



## **FACILITATION PANEL (FALP)**

### **NINTH MEETING**

**Montréal, 4-7 April 2016**

#### **Agenda Item 3: Amendments to Annex 9**

#### **ELECTRONIC TRAVEL SYSTEMS**

(Presented by the International Air Transport Association)

##### **SUMMARY**

This working paper proposes the introduction of a new concept entitled “Electronic Travel Systems”, including a definition in Chapter 1, as well as a subsection in the newly introduced Chapter 9 containing six new Recommended Practices.

In recent years, governments are increasingly requiring passengers to apply for travel authorization or register online prior to boarding a flight for travel. These countries are using mixed terminology such as “electronic visa”, “electronic travel authority”, or “visa on arrival” to describe their online programs. Given the wide disparities in language and use there is a need to standardize this terminology and to place this function in a policy and regulatory framework within Annex 9.

Following the work of the IATA Control Authorities Working Group (CAWG) this Working Paper proposes the introduction of the term Electronic Travel Systems (ETS) within Annex 9 to define and standardize terms such as eVisa, electronic travel authority or visa upon arrival. Incorporating ETS provisions into Annex 9 will provide guidance to governments planning implementation of an electronic version of visa issuance or travel authority.

Moreover and very critically, this Working Paper emphasizes the need to implement ETS with a fully automated validation system embedded in interactive API exchanges.

##### **Action by the FAL Panel:**

The FAL Panel is invited to consider the proposals described in this paper and agree that Annex 9 be amended, as set out in the Appendix.

## 1. INTRODUCTION

1.1 Since there is no universally accepted definition for an eVisa or an electronic travel authorization, this paper proposes introducing the term “Electronic Travel System” (ETS) to describe and define the automated process for authorizing and verifying a passenger’s acceptance for travel to a country, in lieu of the processes involved in standard counterfoil paper visas.

1.2 The purpose of implementing an ETS is to expedite the pre-vetting and acceptance of low risk passengers into a country, while providing a secure method for applicants, governments, and airlines to verify the acceptance for travel. Often countries implement an ETS requirement in lieu of a visa requirement. This can facilitate travel by alleviating visa requirements, while still providing an adequate level of border security in the form of electronic registration and personal data submission.

1.3 IATA would like to highlight as a best practice that in some cases the ETS is validated electronically by airline staff or systems through the integration with an interactive API system, allowing airlines to receive a boarding directive per passenger that will advise whether the ETS requirement is fulfilled, and whether it is “<OK TO BOARD>” the passenger.

1.4 Unfortunately a number of so called eVisa regimes have provided aircraft operators no ability to verify the passenger’s acceptance for travel via automated means. In some cases airlines are asked to verify paper printouts or access a government web site, both of which are not feasible in the operating environment and cause delays.

## 2. DISCUSSION

2.1 The current practice for visa issuance can be time consuming and may be difficult for the passenger to obtain when there is no local document issuing authority e.g. Embassy or Consulate in their country. This disproportionately affects developing countries, whose economies often rely on tourism, and who do not have wide consular representation. Particularly in this scenario, implementing ETS in lieu of a visa requirement is an effective facilitation tool, while still providing a layer of border security.

2.2 There is general acceptance among aircraft operators on how to verify a counterfoil or stamped visa to confirm a passenger’s eligibility to travel. However, the visa image or stamp can still be fraudulently manipulated and aircraft operators could be considered liable for transporting an improperly documented traveller. Aircraft operators also find it difficult to manage notification from countries that a visa has been cancelled, and not to accept a passenger for travel, even though the visa still appears to be valid in his or her passport. Aircraft operators can experience difficulties in maintaining training programs for check-in agents to keep them apprised of entry requirements and different types of online visas or travel authority programs for countries that they fly to. Check-in agents also experience difficulties in maintaining awareness of entry requirements for a country when that country implements an online travel authority for a limited number of nationalities.

2.3 IATA supports the concept of more countries implementing an ETS where there are apparent benefits for governments, the public and industry. ETS implementation can be used to simplify the process for individuals to seek prior authority to travel to a country when the guidelines are clearly communicated and easily understood. Aircraft operators will be more successful in preventing improperly documented arrivals when there is automated verification of a passenger’s authority to travel tied into the air carrier’s departure control system. This can only be achieved by integrating the ETS verification function with the iAPI application allowing aircraft operators to communicate passport details for the purposes of both ETS and iAPI.

2.4 A well implemented and robust ETS, which is linked to an interactive API system, enables aircraft operators to effectively verify that passengers have authority to travel before issuing boarding passes. This saves time for aircraft operators at check-in and reduces the likelihood of uplifting improperly documented passengers.

### 3. **RECOMMENDATIONS**

3.1 The Facilitation Panel is invited to agree with the introduction of:

- a) a definition in Chapter 1,
- b) a subsection “Electronic Travel Systems” in the newly introduced Chapter 9 containing six new Recommended Practices.

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## APPENDIX

*Amend* Annex 9 as follows:

### Chapter 1: Definitions and general principles

#### A. Definitions

**Electronic Travel Systems (ETS).** The automated process for the lodgement, acceptance and verification of a passenger's authorization to travel to a State, in lieu of the standard counterfoil paper visa.

### Chapter 9: Passenger Data Exchange Systems

#### C. Electronic Travel Systems (ETS)

**9.20 Recommended Practice.**— *Contracting States seeking to establish an Electronic Travel System should integrate the pre-travel verification system with an interactive Advance Passenger Information system.*

*Note.*— *This will allow States to integrate with the airline departure control systems using data messaging standards in accordance with international guidelines in order to provide a real-time response to the aircraft operator to verify the authenticity of a passenger's authorization during check-in.*

**9.21 Recommended Practice.**— *Contracting States seeking to implement an Electronic Travel System (ETS) should:*

- a) *ensure a robust electronic lodgement platform where an online application for authority to travel can be made. A State should make clear that their platform is the preferred means for applying online in order to reduce the scope of unofficial third party vendors that may charge an additional fee for the purpose of lodging an individual's application.*
- b) *include tools built into the application to assist individuals to avoid errors when completing the application form, including clear instructions as to the applicability of which nationalities require an ETS, and not allow application processing for non-eligible passengers (e.g. nationality and/or document type).*
- c) *institute automated and continuous vetting of relevant alert lists.*
- d) *provide electronic notification to the passenger to replace paper evidence of an individual's approval for travel.*

**9.22 Recommended Practice.**— *The information required from the passenger should be easily understood by the applicant and be kept to the minimum in accordance with national laws and regulations of that State.*

**9.23 Recommended Practice.**— *States should allow for an implementation schedule that builds awareness regarding upcoming changes and develops communication strategies in multiple languages in*

*cooperation with other governments, travel industry, airlines and organisations in order to communicate the planned implementation of an ETS.*

**9.24 Recommended Practice.**— *States should include a period of enforced compliance after the initial implementation deadline, where passengers are allowed entrance into the country but informed of the new requirements. e.g. handing out a tear sheet with new requirements.*

**9.25 Recommended Practice.**— *The aircraft operator providing transportation into the State requiring an ETS should inform their passengers of ETS requirements at time of booking and seek to extend the uplift verification check to the point of origin rather than the last leg before entry to the destination country.*

*Note.*— *This will greatly depend on other aircraft operators' interline thru check-in capabilities and the relationship between aircraft operators.*

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