

Barrage of New Countries and Airlines to Adopt Vaccine Passports

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New York Times admits schemes could lead to “a dystopic system that would limit the rights of people who have been careful to avoid infection and are unable or unwilling to be vaccinated”

Several more countries have indicated that they are to adopt vaccination passports, meaning anyone crossing their borders will need to be able to prove they have been inoculated against coronavirus.

[It is being reported](#) that the South African government is working on implementing an entire Covid-19 vaccine ‘ID system’, which will not only encompass the so called ‘passports’, but will also include “management and surveillance of the Covid-19 vaccine,” as well as “an integrated track-and-trace system,” and “a dashboard system... to capture the reasons given for vaccine refusal.”

The country’s COVID battle has come under scrutiny in recent weeks with a purported super ‘mutation’ of the virus being discovered there.

The South African Department of Health has announced that all citizens who are vaccinated will be placed on a national register and provided with a vaccination card.

Meanwhile, in Europe, another country has indicated it will adopt the vaccination passport scheme with [Ukrainian health officials announcing](#) that all vaccinated people will be entered into an electronic health care database.

“When **mandatory** vaccination passports are introduced at the international level, Ukrainian doctors will be able to promptly issue a certificate of vaccinations,” said chief sanitary doctor of Ukraine Viktor Liashko.

Another country said to be mulling the introduction of COVID passports is Russia. The [New York Times reported](#) that

“The Russian government is considering issuing coronavirus health certificates that could ease travel and commerce for people who have been vaccinated.”

The Times quoted the head of the Russian Parliament’s committee on public health, **Dmitri**

Morozov, who [said](#) that a Covid passport was “very important and needed.”

“This is great, this is the new world,” Morozov reportedly stated.

The Times also noted that

“A regional governor in Russia, **Radi Khabirov**, proposed on Monday that Covid passport holders receive discounts at stores, as an incentive for people to obtain the certificate.”

The report also noted that

“President Vladimir V. Putin’s spokesman, **Dmitri S. Peskov**, [said](#) on Tuesday that the government is considering issuing Covid passports.”

After the Times report was published, [Russian state media denied](#) that a COVID passport scheme to limit travel had been discussed by Peskov or the Kremlin.

“We are far from a unified point of view on this subject right now, there are no consistent approaches or a consensus on this subject,” Peskov said, but added that “this subject is circulating, it’s being worked out.”

Interestingly, while the likes of the New York Times has reported on other countries adopting the COVID passports, in its coverage of Russia potentially doing the same, it paints a much darker picture, stating that

“Opponents fear a dystopic system that would limit the rights of people who have been careful to avoid infection and are unable or unwilling to be vaccinated.”

“Russia has a grim history rooted in the Soviet era of controlling citizens’ movements, through a residency permit system that was never fully abolished,” the Times report continues.

So when Russia do it, it’s bad, but when other countries do it, it’s part of restoring ‘open society’. Hmmm.

While scores of countries are now slowly moving toward the implementation of vaccination passports, airlines appear to have fully embraced the idea and essentially already have them in place.

[Emirates airlines has announced](#) that it will be trialling the IATA Travel Pass ‘digital passport’ which shows passengers’ proof of Covid-19 tests and other entry requirements when flying.

Adel Al Redha, Emirates’ Chief Operating Officer said that

“While international travel remains as safe as ever, there are new protocols and travel requirements with the current global pandemic.”

“We have worked with IATA on this innovative solution to simplify and digitally transmit the information that is required by countries and governments into our airline systems, in a secure and efficient manner,” Al Redha continued, adding “We are proud to be one of the first airlines in the world to pilot this initiative, which will provide an enhanced customer experience and conveniently facilitate our customers’ travel needs.”

As we [reported last November](#), the IATA, the world’s largest air transport lobby group, expects its COVID travel pass app to be fully rolled out in the first months of 2021.

Other airlines, including United Airlines and Cathay Pacific have already trialled the IATA’s scheme.

Meanwhile, [American Airlines has reportedly partnered with biometric authentication provider VeriFLY](#) to develop its own COVID passport app, which will be rolled out within days.

“We support the implementation of a global program to require COVID-19 testing for travelers to the United States, and we want to do everything we can to make travel a seamless experience for customers,” **Julie Rath**, the vice president of customer experience at American Airlines, said in a statement.

Virgin Atlantic owner **Richard Branson** has also thrown his weight behind the vaccination passport idea, [telling CNBC](#) he hopes that soon

“there will be a proof-of-vaccination piece of paper that people can use to be able to get on a plane without having to be tested or without having to quarantine.”

“Vaccination is everything. Once vulnerable people, in particular, have been vaccinated, I think all kinds of businesses can start opening up again: restaurants, travel companies, cruise companies,” Branson declared.

The narrative of [adopting vaccination passports is now so ubiquitous](#) that it would be surprising not to see them adopted world-wide, despite the fact that even the [World Health Organisation has warned](#) that such schemes should absolutely not be implemented while there is no proof that vaccinations can provide immunity to coronavirus.

“Being vaccinated should not exempt international travellers from complying with other travel risk reduction measures,” the WHO committee stressed during its meeting held on January 14.

Others have warned that the adoption of vaccination passports will inevitably lead to a two-tier society, and must be prevented.

“The immunity passport could become a ‘passport for privilege,’ accentuating the divide between those who already have a comfortable position in society and those on the margins,” [warns Dr Israel Butler](#), Head of Advocacy, at the Civil Liberties Union for Europe, Liberties.

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