

Skift.



Destinations

Europe Gears Up for Sweeping Digital Health Passport Coordination to Spur Travel

James Mackenzie, Reuters- Mar 05, 2021 12:30 pm

SKIFT TAKE

After a year of impasse on unified Covid protocols and corridor agreements, European Union members are close to a consensus in implementing a green vaccination passport in an effort to save the summer vacation season.

— *Lebawit Lily Girma*

EU governments must immediately begin technical work to ensure a COVID-19 vaccination certificate system can be introduced across the 27-member bloc in time for summer, European Commission President Ursula von der Leyen said on Friday.

The EU executive aims to present its plans for a “digital green pass” on March 17 and to cooperate with international organisations to ensure that its system also works beyond the European Union.

A system to provide travellers with “vaccination passports” is eagerly awaited by airlines and tourism destinations that have been hammered by the pandemic and want to stage a rebound in the peak summer season.

Such passports, pushed by tourism-reliant southern states like Greece and Spain, would provide proof that a person has been vaccinated, test results for those not yet vaccinated and information on recovery for people who have contracted COVID-19.

“The foundation of such a common approach is trust,” von der Leyen wrote in a letter to EU governments, adding that member states had to start work immediately to ensure systems were ready in time.

As well as a legal framework, the system requires a common technical infrastructure to ensure that authorities in one member state could be sure that certificates issued by another state were reliable, she said.

The Commission is working with member states on a digital infrastructure to allow the certificates to be authenticated and this work could be completed within three months, von der Leyen wrote.

“An EU system can only work if the national systems are in place on time,” she added.

Sweden said on Friday that it aimed to have its system up and running by summer and that it would be available on smartphones, digital wallets as well as on paper. It will be based on electronic ID, a system most Swedes already have, and use an encryption key so certificates can be verified at border crossings.

(Reporting by James Mackenzie; Additional reporting by Johan Ahlander in Stockholm; Editing by Pravin Char)

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Photo Credit: EU member countries are getting closer to a decision on implementing a green vaccination passport in time for summer travel. John Walker / Getting Images