

EN
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Answer given by Mr Várhelyi
on behalf of the European Commission
(10.3.2025)

1. The negotiations of the amendments to the International Health Regulations (2005) (hereafter 'IHR') were successfully concluded on 1 June 2024 and such amendments were adopted by the IHR States Parties at the 77th World Health Assembly with Resolution WHA 77.17¹. None of these amendments and none of the original provisions of the IHR affect the capacity of the Member States to define their health policy and the organisation and delivery of health services and medical care as enshrined in Article 168(7) of the Treaty on the Functioning of the EU. In addition, Article 3(4) of the IHR has not been modified as a result of the amendment process.

2. Digitalisation of documents contributes to digitalisation of healthcare systems and health certificates can be a valuable tool to facilitate travel and trade in case of health emergencies. While it is up to each IHR State Party to decide whether to use digital health certificates, the Commission supports their use. This is also consistent with the support provided by the EU to the World Health Organization (WHO) global digital health certification (GDHC) network. The GDHC network, in which Member States can voluntarily join, is based on the standards and specifications developed for the EU Digital COVID Certificate, including with the purpose to validate digital signatures against fraud.

3. The recommendations issued by the WHO on the basis of the amended IHR remain, by definition, not legally binding. Their objective is to guide IHR States Parties in preventing, preparing for and responding to public health threats. In line with Article 22 of Regulation (EU) 2022/2371², the Commission shall take WHO recommendations into account when adopting recommendations on common temporary public health measures.

¹ WHA77.17 - Strengthening preparedness for and response to public health emergencies through targeted amendments to the International Health Regulations (2005).

² Regulation (EU) 2022/2371 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 23 November 2022 on serious cross-border threats to health and repealing Decision No 1082/2013/EU, OJ L 314, 6.12.2022, p. 26-63.