

COVID-19 DIGITAL HEALTH CERTIFICATES FOR CROSS-BORDER MOBILITY AND MIGRATION

As the world seeks to recover from the impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic, States will need to design and implement comprehensive COVID-19 risk mitigation strategies to facilitate cross-border mobility. These will need to combine a range of public health interventions to reduce transmission of the virus.

IOM recognizes that health certificates are one useful tool which can support the much-needed resumption of cross-border human mobility, including safe, orderly, and regular migration. Health certification should not be limited to vaccination, as this would exclude large unvaccinated populations, but rather cover a wider range of risk mitigation measures including vaccination, recovery and testing.

It is important that measures do not exacerbate discrimination, stigmatization, and inequality, infringe upon human rights and international refugee law, and they should take into consideration additional barriers to travel such as the cost and accessibility of vaccination, testing and certification.

Failure to facilitate regular travel in an accessible manner could push migrants and other groups into more dangerous, clandestine journeys, including through smugglers and traffickers, as well as expand the risk that fraudulent certification becomes more widespread. This both increases the dangers of travel for migrants, as well as undermine public health objectives.

IN DESIGNING TOOLS TO FACILITATE TRAVEL, INCLUDING THE DEVELOPMENT OF HEALTH CERTIFICATES, STATES SHOULD ENSURE THAT:

- Measures are evidence based, drawing on the most up-to-date scientific knowledge.
- No one is left behind, particularly more vulnerable migrant groups, who are not able to access new digital tools, vaccination and/or testing easily and effectively. Paper-based registration and certification as well as offline validation should be offered.
- Data privacy and protection is safeguarded, according to data minimisation principles.
- Certificates are as interoperable as possible, based on regional and international dialogue to facilitate mobility also in less developed states. There should be consideration of, and support for, less developed states to build certification systems, national and global trust frameworks and ensure a strong legal basis and authentication system to reduce fraud.
- Processes to obtain and use certification are 'migrant-friendly' including clear and accessible information in multiple languages.

IOM is actively involved in a number of key initiatives with UN partner agencies, including the WHO-led initiative on the “Digital Documentation on Covid-19 Certification (DDCC)” (formerly referred to as “Smart Vaccination Certificate”) and the relevant ICAO working groups; IOM co-leads the workstream on travel and trade within the COVID-19 UN Crisis Management Team alongside ICAO and IMO.

IOM is supporting states to develop national strategies to adapt to new health needs within their border management systems, including the creation of trust frameworks for digital health certificates, adaptation of data protection regulations, and facilitation of international dialogue to align to internationally recognised standards and good practice.

IOM stands ready to explore the use of its migration-relevant document verification services, as well as its visa application support programmes to provide options for prospective migrants and travellers to submit trusted required documentation.

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