on the specific course prescribed by each individual nation, such as 2 doses of different vaccines, an approved single dose vaccine, or a dose of vaccine after recovery from COVID-19. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Includes type of test, date and time of test, test centre and result. • Individuals may also be given an EUDCC after recovering from COVID-19. • Such a certificate can be issued, at the earliest, 11 days after a positive RT-PCR test result. • Individuals with such a certificate, until 180 days from their first positive test, shall not be required to quarantine. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Includes date of positive test result, issuer of certificate, date of issuance, validity date. • Individuals with a negative test result, unless coming from a highly affected area, may be exempted from quarantine requirements. • The tests can be as old as 72 hours for an RT-PCR test, and, where accepted, 48 hours for a Rapid Antigen test.

National authorities are in charge of issuing the [certificate](#). It could, for example, be issued by test centres or health authorities, or directly via an eHealth portal. The digital version can be stored on a mobile device. Citizens can also request a paper version. Both will have a QR code that contains essential information, as well as a digital signature to make sure the certificate is authentic. The member states have decided on a common design for uniformity, that looks as follows (note that the certificates for vaccination, recovery, and testing look largely the same apart from the bottom right column):

EU Digital COVID Certificate

Certificat numérique européen COVID



– Technical information –
Country 2-letter code in the flag



Member State Placeholder

– Technical information –
(information on issuing entity, national COVID-19
information etc. – no additional personal data).

This certificate is not a travel document. The scientific evidence on COVID-19 vaccination, testing and recovery continues to evolve, including with regard to new virus variants of concern. Before travelling, please check the applicable public health measures and related restrictions applicable at the point of destination.

Relevant information can be found here:
<https://reopen.europa.eu/en>



Surname(s) and forename(s)
Nom(s) de famille et prénom(s)
Name

Date of birth
Date de naissance
XXXXXX

Unique certificate identifier
Identifiant unique du certificat
XXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXX

Vaccination Certificate Certificat de vaccination

Disease or agent targeted: COVID-19
(SARS-CoV-2 or one of its variants);
Maladie ou agent ciblé: COVID-19
(SARS-CoV-2 ou l'un de ses variants);

COVID-19 vaccine or prophylaxis
Vaccin or prophylaxie contre la COVID-19

COVID-19 vaccine medicinal product
Médicament vaccinal contre la COVID-19

COVID-19 vaccine marketing authorisation holder or manufacturer
Fabricant ou titulaire de l'autorisation de mise sur le marché du vaccin contre la COVID-19

Number in a series of doses as well as the overall number of doses in the series
Nombre dans une série de vaccins/doses et nombre total de doses dans la série

Date of vaccination, indicating the date of the latest dose received
Date de la vaccination, indiquant la date de la dernière dose reçue

Member State in which the vaccine was administered
état membre dans lequel le vaccin a été administré

Certificate issuer
émetteur du certificat

II. DEBUNKING MISCONCEPTIONS REGARDING THE EUDCC

MISCONCEPTION 1 **An Individual Must Have A Green Pass To Travel To And Within The EU**

- This claim is categorically untrue. While having a Green Pass makes things much simpler for intra-EU travellers, it is not an absolute requirement, keeping in mind the principle of free movement within the EU.
- Furthermore, only individuals who are EU Citizens, family members, residents, or travellers with the Schengen Visa are eligible to receive an EUDCC.
- Many people from abroad wishing to travel to the EU may firstly, not be able to do so due to travel restrictions to the EU, and secondly, may not be eligible for an EUDCC if they don't meet the aforementioned requirements.

MISCONCEPTION 2 **Having A Green Pass Implies Complete Freedom From Any Travel Restrictions**

- It is important to understand that the EUDCC is not a document that empowers an individual to travel without restrictions, it is simply a verifiable document that proves one's COVID-19 related status. The restrictions depend solely on states, and the document reliably tells them whether the information furnished is true.
- Making the EUDCC a document that frees you from any requirements would not make sense especially because it is not a single document but three different types of documents, proving different things - vaccination, recovery, and testing.
- Even the kinds of leeways that have been granted are not absolute and there is a provision to bring back or tighten restrictions by informing the EU 48 hours in advance.

MISCONCEPTION 3 **If Vaccinated With Covishield/ Any Non EU-approved Vaccine, One Cannot Get A Green Pass**

- The EU has declared that the EUDCC has to be issued to an individual for **ANY** COVID-19 vaccine.
- The difference that EU approved vaccines make is that no country who has accepted the EUDCC system will subject a person who is fully vaccinated to quarantine requirements.
- For the other vaccines, freedom from such restrictions depends on the specific nation, based on which vaccines are exempted. For instance, Germany allows the similar leeway to people inoculated with COVISHIELD, as EU approved vaccines.

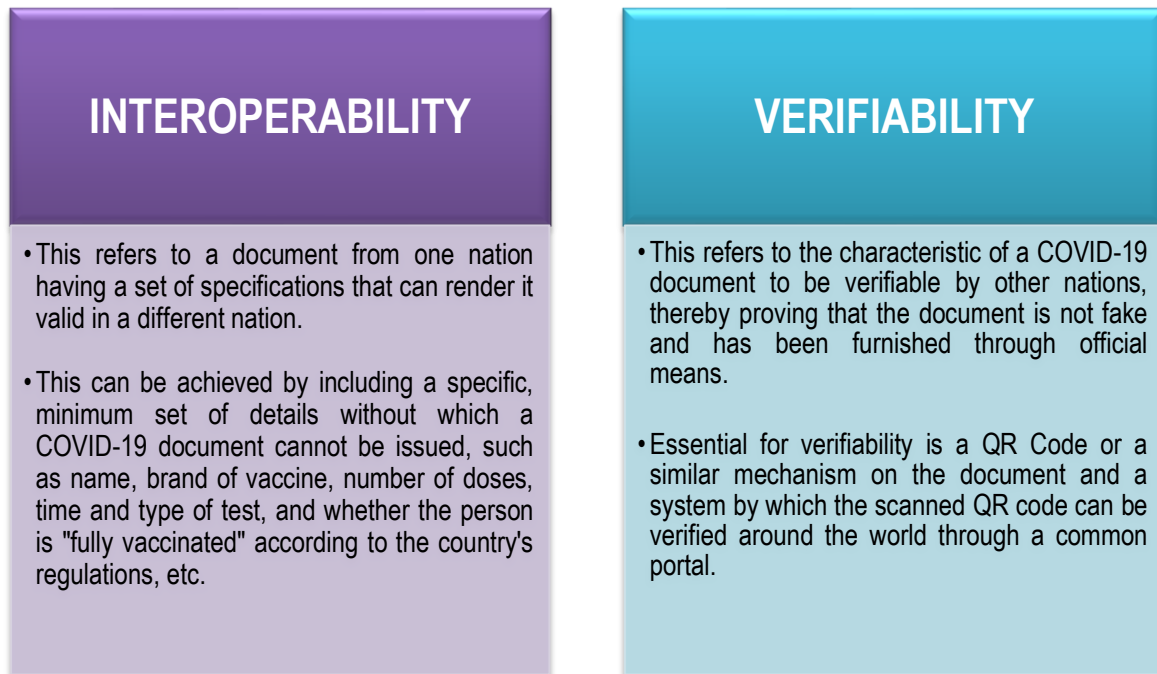
MISCONCEPTION 4 **Covishield Is Inferior To Vaxzevria (Oxford- AZ Vaccine)**

- COVISHIELD and Vaxzevria are the exact same vaccine. They are prepared in the same manner with similar protocols.
- The only reason COVISHIELD is not approved by the EU for sale is because Serum Institute did not apply for the approval, likely because demand for the vaccine was already fulfilled by the Vaxzevria variant.
- The need for separate applications despite the vaccines being the same is not exceptional. Even for its WHO approval, COVISHIELD had to be applied for separately. However, data from Vaxzevria's trials was accepted for COVISHIELD as well, further proving that it is considered to be the same shot, and the situation is a bureaucratic delay.

III. INTERNATIONAL TRAVEL IN THE “NEW NORMAL”

As more people get inoculated around the world especially in more developed nations, the prospect of non-essential international travel in a post COVID-19 world seems closer than ever. This, naturally, guides us to the question of whether a similar structure to the EUDCC can be developed at an international level.

While a uniform document such as the EUDCC is impossible to gain consensus on at this stage of the pandemic, a close alternative may be each nation’s COVID-19 certification document which can be interoperable and verifiable.



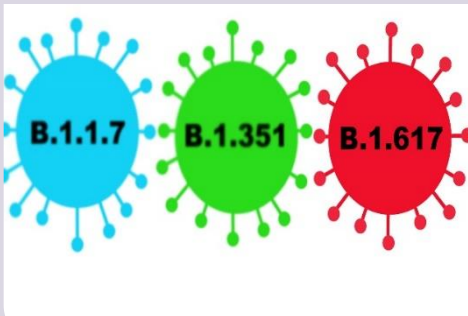
While such a system is difficult to form and maintain globally, making such a document mandatory may be unfair on countries that are worst hit by the pandemic and vaccine shortage. Bringing in such systems through bilateral or multilateral means between countries that are willing may ease up travel, while routine restrictions continue to be followed for other nations.

The EU is in talks with other nations such as USA and UK over mutual recognition of each other’s COVID-19 document systems, and it has already included certain non-EU countries in the EUDCC system. Once travel opens up, co-operation shall not be difficult considering these nations have similar vaccination rates and widespread COVID-19 vaccination programs.

India has demanded that the EU accepts its vaccination certificate, generated from the COWIN platform on par with the EUDCC, otherwise India would not recognize the EUDCC. The COWIN generated certificate is verifiable from the COWIN website itself.

IV. ASSESSMENT

Although the EUDCC and other verification mechanisms are a good step towards easing travel, the unpredictability of COVID-19 and the differing levels of success in handling the pandemic by different countries may lead to hiccups on the road to non-essential travel. **Two problems immediately stand out:**



VARIANTS AND SURGES

- Although restrictions may be eased momentarily, there is no way for nations to precisely tell when a surge may occur and its magnitude.
- This means that there may come a need to place fresh restrictions on travel to and from specific regions, bringing the situation back to square one.
- There is also a real risk of new variants coming up and becoming the dominant strain, given the prominence of the Delta variant right now. There is no way to tell the extent of disease these variants may cause.
- While the re-placing of restrictions during surges and new variants seems routine, it is inevitable that this will affect poorer nations disproportionately, since nations with less number of vaccines are the most susceptible to surges and variants.

NATIONAL DIFFERENCES

- Different vaccination regimes and COVID-19 rules followed by different nations may also cause certain hiccups.
- For instance, some nations prescribe only a single dose of a two-dose vaccine after infection. Furthermore, they treat ex patients as immune to COVID-19 for a certain number of days. These numbers and prescriptions may differ among various countries.
- There is also a difference in the type of vaccines used, and the number of shots these vaccines require. Some nations also allow mixing of vaccines, and even encourage that the second dose be of a different brand, others do not.
- This problem compounds with the ineffectiveness of vaccines and its non-approval in various nations.

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Pratham Arora is a Risk Intelligence Consultant at India Bound. He is currently an undergraduate at Ashoka University, studying Political Science, International Relations, and Philosophy. His primary area of interest includes Diplomacy, International Relations theory, and Conflict Analysis.



<https://indiabound.org>



risk.services@indiabound.org



+91-80- 43755220



+91-8105548770
+91-8722286269

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