

A common digital Passenger Locator Form (PLF) for Europe

Air Transport Pilot Project

Testing citizens and tracing their close contacts is a central pillar in the fight against COVID-19 within the European Union's Member States and beyond. Passenger Locator Forms (PLFs) are essential because they ensure that public health authorities can continue to trace contacts when a person travels by plane, train, boat or bus, nationally or across borders. As such, they can accompany and encourage a safe increase in mobility in the European Union while enhancing health safety. They are complementary to other tools like contact tracing apps.

The approach to Passenger Locator Forms differs across the Member States. Several Member States already have digital systems, which remain separate from each other. Paper-based schemes still exist but are less reliable and slower to use. This patchwork is confusing for passengers and costly for transport companies. Most importantly, it is inefficient from the perspective of health authorities, whose efforts to trace contacts are highly time-sensitive.

Good work in this area has been carried out by the EU Healthy Gateways initiative. In order to build on and accelerate this work, and enable travel contacts to be traced across borders, this pilot project will initially focus on aviation passengers. It will use the EU Passenger Locator Form template developed by EU Healthy Gateways and provide a dedicated platform for the exchange of passenger data between national health authorities in complement to the existing Early Warning Response System (EWRS), in time for the end-of-the-year holiday season.

The possibility to join this pilot project will be open to all Member States and a model system will be made available to them. It is envisaged that a system should be in place for all Member States joining and should work for all travellers, irrespective of the transport mode used, by April 2021, in line with the objectives of the EU Healthy Gateways initiative.

Data protection concerns will be addressed by clearly limiting the duration for which the forms can be kept, the purposes for which they can be used and the type of public authorities who have access to them.

This proposal responds to the recent Communication from the Commission to the European Parliament, the European Council and the Council on additional COVID-19 response measures (COM(2020)687final), recommending a common EU digital Passenger Locator Form to be launched in December 2020.