

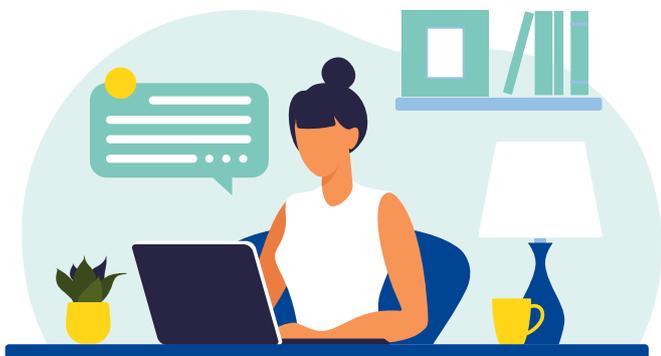


## The European Social Security Pass

# ESSPASS

*exploring a new digital tool to  
help mobile citizens exercise their  
social security rights.*





Joanna, a Polish citizen, is sent by her employer to work temporarily in Germany for six months. In Germany, the German labour inspector asks her for a document known as a PDA1. This Portable Document is proof that Joanna's social security contributions are being paid in Poland. Joanna realises she has lost the document and she cannot provide it to the labour inspector. This sets in motion an administrative process between Poland and Germany to verify Joanna's social security coverage.



Mateo, a Spanish citizen, decides to spend his holiday skiing in Austria. Although Mateo is an experienced skier, on the second day of his trip he falls and severely injures his leg. On arrival at hospital, Mateo is immediately asked for his European Health Insurance Card (EHIC). This is a free card which gives him access to unplanned medically necessary, state-provided healthcare during his temporary stay in Austria. In other words, he will be treated like any other person insured in Austria. However, Mateo forgot to bring the card with him. In order to get a provisional certificate, the Austrian healthcare institution must contact his local health authority. If there is a delay, the hospital is likely to ask Mateo to pay the cost of his treatment in full or to pay part of the cost upfront until this can be sorted out.

These are some real-life examples of social security coordination issues that a European citizen can be faced with when moving from one EU country to another. At the moment, proving your rights and sorting such problems out in most cases involves exchanging paper documents, or queuing in an office. Initiatives have been launched to remove these obstacles using digital technology. An EU pilot project is testing the idea of a **European Social Security Pass (ESSPASS)**. This would make it easier to prove your coverage and entitlements when you are in another EU country, and at the same time help reduce fraud and mistakes.

**DID YOU KNOW THAT IN 2020...**

- more than 3.7 million portable documents providing evidence of social security affiliation (PDA1) were issued?
- almost 240 million European Health Insurance Cards (EHIC) were in circulation?

The ESSPASS initiative would contribute to the EU **'Single Digital Gateway'**, which requires that by the end of 2023, EU citizens be able to access and complete 21 key administrative procedures online and obtain the result electronically. Three of these are key procedures in the field of social security coordination: applying for the Portable Document A1 (PDA1), obtaining the European Health Insurance Card, and requesting a summary of pension decisions (PDP1).

The ESSPASS Pilot Project focuses not only on the **digitalisation** of portable documents but also on making **real-time verification** possible without calling upon the issuer to know if these documents can be trusted. Joanna and Mateo will be able to carry their documents in a digital wallet that will allow them to prove their identity, to store and share instantaneously data required by a verifier, such as a labour inspector or medical service. The verifier will not need to go through tedious administrative processes to understand the authenticity and integrity of the shared information. To achieve this, the ESSPASS Pilot Project creates links with another initiative, which is creating a European Digital Identity Framework. ESSPASS could make use of this framework for the cross-border identification and authentication of citizens.

# STATE-OF-PLAY: THE EUROPEAN SOCIAL SECURITY PASS PILOT PROJECT

## DID YOU KNOW THAT?

The Electronic Exchange of Social Security Information (EESSI) allows social security institutions across the EU to exchange information more rapidly, securely and accurately. EESSI became operational in January 2019. By March 2022, 25 million messages had been exchanged between national authorities and some 8 million cases were being handled!

How far are we in the process of making the ESSPASS a reality? A pilot project on the European Social Security Pass was launched in March 2021. The first phase of the pilot is led jointly by the Italian social security institution (INPS) and the European Commission. Apart from Italy, 12 other Member States are taking part, but more have expressed their interest in joining.

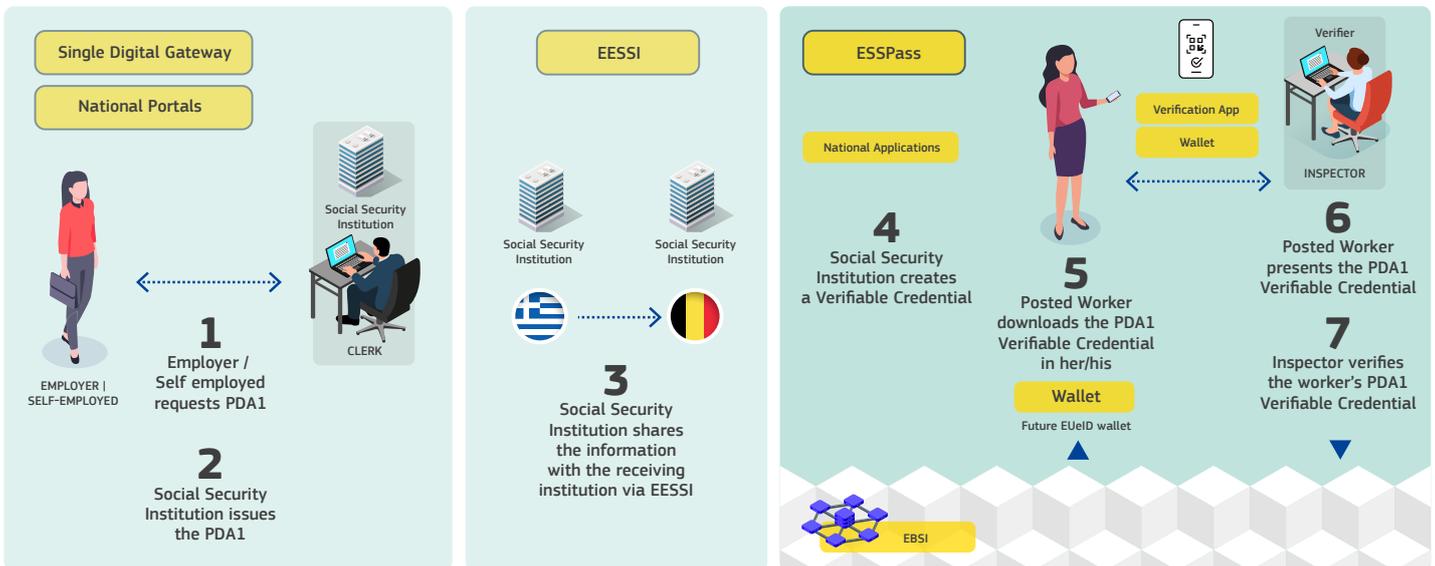
## WHAT ARE THE OBJECTIVES?

The goal is to explore the feasibility of a digital solution for the cross-border verification of social security coverage and entitlements and see what hurdles need to be overcome with a view to large-scale deployment of the solution. In the current first phase, the pilot project is focusing on the digitalisation of the procedures related to the PDA1.

## HOW DOES IT WORK AND HOW DOES IT FIT TOGETHER?

In a first phase, the pilot project tackles the case of Joanna: to replace the current paper-based exchanges between posted workers, administrations and labour inspectors as much as possible by electronic means, ESSPASS proposes a digital solution.

The figure below provides a simplified overview of the solution and the links with other digital EU initiatives such as EESSI, the various national applications, and the app which will be used to verify the authenticity and validity of a PDA1. The solution currently in the pilot phase leverages blockchain technology. The European Commission together with the Member States' national authorities have joined forces to create an EU-wide blockchain platform known as the European Blockchain Services Infrastructure (EBSI). This is a peer-to-peer network of interconnected nodes, each of which is operated by different authorities of the Member States.



## WILL MY DATA BE SAFE?

Security and privacy of the data will be a prime concern. The EU data protection and security rules would apply to all data processing activities carried out within the solution and the citizens would keep control and ownership of their data and decide which information to share.

## WHAT WILL THE NEAR FUTURE BRING?

The first results of the ESSPASS pilot project on the digitalisation of procedures related to the PDA1 are expected in the course of 2022. Based on the results of the first phase, the piloting of other procedures (notably digitalisation of the European Health Insurance Card) is anticipated in 2022/2023. Thanks to ESSPASS, in a few years from now, it should be possible to request online documents attesting to social security coverage and benefits. Mobile citizens should be able to download an electronic version and show it to the relevant institutions when travelling in and moving to another country. These institutions should then be able to verify the validity and authenticity of such documents online, including whether documents have been revoked, suspended or changed. With this perspective ahead of us, we can expect that in the years to come matters like these will be considerably simplified for mobile citizens, social security institutions, labour inspectors, health care providers and other stakeholders.

**More info needed? Visit:**

European Social Security Pass Pilot Project:

[Videos - European Social Security Pass - Employment, Social Affairs & Inclusion - European Commission \(europa.eu\)](#)

Single Digital Gateway:

[Single digital gateway \(europa.eu\)](#)

European Digital Identity:

[European Digital Identity | European Commission \(europa.eu\)](#)

European Blockchain Services Infrastructure:

[EBSI \(europa.eu\)](#)

European Health Insurance Card:

[European Health Insurance Card - Employment, Social Affairs & Inclusion - European Commission \(europa.eu\)](#)

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