

SAMARITAN INTERNATIONAL e.V. – Sülzburgstr. 140 – D-50937 Köln

President of the European Commission Ursula von der Leyen
European Commission
Rue de la Loi 200
1049 Bruxelles

Belgium

In advance via e-Mail (ec-president-vdl@ec.europa.eu)

29 January 2021

„Transnational cooperation needs living networks, open borders, and safe ways to travel.“

Dear President von der Leyen,

as a network of 20 European civil protection, aid, and welfare organisations in 19 European countries, SAMARITAN INTERNATIONAL fosters exchange between them. We help them to learn from each other and mutually support each other and we enable a common European identity and sense of purpose among these important civil society actors that represent a total individual membership of almost 3 million people. Part of our activities are co-funded by the EU. The coronavirus crisis and the understandable restrictions on travel to protect public health have posed major challenges for this important work.

Our members organisations and their almost 150.000 volunteers have been on the front lines of the crisis in their respective countries for the past months. They have taken care of persons from high-risk groups, safely transported infectious patients, and operated a variety of small but irreplaceable voluntary efforts that enabled people to better cope with the circumstances, such as grocery shopping services for quarantined persons. Now, many of them are active in implementing the national vaccination strategies, as they manage or work in vaccination centres.

With the vaccination campaigns underway, we look to re-enabling our cross-border collaboration, to prepare for future challenges and to continue maintaining and building our European community of civil society organisations.

This is why we unequivocally support efforts to conduct and expedite the vaccination campaigns and also any measures that aim at normalising free movement of individuals within the European Union. This explicitly includes that any restrictions of the right to free movement must no longer apply to individuals who can prove that they have been vaccinated. In accordance with many priority schemes used in EU member states, this would enable personnel from essential services and NGOs providing such services to quickly re-establish the vital exchange with their European colleagues to the full extend, supporting them in handling this crisis, jointly exchange knowledge, and to learn and grow together. This contributes to a goal all our member organisations share – to keep improving their services, thereby providing increasingly better help and care to people in need of it.

In this context, we welcome your efforts taken towards European recognition of a vaccination certificate, as an option to enable safe and free movement for as many people as possible at the soonest possible time.

We remain at your disposal to share our first-hand experience and expertise from the various national vaccination campaigns that our member organisations are involved in. Please do not hesitate to contact us.

A letter with the same wording has also been sent to the President of the European Council Charles Michel and the members of the ENVI committee of the European Parliament.

Best regards,



Knut Fleckenstein
President



Dr. Ivo Bonamico
Secretary General

Our members:



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