



Council of the
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OUTCOME OF PROCEEDINGS

From: General Secretariat of the Council

On: 24 April 2023

To: Delegations

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Subject: Council conclusions on ECA SR No 1/2023: Tools facilitating travel within the EU during the COVID 19 pandemic
- Council conclusions (24 April 2023)

Delegations will find in annex the Council conclusions on ECA SR No 1/2023: Tools facilitating travel within the EU during the COVID 19 pandemic, as approved by the Council (Foreign Affairs) at its 3944th meeting held on 24 April 2023.

Council conclusions on Special Report No 01/2023 by the European Court of Auditors: Tools facilitating travel within the EU during the COVID-19 pandemic – Relevant initiatives with impact ranging from success to limited use

THE COUNCIL OF THE EUROPEAN UNION,

1. TAKES NOTE of the Special Report No 01/2023 of the European Court of Auditors (hereafter referred to as “the Court”), complementing the Special Report No 13/2022 of the Court: Free movement in the EU during the COVID-19 pandemic – Limited scrutiny of internal border controls, and uncoordinated actions by Member States, and the Commission’s reply to the findings of the Court.
2. STRESSES the unprecedented nature of the pandemic and the need to develop effective tools and especially IT solutions, to facilitate travel within the EU.
3. TAKES NOTES of the findings of the report, in particular that:
 - Despite its limited competence in public health policy, the Commission acted fast to propose suitable technological solutions to facilitate travel within the EU during the COVID-19 pandemic.
 - The Commission swiftly mobilised €71 million for the development of the tools to facilitate travel within the EU.
 - The Commission delivered the contact-tracing gateway and the EU Digital COVID Certificate in good time. The technical development of the EU Digital COVID Certificate was completed before the Member States had finished implementing their vaccination plans.
 - The Commission proposed an EU solution for passenger locator form only after several Member States had already developed their own tools.

4. WELCOMES the swift adoption of the EU Digital COVID Certificate Regulations and the rapid roll-out of the technological infrastructure. The EU Digital COVID Certificate has been effective in facilitating travel during the COVID-19 pandemic as it improved information sharing and coordination in relation to travel restrictions between Member States.
5. TAKES NOTES of the recommendations of the Court and INVITES the Commission, in particular, to:
 - Identify those EU tools created during the COVID-19 pandemic that have been most useful to citizens and Member States, and explore potential ways to make use of the technological infrastructures, in particular in the case of the EU Digital COVID Certificate, for other suitable purposes, while taking into account the competence of Member States for the issuance of identity and travel documents, and in accordance with appropriate legal base.
 - Make the EU tools used to facilitate cross-border contact tracing during public health crises easier for EU citizens to access, through synergies or simplification, in accordance with the principle of proportionality and by respecting national competences.
 - Analyse the need for any additional tools to address potential future crises, in close coordination with Member States, in particular in view of data protection requirements, in the appropriate fora. Any new legislative proposals should whenever possible be based on a prior impact assessment or at least preliminary consultations.