



**Under embargo until**

1 December 2021

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## Mandatory vaccination, transparency, patents and EU Digital Covid Pass Euroconsumers unveils results of multi-country covid survey

**Brussels - 1 December 2021** – Amid rising covid infection rates and heated debates on mandatory vaccination and free travelling, Euroconsumers releases the results of a large survey on consumers' opinions and expectations on covid vaccines. With 33% of infected respondents experiencing long term covid symptoms and 30% of all respondents stating someone in their household needed to postpone important medical treatment because of the pandemic (up to 46 % in Italy), it clearly touches upon the hearts of consumers in Belgium, Italy, Portugal, and Spain.

### **2 in 3 favor of mandatory vaccination for adults**

A large majority of consumers are in favor of introducing mandatory vaccinations for at least one social category. This is especially the case when asked about health care workers (74%) or public office staff working in direct contact with the public (68%). But 2 out of 3 also support mandatory vaccination for all adults (64%).

However, there seems to be less of a consensus on making vaccination compulsory for minors: only 48% of respondents agreed to mandatory vaccination for 12 to 17 years old and 38% for minors below 12. Nevertheless, when asked whether they would be willing to vaccinate their child if the covid vaccine would be approved by children aged below 12, more than half (56%) said they would do so. In Spain this even goes up to 71%.

### **Time to waive those patents**

Interestingly 74% of respondents indicated to be concerned about the scarcity of vaccines and tests in developing countries. In light of the recent discovery and emerging spread of the Omicron variant, this finding is even more relevant. Euroconsumers [repeats its call upon EU and US leaders to finally waive patents on coronavirus vaccines](#). Because no one is safe until everybody is safe. Consumers are well aware of that.

*“Covid has already taken the lives of many and left indelible traces in the existence of others”, says **Director Public Affairs at Euroconsumers Marco Pierani**. “Our strength lies in science and in acting in the most coordinated way possible, safeguarding the interests of all. That’s why we need to keep on vaccinating in and outside Europe”.*

### **Need for more transparency**

Given the above consumer focus on vaccination, it is worrisome that overall consumers seem to have a rather poor perception of the EU’s performance when handling the covid-19 vaccination purchases. While only 26% of consumers believe that the purchasing process of covid-19 vaccines was well handled by the EU, still 34% believe that the EU achieved a better deal with pharmaceutical companies than what their national country could have achieved on its own (versus 20% who disagree). However, 1 out of 4 believes the EU prioritised pharmaceutical companies’ interests over those of European citizens.

It is again clear more transparency is needed as it is absolutely crucial to ensure consumer and citizen trust. In the survey 51% of respondents stated that the negotiations between the EU and the pharmaceutical companies should have been more transparent, something [Euroconsumers has since long been calling for](#).

### **Keep the EU digital covid certificate easy and effective**

On the upside, half of respondents agree the EU Covid Certificate is an efficient measure to move freely within the EU. However a third immediately states that the different national rules (such as number of vaccinations, age limit, etc.) complicated the use of it. Surprisingly 18% of respondents indicated it happened at least once that they were not asked for their certificate when crossing an EU border.

[Euroconsumers has long asked](#) the European Commission and Member States to coordinate the implementation of the EU Digital Covid Certificate. In light of some recent unilateral decisions and [the European Commission proposal for a Council recommendation on updated travel rules](#), Euroconsumers reiterates its call to ensure a united front.

*“We need to safeguard the EU Digital Covid Certificate as an easy and efficient tool allowing consumers to move freely and safely across Europe”, says **Els Bruggeman, Head of Policy and Enforcement at Euroconsumers**, “If anything it should be applied more rigidly”.*

### **Need to ensure good and trustworthy information remains high**

On a more general note. Although consumers seem to be rather well informed about the basics of the coronavirus (i.e. how it is spread, how to prevent contamination, how it affects elderly people, etc.), it is still worrisome 40% believe it to be only as deadly as the common flu. However, more striking is that 1 in 4 believe *“the coronavirus was released by the Chinese government to destroy Western economies”* or 1 in 4 believe *“it was created in a lab so the pharmaceutical industry can sell vaccines”*. It shows that despite all efforts, it remains essential to keep on ensuring good and trustworthy information.

While 2/3 of respondents still use TV or radio, followed by 35% consulting government or health care websites, 24% turn to social networks and 20% to websites, blogs or forums. Knowing that in Belgium, Italy and Portugal, respondents who use the latter to get information about the pandemic are more inclined to believe in the above statements, it's clear where the challenge lies.

### **Note on Methodology**

An online questionnaire was elaborated in English and then translated and adapted to the national contexts. A representative sample of adults (18-74 years old) of about 1.000 individuals were surveyed in each of Euroconsumers' European countries: Belgium, Italy, Portugal and Spain. A weighting procedure was applied to bring survey data in line with the target population, for gender, age, geographical area and educational level. The survey was carried out between 8 and 15 November 2021 in Italy, Belgium and Spain and between 8 and 19 November 2021 in Portugal.

### **About Euroconsumers**

Gathering five national consumer organisations and giving voice to a total of more than 1.5 million people, Euroconsumers is the world's leading consumer cluster in innovative information, personalised services and defence of consumer's rights. We work closely together with Consumers International to ensure consumers are safe, that markets are fair and benefit from honest relations with businesses and authorities. Our European member groups are also part of the umbrella network of BEUC, the European Consumer Organisation. Together we advocate for EU policies that benefit consumers in their daily lives.

