

Carriers Working Group of 27 February 2024

Summary

Subject: Monthly Carriers Working Group meeting

Sea and Land Carriers at 10:00– 12:00 CET

Participants: Carriers representing sea and land industry, their declared service providers, carrier associations, European Commission (DG HOME), Member State (MS) experts, Frontex and eu-LISA (altogether 90 participants).

<p>1. Introduction</p> <p>a. Agenda</p> <p>b. Carriers meeting calendar</p>	<p>eu-LISA presented the agenda of the 29th Carriers Working Group (CWG) and the calendar of the upcoming meetings to the participants.</p> <p>The CWG took note of the Carriers meeting calendar with the dates of upcoming meetings until June 2024. The next CWG meeting is scheduled for 21st March and the community was reminded that the May CWG was changed to May 29 . Ad hoc meetings can be organised upon request. eu-LISA however kindly requests that the discussion topics are shared in advance to ensure the inclusion of the most pertinent experts in the discussions.</p>
<p>2. Legal updates (European Commission)</p>	<p>The CWG received updates from the European Commission on several key topics regarding the carrier interface replies in relation to the limited territorial validity topic, Council Decision and Bulgaria and Romania and the border checks and carrier interface queries on the vicinity of a vessel. . It was highlighted that, for entering the Schengen area, travellers must hold a valid visa or ETIAS, with specific rules regarding LTV as per ETIAS Regulation and Visa Code. For instance, travellers with an LTV (Limited Territorial Validity) visa cannot use it to enter Schengen through a country not covered by their visa. Carriers, including cruise ships, are reminded that the carrier interface will automatically consider if a passenger has an LTV for a specific country of entry. COM presented the specific case of cruise ship and travellers who hold an LTV. Cruise ships must check for LTVs before boarding passengers due to their unique operational scenario and are advised not to take a third country national with LTV on board. The</p>

	<p>interface will aid by marking "LTV" on relevant "OK" responses for ETIAS. The presentation also covered Bulgaria and Romania's full integration into the Schengen area as of 31 March 2024, making their external borders part of the Schengen external borders and lifting internal border controls for air and sea BCPs. This change means that all TCNs entering the Schengen area through these countries will be registered in the EES, and carrier interface queries for trips crossing the internal borders of Bulgaria and Romania will no longer be necessary, also in the case of land carriers. Lastly, the CWG was informed about the procedures for carrier interface queries and border checks near vessels. Carriers can proceed with queries, even on the surface of the vessel, up to 48 hours before departure. Additionally, it is at the Member States' discretion to conduct border checks on board of vessels.</p> <p>Carriers sought clarification on the possibility of capturing EES biometric data on board before arriving in the EU, a measure aimed at streamlining passenger flows and reducing congestion at ports. On the topic of the biometric data linked to the border checks, COM explained that it is at the discretion of the Member States to decide how the registration will be performed. The conversation highlighted the importance of ensuring passengers have valid visas or ETIAS before boarding, with carriers emphasizing the need for efficient pre-departure checks to mitigate potential liabilities and delays. The Commission reiterated that interface checks must occur before departure, aligning with secondary legislation requirements.</p>
<p>3. Technical updates (eu-LISA)</p>	<p>eu-LISA updated the CWG on the status of Carrier implementations and the system-to-system integration process as of February 2024. There is 1 system that is compliant, 4 systems ready to start testing, and 20 systems are in the "technical readiness" phase, focusing on connectivity (including security). However, 35 systems are not yet ready to start connectivity with the PGD. There are 570 carriers prepared for system-to-system integration and 520 carriers for the mobile app and web portal. The CWG took note of the reminder on the carrier implementation process which delineates a meticulous, step-by-step protocol aimed at ensuring systems are interconnected efficiently and adhere to compliance requirements. Initially, connectivity is planned with Carrier's System Points of Contact (SPOCs) completing necessary forms and selecting their representative. eu-LISA will share these forms and a certificate with the SPOCs to configure systems accordingly. In cases where issues arise, a troubleshooting call with technical experts can be arranged to facilitate resolution. Upon resolving any hitches, systems are connected, and preliminary tests, referred to as "free" tests, are conducted to confirm the systems are operational. To formalise this phase, a Connectivity Test (CT) slot is scheduled using the system</p>

connected, enabling representative carriers to execute necessary compliance tests. The average duration for establishing a REST Connection is around 3 working days, whereas setting up an MQ Connection typically spans over approximately 3 weeks. Once the system is declared compliant, all Carrier's SPOCs will receive a notification from eu-LISA. Carriers can then schedule a slot to run the CT tests or, if eligible, submit a Carrier Self Declaration for system compliance exemption. The process culminates with the CT completion, at which point the 'Carrier' is recognised as compliant, thereby affirming the connected system's adherence to established protocols. During the pilot phase for system connectivity, the interaction between experts was identified as a critical factor in reducing the time required for establishing connections. The use of the correct carrier ID and adherence to the template in the TDD document were emphasised as essential for ensuring that all necessary values were correctly provided. Common issues included receiving an error 422 when incorrect data value formats were used. To address this, the TDD document was updated to include more specific testing instructions and example data.

For the Carrier Web Portal (CWP), it is expected that a significant majority of carriers, 957 or 88%, will use the CWP. The CWP on PGD is intended for training and is not a part of the mandatory test campaign. Its functionalities include managing users and verifying TCN status. The CWP will be available for training on PGD from March 30, 2024, and it will be ready on PRD for technical connections during Q3 2024. Full operations for business use are scheduled for Q4 2024, coinciding with the EES Entry into Operations.

In response to a query from the Carriers, eu-LISA outlined a structured support process across different phases of implementation. During the pilot phase, Carriers should communicate issues via email for direct and timely troubleshooting, especially for emergent problems. As the project moves into the growth phase, Carriers are instructed to use a specific form – F06- to report connectivity or testing issues, facilitating rapid response and efficient problem resolution. During the production phase, it was clarified that a dedicated support tool will be available for carriers to ETIAS Central Unit (ECU) for operational and technical assistance once EES operations commence. This tool is designed to provide direct and efficient support for any issues encountered. In cases where the support tool might not be available, Carriers will have access to an emergency line, ensuring continuous support for their operational and technical needs.

<p>4. Carriers and Travellers Support - Operational updates and sea scenarios (Frontex)</p>	<p>The CWG reviewed Frontex visual guide on Carrier Interface queries for ferries, noting the process for carriers to conduct verifications within 48 hours before departure. The guidelines for performing verification queries, including data requirements from travel documents, were acknowledged. The CWG was informed of the possible responses carriers will receive upon querying, including "OK", "NOK EES" and "NOK ETIAS". The steps following a potential refusal of entry at the border, emphasizing the carrier's responsibility for transferring the passenger back, were also highlighted.</p> <p>The CWG noted Frontex's guidance on Carrier Interface for sea crew members. It was acknowledged that certain exemptions apply to visa and ETIAS requirements for sea crew. Member States have unique interpretations of "sea crew" and "going ashore", with exemptions communicated to the European Commission. Finally, the CWG was reminded of the Land Scenarios Survey noting its ongoing availability for the submission of itineraries. It was highlighted that the Assistance Centre Unit in Frontex will compile the land scenarios document from the survey submissions, capturing a range of distinctive scenarios.</p> <p>For operational queries, Carriers were invited to contact Frontex at etias.acu1@frontex.europa.eu.</p>
<p>6. Q&A</p>	<p>During the Q&A session, eu-LISA, the Commission and Frontex addressed several topics and answered Carriers' questions.</p>

Carriers Working Group of 27 February 2024

Summary

Subject: Monthly Carriers Working Group meeting

Air Carriers at 13:00– 16:00 CET

Participants: Carriers representing air industry, their declared service providers, carrier associations, European Commission (DG HOME), Member State (MS) experts, Frontex and eu-LISA (altogether 153 participants).

<p>1. Introduction</p> <p>a. Agenda</p> <p>b. Carriers meeting calendar</p>	<p>eu-LISA presented the agenda of the 29th Carriers Working Group (CWG) and the calendar of the upcoming meetings to the participants.</p> <p>The CWG took note of the Carriers meeting calendar with the dates of upcoming meetings until June 2024. The next CWG meeting is scheduled for 21st March and the community was reminded that the May CWG was changed to May 29. Ad hoc meetings can be organised upon request, however, eu-LISA kindly requests that the discussion topics are shared in advance to ensure the inclusion of the most pertinent experts in the discussions.</p>
<p>2. Legal updates (European Commission)</p>	<p>The CWG was briefed on the European Commission's latest updates regarding the carrier interface replies in relation to the LTV topic and the Council Decision on Bulgaria and Romania. Regarding the first topic, key points covered the necessity for passengers to possess a valid visa or ETIAS TA when entering the Schengen Area, emphasising the importance of this requirement for travellers on connecting flights within the Schengen Area, who might leave the international transit area. Article 24 of the ETIAS Regulation and article 25 of the Visa Code establish the possibility for Member States to exceptionally grant ETIAS and visa with LTV. Such ETIAS authorisation and such visa can be issued for one or several Member States, and they will be valid only on the territory of the issuing Member State(s). The air carriers would receive "OK" or "NOK" messages that already</p>

	<p>account for LTVs, therefore no further information needs to be displayed. For visa, the visa stickers will still present the information on the passport after the EES EiO and after VIS EiO. However, for ETIAS there will be no information on the passport but for the needs of cruise carriers, it is important to know when a traveller has an LTV. The reply will include the mention of LTV in the OK message but the air carriers should generally disregard this because it does not influence their business processes.</p> <p>Furthermore, the CWG was informed about the full application of the Schengen acquis by Bulgaria and Romania having full effect as of 31 March 2024, marking their external borders as the external borders of the Schengen Area. This expansion means that all TCNs entering the Schengen area through these countries will be registered in the EES at their external borders; border controls at air and sea BCPs with these countries will be lifted, eliminating the need for carrier interface queries for itineraries crossing internal borders of Bulgaria and Romania with the other MS of the Schengen area. However, the border controls will still take place at land borders.</p> <p>In addressing carriers' concerns about the lack of additional information behind "NOT OK" ETIAS responses in scenarios involving LTV, the Commission informed that ETIAS replies may only indicate existence of valid travel authorisation without detailing the cause of rejection (NOT OK). This absence of detailed feedback poses challenges, according to the carriers, in assessing passengers' eligibility for transiting through the Schengen area to their final destinations. Carriers advocated for clearer ETIAS NOT OK response, suggesting that knowing whether a "NOT OK" response is related to LTV could significantly assist airline agents in handling passenger queries, rerouting passengers and adhering to compliance requirements. The Commission highlighted it is the travellers' obligation to verify their travel authorisations for entire journey, including transit through Schengen area. Air carriers can re-direct the traveller to the border authorities for further information.</p>
<p>3. Technical updates (eu-LISA)</p>	<p>eu-LISA updated the CWG on the status of Carrier implementations and the system-to-system integration process as of February 2024. There is 1 system that is compliant, 4 systems ready to start testing, and 20 systems are in the "technical readiness" phase, focusing on connectivity (including security). However, 35 systems are not yet ready to start connectivity with the PGD. There are 570 carriers prepared for system-to-system integration and 520 carriers for the mobile app and web portal. The CWG took note of the reminder on the carrier implementation process which delineates a meticulous, step-by-step protocol aimed at ensuring systems are interconnected efficiently and adhere to compliance requirements. Initially,</p>

connectivity is planned with Carrier's System Points of Contact (SPOCs) completing necessary forms and selecting their representative. eu-LISA will share these forms and a certificate with the SPOCs to configure systems accordingly. In cases where issues arise, a troubleshooting call with technical experts can be arranged to facilitate resolution. Upon resolving any hitches, systems are connected, and preliminary tests, referred to as "free" tests, are conducted to confirm the systems are operational. To formalize this phase, a Connectivity Test (CT) slot is scheduled using the system connected, enabling representative carriers to execute necessary compliance tests. The average duration for establishing a REST Connection is around 3 working days, whereas setting up an MQ Connection typically spans over approximately 3 weeks. Once the system is declared compliant, all Carrier's SPOCs will receive a notification from eu-LISA. Carriers can then schedule a slot to run the CT tests or, if eligible, submit a Carrier Self Declaration for system compliance exemption. The process culminates with the CT completion, at which point the 'Carrier' is recognised as compliant, thereby affirming the connected system's adherence to established protocols. During the pilot phase for system connectivity, the interaction between experts was identified as a critical factor in reducing the time required for establishing connections. The use of the correct carrier ID and adherence to the template in the TDD document were emphasised as essential for ensuring that all necessary values were correctly provided. Common issues included receiving an error 422 when incorrect data value formats were used. To address this, the TDD document was updated to include more specific testing instructions and example data.

For the Carrier Web Portal (CWP), it is expected that a significant majority of carriers, 957 or 88%, will use the CWP. The CWP on PGD is intended for training and is not a part of the mandatory test campaign. Its functionalities include managing users and verifying TCN status. The CWP will be available for training on PGD from March 30, 2024, and it will be ready on PRD for technical connections during Q3 2024. Full operations for business use are scheduled for Q4 2024, coinciding with the EES Entry into Operations.

Carriers raised concerns about calculating remaining authorised stays within the Schengen area, following the EES EiO, when stamping will be discontinued. eu-LISA explained that the initial Carrier Interface focused on single-double visa and ETIAS validity, without accounting for the duration of stay. However, with the updates for the new Visa Information System, the calculations for remaining days of stay will also be considered in the response. Member States are aware of this gap, and carriers are

	<p>encouraged to liaise with them to prevent penalties for travellers exceeding their stay. The responsibility for monitoring stay duration lies with the travellers, ensuring they do not exceed the allowed 90 days in any 180 day period</p>
<p>4. Carriers and Travellers Support - Operational updates (Frontex)</p>	<p>Frontex provided to the community a refresher on the countries that use EES, countries that require ETIAS TA and the obligations for Carriers stemming from EES, ETIAS, and VIS systems. The group was briefed on the 29 European countries using EES, with Cyprus and Ireland continuing manual passport stamping, and 30 countries where ETIAS TA is a requirement. The operational requirements for Carriers were outlined, indicating their roles in verifying TA as mandated by EES and ETIAS. This includes the necessity for carriers to validate uniform short-stay visas of one or two entries under the EES and to confirm ETIAS authorisations prior to travel. Additionally, the future expansion of VIS Recast after 2025 will prompt Carriers to query a broader range of visas, including transit and multiple entries.</p> <p>Exemptions for crew members were also discussed, highlighting the operational details carriers must manage for air transit under these evolving systems. For operational queries, Carriers were invited to contact Frontex at etias.acu1@frontex.europa.eu.</p>
<p>5. Q&A</p>	<p>During the Q&A session, eu-LISA, the Commission and Frontex addressed several topics and answered Carriers' questions.</p>