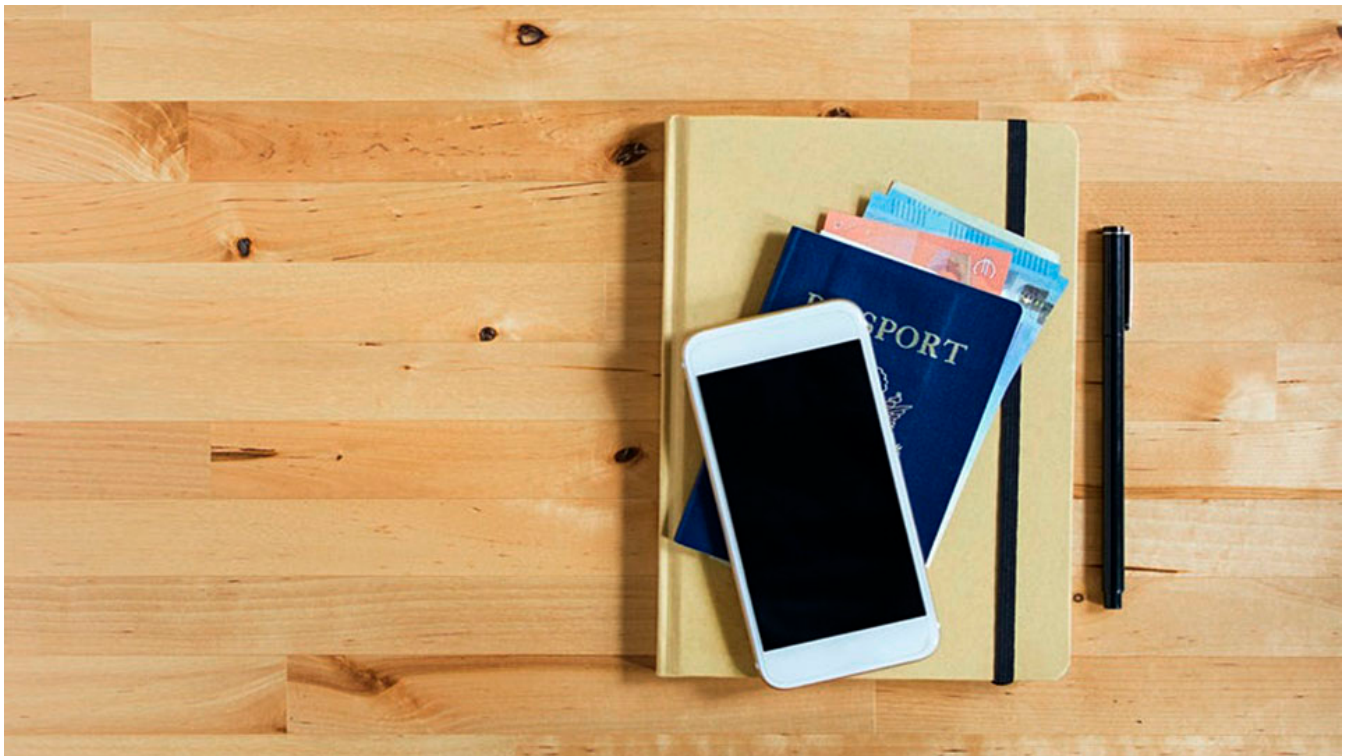


EU to launch Covid-19 passport in July

- A Monitor Desk Report

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Brussels: The council of the European Union has given its unanimous support to a digital Covid-19 certificate.

The aim of the new tool is to facilitate safe and free movement during the Covid-19 pandemic by providing proof that a person has either been vaccinated against the virus, has received a negative test result, or recovered from Covid-19.

The certificate, which will be in use by July 1st, will be available in digital and paper format, contain a QR code, and be issued free of charge.

It is not a precondition for exercising free movement rights and it is not a travel document, officials added.

António Costa, prime minister of Portugal, said: "The certificate is an important step towards a more normal, freer and safer life during the pandemic.

"It will facilitate the free movement of all Europeans, starting this summer."

The legal framework for the certificate consists of two legislative proposals that were tabled by the European Commission in March.

The first proposal concerns EU citizens and their family members and the second concerns third-country nationals staying or residing legally in the Schengen area.

Under the proposals, it will be possible to use the certificate across all EU member states, as well as in Iceland, Liechtenstein, Norway, and Switzerland.

The certificate will also be open to initiatives being developed globally.

Virginia Messina, senior vice president at the World Travel & Tourism Council (WTTC), welcomes the news.

She said: “WTTC welcomes the agreement reached on the EU Digital Covid-19 Certificate, which has now been given the green light by all member states.

“This new certificate could be the key to unlocking international travel and save thousands of businesses and millions of jobs across Europe and beyond.

“It will see all 27 member states welcoming vaccinated travelers and those with proof of a negative test or a positive antibody test in time for the peak summer season, which will provide a massive and much-needed boost to economies.”

She added: “We call on all member states to have the certificate up and running by July 1st with no extra restrictions.

“The European Commission must be applauded for its incredible efforts in launching this major initiative, which could be the driving force behind the resurrection of tourism.

“For more than a year, the tourism sector has suffered like never before, with 62 million people around the world losing their jobs.

“But this initiative will aid the restoration of safe international travel.”