

VACCINATION PASSPORT CONTINUES TO DIVIDE EUROPE



The vaccination passport continues to be the subject of a debate in the EU. Submitted in January by Greece, the idea of such a "vaccination certificate" aims above all to save tourism in Europe. But within the European Union, views on the issue diverge.

While no agreement has been reached so far, discussions are ongoing among the EU-27 on the standards to be put in place for mutual recognition of these documents. Admittedly, there is a considerable issue of discrimination to take into account. Complicated, practically illegal to make it mandatory, but by some, the vaccination passport is viewed as an option to reassure tourists and insiders.

For the President of the European Commission Ursula von der Leyen, the introduction of such a vaccination passport is "a medical imperative". This view is shared by **Sweden** and **Denmark**. The two countries have thus announced the introduction of electronic certificates for travelling abroad, which could be used to access sporting or cultural events, or even restaurants in the Danish case.

*** facebook video ***

An Option for a Return to Normality?

In **Estonia**, passengers are exempted from quarantine on arrival if they can show a proof of vaccination, PCR or serological test. **Iceland**, which is not part of the EU but belongs to the Schengen area, also started at the end of January to issue these digital documents that are supposed to facilitate the movement between countries.

While northern European countries are already ahead of the game, those further south are not ruling out the idea. Although **Spain** has not yet launched any vaccination passport, the authorities are indeed in favor of it. "Spain bets on the vaccination certificate and will work so that this contributes to the recovery of mobility," explained official spokesman of the Industry, Commerce and Tourism ministry.

The same goes for **Italy**, where in mid-January the government's high commissioner in charge of managing the health crisis, Domenico Arcuri, stated that the passport was "not a bad idea" to "allow a return to normal activity as soon as possible".

For other EU countries, it is still too early to implement such a document. In **France**, the government seems to be reluctant to this idea at this stage: "Not everyone has access to the vaccine yet", said Health Minister Olivier Véran in January, who believes the debate could take place "in a few months".

In **Germany**, the authorities also oppose a lifting of restrictions for the vaccinated population alone. But they do not exclude this possibility in the private sector. In **Belgium**, taking part in certain activities only with the possession of a vaccination passport is also out of question. As for travelling,

the country is awaiting the outcome of discussions at the European level and at the WHO.

Caution against the Vaccination Passport

In **Poland**, the government does not currently plan such a passport but has launched an application for smartphones, "Vaccinated", which allows its holder to avoid quarantine upon entry into the country.

Some EU members, such as for example **Luxembourg**, firmly oppose the certificate idea which would have an impact on the rights of a person. A position which is based in particular on the fact that there is, for the time being, no proof that vaccination prevents the transmission of the virus. Not to mention the lack of evidence on the duration of immunity gained through the vaccines.

These are the arguments also used by the World Health Organization (WHO). **While the organization nevertheless supports the principle of vaccination certificates to monitor campaigns in countries, it is critical** - at least "for the time being" - of the introduction of vaccination passports as a prerequisite for travelling.

The idea of making access to certain countries, or certain places, conditional on the completion of a vaccine is, however, not specific to the Covid. In many countries, yellow fever vaccine is mandatory for entry, either for all travelers (such as in French Guiana) or only for those coming from African and South American countries where the disease is endemic.

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