EUROPEAN COMMISSION

Ursula von der Leyen
The President

Brussels, **2 1 DEC. 2020**
Ares (2020) 7312406

Dear Honourable Members,

I would like to thank you for your letter of 3 December 2020 presenting a proposal for a validity mechanism for COVID-19 tests and vaccines through blockchain technology.

The COVID-19 pandemic has highlighted the importance of cooperation and the need for digital solutions in healthcare. Since the beginning of the crisis, the Commission has supported Member States through different platforms to foster the exchange of best practices and the use of common standards in the digital health area, including through the eHealth Network and the Health Security Committee. The eHealth Network has focused on the development of a common approach for safe and efficient digital contact tracing[1], including the rollout of an EU-wide interoperability gateway financed under the Emergency Support Instrument, as well as on the collection and exchange of best practices for COVID-19 coding in clinical datasets for re-use in research.

We are working closely with Member States to assess the data needs on vaccination at population level (it is key to monitor the coverage, efficacy and safety of vaccination) as well as at individual level (in order to be able to know and demonstrate one's vaccination status). This assessment aims at better understanding the data needs as well as the potential of existing solutions. In this effort, the Commission is closely collaborating with the European Centre for Disease Prevention and Control (ECDC) and the World Health Organization (WHO), which recently launched an open call for experts to contribute to the development of technical specifications and standards for Smart Vaccination Certificates.

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[1] https://ec.europa.eu/health/ehealth/covid-19_en

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We are also considering a package of support actions facilitating the interoperability between different solutions and possible financial support to develop and deploy such solutions.

The Commission believes in the potential of blockchain technologies to benefit the economy, industries and societies at large. Given their promise in terms of safety, data protection and efficiency, their use will be a strong candidate for the development of a digital technological infrastructure facilitating the exchange of COVID-19 tests and vaccinations. To ensure an overarching and unbiased approach, the Commission will support Member States to achieve an agreement on common standards, architecture and specifications for security, authentication, privacy, and data exchange.

Advancing the digital transformation of healthcare is a priority for the Commission. That is why we are working on a proposal for the creation of a common European Health Data Space[2] that will aim to achieve better healthcare, better research and innovation, and better policy-making.

I very much appreciate our dialogue on this very important topic and hope that this reply provides the requested clarifications.

Yours faithfully,

Ursula von der Leyen

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[2] *https://ec.europa.eu/commission/presscorner/detail/en/IP_20_2049*