What is the difference between certificate, approval, and test report?

The following information is general advice that is intended for information purposes only and is not directed at specific institutions or bodies. In particular, it does not constitute legal advice.

- A certificate is a confirmation by an independent body that products, processes, systems, or persons meet specified requirements (e.g., standards) and is the result of a certification process, which is based on a certification scheme. The requirements described in the certification scheme can result from laws or regulations, from EU directives, but also from standards and certification requirements specially developed by the certification body (voluntary certification).
  The certificate also specifies the conditions (certification conditions) under which the certificate is valid. The certification conditions are set out in the respective certification schemes.
  The general liability of the manufacturer (in particular under the Product Liability Act) remains unaffected.
  (Applicable standards - all also in DIN version: EN ISO/IEC 17065 for product certifications; EN ISO/IEC 17050-1 for the supplier's declaration of conformity)

- A test report is not a certificate. In contrast to a certificate, a test report only contains a test result for single, i.e., individual test samples. Here, in contrast to the certificate, the customer alone decides what is to be tested and how, and, if necessary, also specifies requirements, the fulfillment of which is to be verified by the test for the individual test samples. These requirements can be described in standards, standard sections, but also in other technical specifications. Only the test results obtained by testing the individual test samples are recorded in the test report.
  (Applicable standards - all also in DIN version: EN ISO/IEC 17025 for testing; EN ISO/IEC 17050-1 for suppliers' declaration of conformity).

- In administrative law, approval is an administrative decision, by which an authority permits to put a product or a service on the market. Similar to a certificate, approval is only granted if certain requirements are fulfilled and verified (conformity). The difference to a certificate is that these requirements immediately result from law and the approval can only be granted by an authority as a result of their official responsibilities.