European Commission

EUROPEAN PILLAR OF SOCIAL RIGHTS

#SocialRights

TOWARDS A EUROPEAN SOCIAL SECURITY NUMBER

The EU protects the social security rights of people who move within the European Union, Iceland, Liechtenstein, Norway and Switzerland for personal or professional reasons, during temporary stays but also for indefinite periods. EU rules guarantee that persons are covered by a social security scheme when moving to another Member State.

LABOUR MOBILITY ON THE RISE: FACTS & FIGURES

Every year, **HUNDREDS OF MILLIONS of people** travel across Europe for family, tourism or business reasons.

+200 MILLION

EU citizens carry the European Health Insurance Card (EHIC).

Every year, the card is **used more than 1.5 million times** to receive medical treatment abroad.

16 MILLION

EU citizens live and/or work in another Member State.

That is **twice as many as 10 years ago**.

2.3 MILLION

EU workers were sent to work in another Member State by their employer in 2016.

This number **increased by 68%** between 2010 and 2016.

1.4 MILLION

EU citizens live in one Member State but work in another.

This is an **increase of 16,7%** from 2014 to 2016.

WHAT THE COMMISSION PROPOSES

Mobile people, whether they are tourists, students, workers or pensioners, still face many administrative formalities and mostly need paper documents to prove that they are covered by social security at home. The procedures to verify coverage across countries are cumbersome. Moreover, paper documents can become quickly outdated and are prone to fraud and error.

Given the increased labour mobility, it is time for all administrations and health providers to enter into the digital era. This is why the Commission proposes to introduce a digital **European Social Security Number** (ESSN). It would be a **unique and digital identifier** that would allow **identification** of a person for social security purposes and real-time **verification of his or her social security coverage** in cross-border situations. The number would also **facilitate the portability and transferability of social security rights**, by simplifying administrative procedures of persons who have an insurance history across several countries. More specifically, the European Social Security Number will make it easier to calculate old-age pension or unemployment benefits of persons who have worked in several EU countries and contributed to several social security schemes.

Maria is on holiday in another EU country. She has an accident and needs medical care. Currently, with a European Health Insurance Card (EHIC), she is entitled to get the necessary public healthcare abroad on the same conditions as a national of that country. However, even with a Health Insurance Card, the healthcare provider cannot verify in real time whether Maria is indeed insured in her country of origin. If the healthcare provider cannot check Maria's social security status, he may refuse to recognize the EHIC as proof of her being covered. Maria may have to pay the healthcare costs upfront and only be reimbursed after an often lengthy procedure. **Thanks to the European Social Security Number, the healthcare provider will be able to verify in real time whether Maria is indeed insured in her country which will make the procedure more efficient and accurate than the current EHIC**.

Thomas works in France. His company sends him to Germany to carry out work there for 3 months. He has a paper form that proves that he is insured in France (Portable Document A1). If the German authorities want to verify Thomas' social security status, they have to communicate with French authorities through long and complex procedures. Paper forms are also prone to errors, and the risk of forgery is higher. **Thanks to the European Social Security Number, national authorities will be able to verify easily and in real time that Thomas is indeed covered in France and that his social security contributions are paid there**.

THE BENEFITS OF A EUROPEAN SOCIAL SECURITY NUMBER

The European Social Security Number would help millions of tourists and persons who live and work in another EU country to easily prove their social security coverage and get quicker and easier access to the benefits they are entitled to. The European Social Security Number will facilitate the portability of rights across borders, and also reduce risks of errors and fraud. It will ensure the protection of personal data.

For **citizens**: the European Social Security Number would simplify the interaction with health care providers such as doctors and hospitals and with national administrations in cross-border situations. Their social security status could be checked more quickly. People would have swifter access to the social security benefits and services they are entitled to, for example when receiving medical treatment when staying abroad.

National administrations, such as labour inspectorates, and **healthcare providers** would be able to verify in real-time a person's social security coverage. This would avoid further verifications with other institutions, hence saving time and money and would reduce errors such as overpayments and prevent fraud.

Businesses would benefit from simpler administrative procedures, making the opportunities to do business abroad more attractive. The European Social Security Number would contribute to a better functioning EU Single Market by lifting obstacles to mobility and facilitate the freedom to provide services or recruit workers across borders.

Overall, the European Social Security Number would support the Digital Single Market Strategy's objective to make the Single Market fit for the digital age and assist Member States in the modernisation and digital transformation of their public administrations.

NEXT STEPS

Based upon this first outline of a European Social Security Number and further exchanges with Member States and stakeholders, the Commission will come forward with an initiative for the creation of a European Social Security Number, in partnership with the Member States.