

EU pushes hassle-free travel for vaccinated residents

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Fully vaccinated residents in the EU should be exempt from COVID-19 quarantine when travelling within the bloc, the European Commission urged on Monday in a sign of increased confidence in its jabs rollout.

The EU executive's update to its non-binding [travel](#) recommendations

was unveiled a week before EU legislation on a Digital EU COVID Certificate is expected to be passed with enforceable measures across member states.

"The last weeks have brought a continuous downward trend in infection numbers, showing the success of the vaccination campaigns across the EU," European Justice Commissioner Didier Reynders said.

That, along with a boost in affordable testing, means "member states are now slowly lifting COVID-19 restrictions both domestically and regarding travel," he said.

When it comes into force from July 1, the European Union wants the COVID certificate to be used to allow travellers within the bloc to avoid testing or quarantine requirements if they can show they are fully vaccinated, have recovered from a COVID-19 infection, or have a recent negative test.

A Commission website—called a "gateway"—allowing border officers and other officials to check the validity of the certificates will go live on Tuesday.

Getting a head start

Commission officials said they encouraged member states to start issuing and accepting the COVID certificates in June, so that all EU countries were using it by the end of the month, in time for the peak summer tourist season.

Countries expected to be ready to issue certificates on Tuesday included Bulgaria, Croatia, the Czech Republic, Greece, Denmark and Poland.

France, the most-visited country on the planet pre-pandemic, was

expected to be ready on June 9.

The Commission proposal urged member states to adopt many of the elements of the COVID certificate before it became law.

They included dropping entry restrictions on people able to show they had been fully inoculated with an EU-approved vaccine at least two weeks before travel, and adopting an "emergency brake" to swiftly restrict travel from regions with a COVID-19 variant of concern.

It also suggested member states should exempt children from quarantine, and those under six years of age from testing, to allow families to travel together.

Commission officials said that once the EU COVID certificate was operational it would pave the way to allowing in visitors from outside the bloc.

Member states can also make entry rules more flexible on their own territory, for instance by permitting half-vaccinated people in with no restrictions or those vaccinated with jabs authorised by the World Health Organisation but not the EU.

Currently, member states have collectively agreed a very restricted "white list" of low-risk countries whose residents can enter, including Australia, South Korea and Israel.

Discussions are under way with "many countries"—including the United States—to allow mutual recognition of the EU's [certificate](#) and their own vaccination proof to broaden travel internationally, an EU official said.

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