



EU External Borders – Streamlining of Information Exchange

Industry Roundtable – 16 May 2018



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Introduction

On the 16th of May, eu-LISA hosted its 8th Industry Roundtable event at the European Commission representation in Sofia, Bulgaria, with the kind support of the Bulgarian Presidency.

The event, titled 'EU External Borders – streamlining of information exchange' gathered 74 representatives representing 39 different commercial entities, the European Commission, 4 EU Member States and 3 EU Agencies.



1. Opening

The Executive Director of the Agency, Mr Krum Garkov, delivered the opening address, welcoming all participants. He noted that the organisation of industry events had become a tradition for the Agency, reflecting on the importance of such engagement for a technical Agency whose mission is to serve EU Member States through provision of advanced and high-quality technology services. Requesting proactive intervention of participants, he wished everyone an enjoyable meeting and expressed his high expectations for the discussions to come.

1.1. Presentation 1. Ciaran Carolan (eu-LISA)

Mr Carolan spoke about the sometimes-difficult relationships between carriers and governments globally and expressed a hope that the industry event, focussed as it was on sharing information with carriers and listening to their view, could be a springboard to a positive working relationship in the European Union going forward. This was, he noted, critical given that carrier connections to EU large-scale IT systems are foreseen for the first time in the EU with the introduction of the EES and ETIAS. He mentioned the mutual benefits that carriers and governments could obtain from such collaboration and implored attendees to speak up in a spirit of full information sharing and collaboration.

1.2. Presentation 2. Marc Sulon (European Commission, DG HOME)

Having provided a brief overview of current carrier-government interactions in the EU, Mr Sulon spoke mainly about the new obligations for carriers introduced in the Smart Borders legislation for EES and ETIAS. He explained how the new regulations generally did not introduce new carrier obligations except for the new need to check for the existence of a valid ETIAS travel authorisation before entering the Schengen area. However, the mechanism for carriers to undertake their checks were changing with the introduction of new IT-based carrier interfaces. He also spoke about the on-going COM study on a central routing mechanism for API and PNR data.

1.3. Presentation 3. Viktoria Skoularidou (eu-LISA)

Ms Skoularidou developed upon the previous presentation by introducing some of the more technical aspects of the carrier communication channels foreseen to be developed by eu-LISA in the context of the EES and ETIAS systems. She mentioned the Agency's core mission to continuously add value to Member States, supporting through technology their efforts for a safer Europe, explaining how the new developments fitted well in this context. She also noted relevant elements of the Agency's pending revised regulation. Finally, she elaborated further on the study introduced by Mr Sulon and spoke about eu-LISA involvement therein.

1.4. Presentation 4. Mr Sergio Fernandez (IATA)

Mr Fernandez spoke about the airline industry's willingness to work with governments to support electronic travel systems and put forward some key considerations that new developments should ideally adhere to so that benefits are apparent for everyone. He proposed a concrete model of how future carrier communications towards EU systems and Member States could be ideally facilitated.

1.5. Presentation 5. Ms Caroline O'Sullivan (ERAA)

Ms O'Sullivan spoke about how smaller regional airlines typically perceive requests for setup of new information flows towards government authorities and put forward her views on how regional aviation might like to see things develop going forward. She agreed with the speaker about the industry's general willingness to support sensible new proposals, indicating that important elements to consider were the use of standards, data minimisation and cross-party collaboration. She also addressed some concerns quite specific to regional aviation, focussed particularly on the carrier's capability to respond to errors, rejections, technological and security requirements.

1.6. Presentation 6. Mr Peter Butler (Amadeus)

Mr Butler explained the place of passenger service systems in the aviation sector, noting the involvement of Amadeus in reservation, inventory and departure control systems. He spoke about departure control systems in particular, emphasising how they accomplish current processes for sending of API information. In particular, he elaborated on the data normally sent and the standards adhered to in such sending. He also briefly mentioned the certification process for finalising carrier-government information exchange.

1.7. Presentation 7. Mr Stephane Levy (Luxembourg Police)

Mr Levy introduced Luxembourg's own version of a central router for API and PNR data, explained the current project status and elaborated on foreseen future use in the context of EES and ETIAS. Emphasising the complexity of the future plans being discussed, he provided some statistics on current carrier readiness to use interactive API services. The LU solution eases the burden of such connections, providing a central point of interconnecting carriers, DCS providers, tour operators and others and potentially enabling future querying of EU large-scale IT systems as well as Member State systems. He spoke about the messaging standards used and message types accommodated. Finally, he elaborated on feedback already provided by the industry on the solution.

1.8. Presentation 8. Mr Andy Smith (SITA)

Mr Smith explained the position of SITA as an organisation at the intersection of the airline and provider industries and a provider of a number of solutions involved in carrier-government communication. He emphasised that many of the solutions being mentioned, such as central gateways for carrier communication, already exist, being provided by SITA and others. Challenges arise still because of organisational arrangements for the use of such systems and their integration into systems and processes used in the modern travel industry. In this regard, he also explained the need to consider future integration of systems such as kiosks, e-gates, mobile passport controls and end-to-end traveller journey management systems. Based on surveys completed by SITA, he justified travellers readiness to utilise such technologies and provide the necessary information for advance checks. Above all, he stressed the need for collaboration of all parties in the travel chain.

1.9. Presentation 9. Mr Emmanuel Wang (Idemia)

Leveraging on Idemia's experience developing API/PNR solutions, in particular in France, Mr Wang enumerated some of the challenges encountered and lessons learned and placed them in the context of the day's discussions. He noted the possible future complexity for travellers to interact with the numerous systems being considered and stressed the need for simplicity, harmonisation and collaboration. This included consolidation of checks against different systems into single process steps. He also proposed an outline future architecture for interoperable large-scale systems including the API and PNR-type data communications. Amongst proposals made, he suggested development of different single windows for carriers, MS and travellers that might be consolidated into a single gateway type solution. Finally, he stressed that future discussions would have to look at processes around land and sea borders more fully.

2. Final discussion

Following the set of presentations, attendees had the opportunity to pose questions, raise issues that they considered outstanding and put forward additional items for final consideration.

Additionally, they were asked to reflect on how to take forward further work on this matter. The following points summarise the main topics considered:

Participants discussed whether a “single window approach” is in the interest of the carriers or rather of the EU institutions. Carriers’ representatives were of the opinion that the “single window” approach will not resolve all of the problems faced by the carriers, in particular some of the major ones. They were of the opinion that continued use of the existing mechanisms/tools and their adaptation to new demands (make them quicker) would be a better option than developing something from the beginning.

Some wondered if examples could be found for central routing mechanisms for airline carriers. One participant raised the Caribbean community’s system as an example probably worth looking into.

Some delegations pointed out that the decision on whether a person/passenger is authorised to enter the EU should not be communicated at the check-in gate at the airport/port. COM recalled that this is not the case according in the current legal framework (EES and ETIAS) and applicants for travel authorisation should be immediately notified about the issuance of the travel authorisation once they lodged their applications unless the applications have to be further assessed or verified.

Participants reminded that flight tickets can be purchased even 1 year before the actual date of travel, a point in time at which the future passenger may not be in the possession of a valid travel authorisation. Thus, pushing the check process too early in the procedure will not always be possible.

The Executive Director of eu-LISA concluded the meeting with some words expressing his gratitude to the organising team and to the participants for ensuring that the event was successful. He looked forward to the next such event, currently scheduled to take place on 18th October 2018 in Tallinn, Estonia.

