



International Civil Aviation Organization

## INFORMATION PAPER

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#### Agenda Item 6: Other matters

#### PASSENGER INFORMATION

(Presented by the European Civil Aviation Conference)

#### SUMMARY

Governments and industry require passenger information both before, and at various points during the passengers' journey. Governments collect and use this information in order to discharge functions such as border control, customs, aviation security, crime and national security. Industry collects and uses passenger information for commercial and operational purposes, to provide the best possible service to the passenger for a quick and seamless journey.

This information paper highlights a number of existing data collection areas and exchanges in the passenger journey, between the passenger, industry and governments. With the number of passengers expected to grow in the coming years, it is important to evaluate how the existing use of passenger information may help to better manage increasing passenger flows, improve security and expedite legitimate travel.

In order to improve the border control process, it would be desirable for the competent public authorities and the industry to possess relevant information prior to the passenger's departure, at the earliest possible stage. Accordingly, the information collection and sharing process with governments must be configured in such a way as to serve both 'security' and 'mobility', must be proportionate, supported by a proper legal framework and not be an excessive operational or financial burden upon passengers, industry or government.

This information paper details the existing collection of passenger information by, or available to, Governments, the information collected by air carriers or their agents, and the provision by air carriers of information to government agencies.

## 1. PREAMBLE

1.1 Governments and industry alike require passenger information both before and at various points in the passengers' journey. Governments collect and use this information in order to discharge various functions, such as border control, customs, aviation security, crime prevention and national security.

1.2 Industry collects and uses passenger information in order to accomplish commercial and operational purposes, which are designed and implemented to facilitate the best possible and most efficient service, for a quick and seamless journey. The amount of information required in order to achieve this will vary according to the journey type, carrier type (scheduled, LCC, charter) and the computer systems used by the carriers to support their business. In certain circumstances, air carriers may be required to collect passenger information in order to discharge their legal duties, such as the collection of biographic information needed for advance security vetting<sup>1</sup> or API<sup>2</sup> purposes, but which has no commercial value.

1.3 Some journeys require little information from the passenger before the commencement of their journey, whereas others may require the passenger to obtain a visa or other authorization to travel.

1.4 This paper highlights a number of existing data collection areas and exchanges between the passenger, industry and governments. This information is not exhaustive.

1.5 It is commonly accepted that the number of passengers will grow significantly in the coming years. With an increased number of passengers, it is important to evaluate how the use of passenger information could potentially help to better manage increased passenger flows, improve security and expedite travel.

1.6 In order to improve the border control process, therefore, it would be desirable for the competent public authorities and industry to possess relevant information prior to the passenger's departure, at the earliest possible stage. Accordingly, the information collection and sharing process with governments must be configured in such a way as to serve both 'security' and 'mobility' purposes, be proportionate, and be based on a solid legal framework. Additionally, it must not create an excessive operational or financial burden upon passengers, industry or government.

1.7 Security refers to the interests served by the relevant authorities, i.e., preventing and combating illegal immigration, serious crime and terrorism, and ensuring (national) security in general. At the same time, the information process must seek to improve mobility and expedite traffic flow. Accordingly, passengers, air carriers and airport operators must experience the least possible hindrance from any information collection/review process, and tangible benefits should be clearly identified. Customer satisfaction, passenger processing times, and the proper identification of passengers that pose a higher risk, could serve as a number of benchmarks relevant to travellers, industry and governments. While a passenger may be requested to provide personal information in advance of travel, doing so might present an opportunity to improve his or her own travel experience and border crossing experience.

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<sup>1</sup> The United States Secure Flight programme enforces an air carrier obligation to collect certain biographic passenger information no later than 72 hours before departure for advance reservations.

<sup>2</sup> Air carriers may be required to collect biographic information for transmission to relevant governments before departure.

## 2. INTRODUCTION

2.1 A border crossing point has been traditionally an opportune moment to determine whether or not the passenger in question is eligible for entry into, or in some cases departure from a country (or region such as the Schengen Area) and to assess whether there is reason to intervene in a more detailed manner. It may also be an opportunity to detain a person for law enforcement reasons. Clearly those requiring pre-clearance, such as nationals requiring visa, could be assessed prior to border crossing.

2.2 A number of processes or events precede the actual border crossing, some of which facilitate the compilation of information, such as booking a trip, applying for a visa, checking in, crossing the border in the country of departure, airport security controls, boarding the aircraft, and then disembarking at one's destination, including transit stops, as appropriate. In the course of these consecutive phases, which are performed at various times throughout a passenger's journey, information concerning the passenger and the intended journey builds, although it is not necessarily linked electronically nor available in any one place or computer system. Whilst some phases or events may not facilitate the collection of information (such as airport security), other phases may provide items of information that may be checked by competent authorities against predefined risk assessments or the applicable watch lists. The provision and review of information in advance of travel and before a passenger actually crosses the border, may make it possible to determine whether he or she represents a risk and requires intervention, or is a low risk and may therefore continue his or her journey quickly. The intelligent use of any advance provision of information may help to expedite pre-vetted passengers to pass the border quickly, thus allowing the border authorities to focus resource on high-risk passengers requiring a more thorough investigation.

## 3. INFORMATION COLLECTED BY OR AVAILABLE TO GOVERNMENTS

3.1 ***Identity Document Issuance.*** The initial point when a passenger is required to provide information is when applying for a travel document, such as a passport or national identity card (which satisfactorily establishes identity and nationality). Such primary identity documents are necessary for the purpose of facilitating cross-border international travel and their issuance is achieved through direct Government/Passenger communication. Most applications are processed in the applicant's own country, but some - such as emergency travel documents - may be issued abroad at consular posts, or at the airport. Whilst the (identity) document application process may differ between States, common information and data collection will include facial image and biographic data, and may include some physical characteristics such as height, weight, eye colour, and contact information. In recent years, to comply with international obligations and to strengthen document and identity assurance, biometric information has been collected. This enhances document security and securely ties the document to its rightful owner, thus contributing to international border security.

3.2 ***Secondary (supporting) Document Issuance.*** It may also be necessary to obtain a visa from another country's consular representative, dependent upon the political arrangements in place between a passenger's country of citizenship and the countries to which he or she wishes to travel. The data required to obtain a visa from States can vary widely from biographic and travel document data to financial, medical, educational and employment information, confirmation of purpose of visit and also an indication of any criminal history.

3.3 The passenger may be required to submit to a biometric procedure as well as attend a personal interview as part of the visa application process. Some States may require evidence of a flight reservation or details of an itinerary prior to granting a visa. The amount of data required varies

significantly depending on the applicant, the issuing State, the reason for travel and/or the intended duration of stay.

3.4 ***Supplementary authorisation.*** As an additional or alternative requirement to a secondary document, passengers may also be required to obtain an electronic travel authorisation from the receiving State.

3.5 ***Immigration and Customs Control Inspection (Border Crossing).*** Upon landing at their final destination, passengers are required to provide evidence of their identity, nationality or citizenship and, if required, a valid visa. Biometrics, such as fingerprints or iris, may also be checked to confirm identity for border control purposes. Some States may also require the passenger to provide information on a landing or customs declaration. The information captured on a landing card often replicates that captured earlier in the passenger's journey but some additional information is also requested, such as an address, length of stay, and a signed declaration regarding goods being carried by the passenger. As data information sharing evolves, there may be an opportunity to withdraw the need for paper trails such as customs declaration forms in the future.

#### 4. INFORMATION COLLECTED BY AIR CARRIERS (OR THEIR AGENTS)

##### 4.1 Reservation information (PNR)

4.1.1 A passenger or a travel agent may make a reservation for a flight with an airline even if a visa application or travel authorisation has not been submitted. Passengers are able to make reservations in various ways, most commonly through direct contact with the airline via its website or telephone reservations office or via travel agents. Many scheduled carriers create reservations records (Passenger Name Records, PNR), for the purpose of electronically recording their business transactions with customers. The PNR contains only relevant information that an airline requires to facilitate a customer's travel for commercial and operational reasons, the content and structure of which will vary significantly between carrier systems. Charter carriers typically do not create reservations records, as reservations processes are handled by the tour operators or flight brokers that charter the flight.

4.1.2 PNR records are created at a time when a passenger requests a reservation on a flight or series of flights and which may be made typically from one year before intended departure date up to the day of departure for immediate travel. Information contained within the PNR may increase between time of creation and time of travel as necessary. Such activity will vary between airline PNR systems, where PNR systems are used.

4.1.3 Information required by airlines from the passenger can vary widely dependent upon the carrier, the route the passenger proposes or the level of service they require. The data given by the passenger or agent is accepted in good faith and cannot be verified by the carrier at the point of collection. The basic information would normally include:

- Passenger name, which is not necessarily the same as that printed or shown in the passport or identity document, e.g. Bob Smith versus Robert Smith or Mohammed Ahmed versus Ahmad Mohamed;
- Details of the intended travel itinerary related to the record; not necessarily representative of a complete itinerary as separate, independent and unconnected records may exist involving multiple airlines;

- Travel companions, if included in the same record;
- Booking source details, an indication from which office or location the reservation was requested.

4.1.4 Additional information that may or may not be found within a reservation record (PNR) might include:

- Method of payment details including (partial) credit card information, in circumstances where a customer uses a credit card as a method of payment when booking directly with the airline. In accordance with current Payment Card Industry Data Security Standards (PCI DSS) carriers are forbidden from storing full credit card numbers in PNRs once payment has been processed and secured. With the exception of low cost carriers (LCC) whose business model involves passengers booking directly with the airline concerned through which they are able to administer some process control, the percentage of records that may contain detailed payment information is low.
- Customer contact information such as telephone number and/or email address. LCC business models normally include the collection of customer contact information within the booking process. For commercial reasons, however, such information is frequently not included in airline reservation records of many scheduled carriers, but rather retained privately by the booking source such as travel agent or other commercial partner within their own system from which the majority of reservation requests are received.
- Special Service Requests (SSR) such as preferred seating and dietary requirements, as requested by the passenger. In order to accomplish efficient and appropriate handling, airlines often implement procedures for many and quite varied special circumstances according to their business which are mostly recorded in the reservation, such as the handling of weapons, service animals allowed to travel in the aircraft cabin, animals travelling in the aircraft hold, wheelchair requirements for persons with reduced mobility, necessary medical clearance, unaccompanied children, where such services are offered. Each SSR is normally denoted by an industry standard code as composed by IATA. WCHR (wheelchair required) and MEDA (medical assistance required) are examples of this.
- Remarks or comments often abbreviated with airline acronyms that may explain certain conditions or actions relevant to the booking.
- Frequent flyer scheme details. Where the passenger has indicated to the carrier that they are enrolled in a relevant frequent flyer scheme this will be noted in the record as it may affect the services offered to the passenger (use of special check-in lanes, lounges etc.).
- Biographic information that may be requested during a pre-travel environment as a way in which to relieve the burden of collecting passport information at the airport to discharge an API (Advance Passenger Information) requirement. Full biographic information is generally collected when required by law and does not normally form part of a carrier's commercial requirement, other than to discharge security procedures.

- It should be noted that the amount of information held about a passenger(s) may vary considerably from passenger to passenger and from airline to airline.

4.1.5 Reservations and Ticketing procedures have evolved over recent years, prompted largely by the advent of technology which has provided an opportunity for customers to use the internet to secure flight reservations through either direct airline communication or through alternative online booking sources according to choice. In many cases this process incorporates the issuance of an electronic ticket, as opposed to a conventional one, and provides a method by which customers are able to exercise greater freedom and control of their travel plans, such as reservation changes, seat selection or obtain a refund, for example. Certain items of information may be available to carriers during the course of this communication process without it being necessary for the passenger to speak to or meet a carrier representative in person.

## 5. CHECK-IN INFORMATION

5.1 Check-in generally describes a procedure by which a carrier is alerted to a confirmation that a passenger intends to utilise the seat on which a reservation is held and to actually board and travel as intended. This procedure may vary significantly between LCC, charter and other legacy business models, but may include self-service check-in such as internet, mobile telephone, airport kiosk or through check-in when travelling on a sequence of connecting flights with which participating carriers have commercial arrangements in place, including code-share agreements. Conventional agent check-in at the airport is diminishing over time as self-service options become increasingly more utilised. It is useful to note that check-in procedures are normally undertaken in departure control systems (DCS) of carriers designed specifically to perform airport handling functions and in most cases these systems remain completely independent and unaligned from reservations systems.

5.2 Given that DCS are normally deployed in airport environments to facilitate functions associated with airport activity, check-in records are created very close to departure, normally no earlier than approximately 24 hours, although this time will vary by airline system. DCS records and any information they contain will not be available prior to this time.

5.3 The processes implemented by air carriers will vary and some will separate check-in formalities into distinct steps, which may be performed separately and several hours apart, for example, web check-in the night before baggage is checked at the airport. Where appropriate, the check-in process may involve:

- Seat allocation or confirmation of a previously requested seat assignment. Typically LCC do not incorporate the concept of seat assignment, where passengers are free to sit where they wish onboard;
- Recording hold baggage information such as number of pieces or weight does not include baggage content, other than to record special or fragile items such as but not limited to sports equipment. Charges for weight or pieces beyond any free allowance would usually be applied;
- Collection of API (biographic information) as necessary to comply with any API programme of the country/countries involved in the journey for which check-in is performed. Where API has been collected as part of a reservations process, it may

mean a confirmation that information previously supplied is still relevant. This procedure is likely to vary between different air carriers;

- Confirmation or action of any special requests;
- Some but not all systems may indicate whether passengers form part of a group or party;
- These procedures are necessary to inform the carrier about aircraft loading, weight and balance information and to ensure accurate records of passengers checked-in on flights.

5.4 Airport check-in provides the airline with their first opportunity to view the passengers travel document. Passengers who elect to perform self service check-in (either through the use of internet or a self service kiosk at the airport) are still required to submit their document for inspection by a carrier representative at the airport, even in circumstances where API data has been provided through the self service check-in process. This is necessary to ensure that passengers are properly documented for their journey and are the rightful holders, and to protect the airline against potential air carriers' liability charges imposed by some States.

5.5 Passengers using self-service check-in will normally have their travel documents examined by an airline representative when depositing baggage to check-in. At this stage some carriers may elect to also validate the accuracy of API data previously supplied by the passenger, or collect API data, as appropriate, where it is required. Furthermore, some States may request airlines to collect copies of travel documents with regards to flights of certain destinations. These are also collected at this moment in time. Transfer passengers and those travelling without any checked-in baggage would be seen by an airline representative only before or during the boarding process.

## 6. BOARDING INFORMATION

6.1 In some cases airlines conduct checks during the boarding process in order to satisfy security procedures, including baggage reconciliation, i.e. that baggage and its owner travel together. This does not necessarily involve the collection of information, but might include automatic system functions that change a check in record status from 'checked-in' to 'boarded'.

6.2 Check-in (seat assignment) and/or the collection of API data, where appropriate, might also be performed during the boarding process. This would normally include passengers who are in transit and connecting from another flight where check-in was not performed due to technical restrictions between carrier systems. Another reason can be that API data was not previously collected because a data sharing agreement is not in place due to technical or legal reasons. It is perhaps noteworthy that where seat assignment is offered by airlines as a service component, seat numbers may change several times for various operational reasons or upon passenger request both before and after boarding has taken place. Passengers may not necessarily occupy their assigned once onboard seat either.

## 7. GENERAL DECLARATION AND PASSENGER MANIFESTS

7.1 In some Member States it is required that either a general declaration or a passenger manifest be provided by the inbound airline or aircraft operator. The data contained within these documents can include a Declaration of Health, crew and passenger numbers and place of origin.

## 8. PROVISION OF INFORMATION (BY AIRLINES) TO GOVERNMENT AGENCIES

8.1 To improve border security and to aid risk assessment of passengers prior to their departure and/or arrival as the case may be, API and PNR information may be passed by airlines to the relevant governments in advance of travel. The amount of information held and timing for transmission or receipt of this information can vary widely.

8.2 An API programme typically involves the capture and transmission of certain elements of a passenger's biographic data contained in the travel document accompanied by details of the flight to which they are assigned, by the carrier to the border control authorities. API may serve a number of purposes. It can facilitate passenger travel and border control processes. It may also be analysed for law enforcement and anti-terrorism purposes.

8.3 API programmes may be implemented in various ways with information sent either prior to or post departure or on an interactive basis (iAPI). The latter is normally associated with a pre-clearance border control strategy in which carriers systems communicate with government systems to obtain a clearance or 'vetting' (authority to carry) result during the check-in procedure.

8.4 PNR means a record of each passenger's travel requirements contained in carriers reservations systems as described above. Further examples of PNR data elements can be viewed in ICAO Circular 309, Appendix 1. Not all data elements are routinely collected by air carriers. The advance provision of PNR information by airlines to relevant governments is normally subject to the establishment of appropriate agreements.

8.5 An 'authority to carry' or pre-clearance API scheme requires air carriers to submit the passengers' details before the flight embarks. Advance receipt of information may be used by governments within an electronic risk assessment environment in order to determine eligibility of a passenger to travel to or through a State rather than to guarantee entry at the destination. The results of this advance verification could lead to an instruction to the air carrier to deny boarding or refer a passenger for more extensive security controls prior to the boarding. Advance dynamic checks of this nature could be enhanced when linked to other pre-processed information (such as visa and passport data) held in the receiving States' own databases, as well as other watchlists or databases for the purpose of identifying those individuals who should be prevented from travel.

— END —