EC CALLS FOR DIGITAL TRAVEL DOCUMENTS WITHIN SCHENGEN AREA

The European Commission has proposed that citizens of the European Union should have the option to carry digital versions of their identity documents and passports that would be recognized when they travel within the border-free Schengen area. This initiative aims to make travel smoother and safer by reducing paperwork and simplifying checks.

The plan of digital travel documents involves creating a common framework for electronic travel credentials and developing an 'EU Digital Travel' app where users can generate and store digital documents, such as on their mobile phones.

The EU emphasizes that participation in this system is entirely voluntary and free of charge. It would provide a digital copy of the information already stored in the chip of identity documents or passports, including the holder's photograph, but not biometric data like fingerprints.

The EU Commission said nearly 600 million border crossings occurred within the Schengen area last year. Currently, document controls must be conducted physically at border points. European services emphasize that having digital versions of these documents would significantly expedite the passage of citizens and the power of travelers' data.

Brussels states that the development of the 'application' will enable the verification of the authenticity and integrity of digital travel documents, as well as the comparison of the user's facial image with the photograph stored in the chip of the official document. This ensures a high level of security. Additionally, **the holder may receive a digital copy when obtaining a new passport or identity card** and may transmit the data to relevant border authorities in advance to facilitate controls and receive entry authorization before arrival.

Before this proposal can become a reality, the Twenty-Seven and the European Parliament must negotiate the definitive form of the law and subsequently adopt its final version.

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