



## DRJUG memorandum on mutual recognition of COVID-19 tests and vaccine certificates

We at DRJUG strongly support the freedom of movement and acknowledge it as one of the fundamental rights for a successful collaboration and a common prosperity. Since its creation ten years ago DRJUG e.V. has always been a platform for interaction: Hundreds of young leaders from Germany, Russia, and their neighboring countries were invited to our events to share their visions, experience, and perspectives. DRJUG became a leading German-Russian youth NGO because we always listen to young people, openly and transparently build a dialogue without any bias. We also see our mission to be the change advocates to facilitate free exchange and reduce the formal obstacles. For many years we have been promoting the liberalization of the visa requirements for youth from Germany and Russia (our “*Visa Memorandum*”) which was ultimately supported by various institutions and leaders. Yet, for two 2 years humanity faces a new challenge, and today we see that the COVID-19 pandemic partially becomes more of a political and juridical topic rather than a sole healthcare conversation. With a full understanding and respect towards health and safety, we should admit that nowadays citizens of our countries have started to encounter certain cross-border bureaucratic limitations which are related to the deficiencies of a mutual alignment and which are solvable via political will. Globally we all dream to come back to normal as soon as possible but it requires a common and streamlined solution and a strategical approach.

The resilience and determination we continue to see throughout the COVID-19 pandemic is inspiring. During these times we are proud to continue our dedication to improve the German-Russian relations. We discovered that together and with certain commitment and hard work we can make things happen despite the roadblocks. We learned a lot in 2020, and we applied that learnings to make 2021 a successful year regardless the setbacks. Like many organizations DRJUG also changed its processes and opened its initiatives for an online participation. However, although online has become our new reality, it cannot replace a personal interaction and can barely compete with a face-to-face networking. Yet, despite a big progress made with re-opening our borders we witness how many young people of the two countries still struggle with discrepancies and differences in acknowledgement of the COVID tests and vaccination certificates. For studies, jobs, and professional trips for Germans in Russia and Russians in Germany we face bureaucratic hurdles. Making multiple shots of different vaccines to obtain various certificates, or having repetitive tests for fully vaccinated people only because their certificate is not recognized - these are just a couple of real-life examples. The current misalignment creates more obstacles rather than efforts to bring our societies to the former level of cooperation.

Today, being the voice of youth and with a full respect, total understanding und support of the medical, security, and governmental requirements and restrictions related to the COVID pandemic, we encourage the governments of our countries – Germany and Russia – to eliminate the political and bureaucratic obstacles. We urge to align and harmonize the procedures of COVID-19 tests and accelerate mutual acknowledgement of the vaccine certificates. We are convinced that a unification in formal procedures will only benefit both countries, enforce our partnership and interaction. We believe that with a strong will of our country leaders supported by the civil society we will be able to overcome the pandemic and get closer to the desired safe and open future full of new common achievements.