

Global Immigration alert

October 2024

European Union

European Commission proposes new digitization initiatives, including a Digital Travel application

Executive summary

On 8 October 2024, the European Commission proposed two digitization initiatives, including a new EU Digital Travel app, to simplify and secure travel to and from the Schengen Area. If adopted, these changes will benefit both EU citizens and non-EU citizens.

Background

Currently, EU and non-EU citizens undergo systematic physical checks at the EU's external borders when traveling to or from the Schengen Area (which encompasses all EU Member States except Ireland and Cyprus). Almost 600 million EU border crossings were recorded in 2023 alone. Digitization initiatives are intended to speed up border controls while maintaining a high level of security.

Key developments

The European Commission has proposed the following:

- ▶ **Digital travel credentials:** EU and non-EU citizens will be able to obtain digital travel credentials (i.e., a digital version of the data stored on their passports and identity cards). These credentials will include facial photographs, but not fingerprints. Individuals will be able to obtain these on a voluntary basis and at no cost. They will be able to submit these credentials to the border authorities prior to travel.
- ▶ **EU Digital Travel application:** The Commission will develop an EU Digital Travel app to be deployed at the EU level. The app will be available to all EU and non-EU citizens who hold biometric passports or EU identity cards. Individuals will be able to use this app to create and store digital travel

credentials and submit travel plans and documents to the border authorities prior to their travel. Member States will be required to provide border authorities comprehensive training on data security and data protection rules before authorizing them to access the data collected via the Digital Travel app. The app is expected to be operational by 2030.

These proposals are part of the broader Schengen strategy and align with the EU's goal to fully digitize public services by 2030 under the Digital Europe and Digital Compass programs. They are aimed at strengthening and enhancing document authentication processes, making it harder for individuals to use fake documents or cross the EU's borders undetected. The authorities plan to implement these changes alongside the upcoming [Entry/Exit System \(EES\)](#) and European Travel Information and Authorization System (ETIAS).

These proposals are pending approval by the European Council and European Parliament. Once adopted, the Commission, in collaboration with [eu-LISA](#), will develop the necessary technical standards for the application's deployment.

Impact on employers

If adopted, these proposals will enable faster border crossings for eligible individuals, enhance freedom of movement within the EU (as EU citizens may be able to use their digital credentials for various registration processes, such as when relocating to another EU Member State) and enhance internal security.

Key steps

EY will continue to monitor these developments. Should you have any questions, we encourage you to contact one of our immigration professionals.

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