



FACILITATION PANEL (FALP)

TWELFTH MEETING

(13 to 23 July 2021, Virtual)

Agenda Item 3: Policy and Regulatory Issues

FOSTERING INNOVATION TO ENABLE CONTACTLESS PROCESSES

(Presented by Airports Council International and
the International Air Transport Association)

SUMMARY

The COVID-19 crisis and its impact on the aviation industry brings into sharp focus the need for technology and innovative processes to cope with the uprising challenges with passenger facilitation and baggage handling. Any additional requirement imposed on passengers has a negative impact on the airport process. As these may be temporarily implemented, digital solutions may help mitigate this impact. The industry has taken the lead in many areas to address public health-related issues, managing queues and crowds and optimizing the use of limited resources by leveraging and accelerating the adoption of automation and advanced technologies, defining a common vocabulary to facilitate data exchange and embracing digital solutions such as biometric recognition technology.

There are numbers of areas within the control of national authorities where significant opportunities exist to innovate, such as enabling the clearance of the majority of passengers prior to travel, adopting automated and digital processing for customs and border control purposes and simplifying inspection points throughout the airport passenger journey.

Action by the FAL Panel:

The Facilitation Panel is invited to:

- a) develop a framework to allow for off-airport passenger pre-clearance;
- b) request the Air Transport Committee through the Council to encourage States to accept and use the Digital Travel Credential (DTC); and
- c) request the Air Transport Committee through the Council to encourage States to set up a dedicated secured portal to collect relevant passenger information directly from passengers, to ensure the respect to privacy laws.

1. INTRODUCTION

1.1 Airports and airlines have seen an unprecedented decline in global passenger traffic volumes since the beginning of the pandemic. The International Civil Aviation Organization (ICAO) estimated a 60% drop in passenger demand in 2020 and 41% to 49% in 2021 compared to 2019. Despite this situation, average queuing time at airports has increased significantly despite reduced passenger volumes, driven by the time needed to verify COVID-19 health credentials at check-in and immigration.

1.2 Member States have introduced a plethora of different entry rules and requirements around the world, creating a chaotic situation for airlines, airports and passengers.

1.3 Any additional requirements imposed on passengers (including passenger locator forms, testing and vaccine certificates, insurance, hotel reservation, health questionnaires, contact tracing information) increases processing times and are negatively impacting the ability for airports, airlines and authorities to maintain government imposed physical distancing requirements between passengers and to offer a decent and acceptable processing time to passengers. Additional verification requirements has forced airlines to disable on-line and mobile check in, therefore forcing all customers to go to physical airline check-in desks. Digital solutions may help mitigate the negative impact.

2. ACCELERATE THE ADOPTION OF DIGITAL TRAVEL CREDENTIALS BY BORDER AUTHORITIES

2.1 The adoption of digital processes and dedicated government portals allow border authorities to clear passengers in advance of their travel. Not only does this facilitate the verification of documents at airports by airlines and border control authorities, it also helps reduce queues at airports, and mitigates the risk for passengers to be deemed inadmissible upon arrival. Digital processes are no longer “nice to have” but have become “must have” to avoid a breakdown of passenger facilitation at airports as traffic resumes. It is therefore critical to accelerate their adoption by ICAO and its Member States.

2.2 In 2020, ICAO issued the guiding core principles for the development of Digital Travel Credential (DTC) which is a digital representation of an electronic passport. This DTC can be extracted from an existing electronic passport by passengers themselves. In the future it may be directly produced and issued in a digital format by an issuing authority. ICAO also released the technical specification for the virtual component of the DTC. The next step is now for border control authorities to accept the reception of DTC as a tool to pre-clear passengers, thereby allowing them to focus their efforts on secondary inspection at airports and increase border security. This is also a critical element to facilitate biometric recognition on arrival.

2.3 ICAO through its New Technology Working Group (NTWG) under the Technical Advisory Group on the Traveller Identification Programme (TAG/TRIP) has started identifying options to digitalize electronic visas and health related documents. Border control authorities are the end users of such tools therefore ACI and IATA encourage the FALP and the TAG/TRIP to increase their cooperation and work together towards developing guidelines for States to issue and accept these tools at their borders.

3. CENTRALIZE THE COLLECTION OF ADDITIONAL ENTRY REQUIREMENTS

3.1 In response to the pandemic, each State has implemented various mitigation measures to reduce the risk of transmission and translocation of the virus. A number of them have been implemented in

the context of international travel including but not limited to Passenger Locator Forms (PLF), request for contact information, health questionnaires, COVID-19 specific medical issuance, testing or vaccination certificates, proof of recovery or hotel reservations. Each of these requirements are published with very specific conditions that pertain to each country. These extensive requirements make it extremely complex for passengers to find the right information and they are a deterrent to travel.

3.2 To facilitate the process a number of States have set up portals to allow passengers to lodge their information. This not only provides States with advance information but more importantly, it provides passengers with the assurance that they are compliant before departing. Passengers should solely be required to inform the airline that they have provided the information or meet the required entry requirements and that they are compliant. However, in case of exceptions, States should offer mitigation measures upon arrival for these passengers who may have outstanding issues.

4. MEASURES TO ENCOURAGE INNOVATION BY NATIONAL AUTHORITIES

4.1 Many elements of passenger facilitation, such as efficient clearances and strategies for addressing airport congestion, inclusive and risk based approach to automated border controls and leveraging emerging technologies and innovation are critical for the future growth of the industry and global economies so that additional requirements can be accommodated in existing facilities in the most cost-effective way. Additionally, enabling States to set up partnerships between government agencies, airport operators, airlines and other industry stakeholders to agree on initiatives of mutual interest and deliver them jointly would be beneficial for all stakeholders. The framework for such partnerships should clarify the funding for joint initiatives. Their goal should be to enhance national security while achieving a more efficient use of airport space, government resources and passengers' time at airports.

4.2 For the majority of international travellers today, passports and identity cards are the only trusted form of identity; issued and owned by Government and inspected at multiple points throughout the air travel journey. Further efforts are needed to strengthen the collaboration between industry and national authorities in this regard and explore the opportunities to offer true end-to-end solutions. The development of innovative practices through pilots, investment and regulatory relief will contribute to more efficient border control processes and an improved passenger experience while maintaining the highest levels of safety and security.

5. ACTION BY THE FAL PANEL

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