



FACILITATION PANEL (FALP)

EIGHTH MEETING

Montréal, 24-28 November 2014

Agenda Item 4: Other matters

Electronic Travel System (ETS)

(Presented by Canada on behalf of IATA/CAWG¹)

1. INTRODUCTION

1.1 Over the past several years, more and more governments are requiring travellers to apply, or register online prior to boarding a flight for travel. These States are using mixed terminology such as “electronic Visa”, “electronic travel authority”, or “Visa on arrival” to describe their online programs.

1.2 In the past, ICAO has received working papers to support removing barriers in visa issuance by implementing an eVisa program². However, with no internationally accepted definition for a Visa, the term has failed to gain wider international recognition.

1.3 Recognizing there is no universally-accepted definition or guidance for States who wish to implement either an electronic visa (eVISA), electronic travel authority (ETA), or pre-approval for visa issuance on arrival system, a working group within IATA/CAWG was created. The working group³ was tasked to gather information relating to existing and proposed ETA and eVisa programs, identify processes that should be considered as best practices, examine the impact of visa issuance processes on airport operation and travel facilitation, and develop an informational paper.

¹ The IATA/Control Authorities Working Group (IATA/CAWG) was established in 1987, primarily as a forum for on-going dialogue between Airlines and Immigration officials in respect of the control of illegal migration. Whilst the original focus was on inadmissible passengers, IATA/CAWG now deals with many key areas of passenger facilitation. Twenty-one (21) Contracting States, along with a representative from a national airline from each State, are presently represented on the IATA/CAWG.

² A37-WP/136 EC/7 3/9/10 presented by the World Tourism Organization eVISAS: A PRESSING NEED FOR GLOBAL STANDARDS, SPECIFICATIONS AND INTEROPERABILITY.

³ The working group comprises of representatives from the Australia Department of Immigration and Citizenship, Canada Border Services Agency, Citizenship and Immigration Canada, UK Border Agency, Airlines for America, National Airlines Council of Canada, Lufthansa and Air France.

1.4 The working group has conducted a review of twenty one different States that offer an online application process for obtaining an eVISA or an ETA. The working group found that there were some common practices in the area of pre-vetting, acceptance and verification to determine a traveller's acceptance for travel to a State. However, since there is no universally accepted definition for an eVisa or an ETA, the working group began drafting an information paper to introduce a generic term "Electronic Travel System" (ETS) to best describe these programs and make the recommendation that an ETS be considered an automated process for the lodgement, acceptance and verification of an individual's authorization to travel to a country.

1.5 The working group also reviewed Australia's implementation of an ETA in 1996, and considered the Australian ETA to be a model of how countries can introduce and integrate all of the elements for an ETS.

1.6 The discussion points below highlight elements from the IATA CAWG information paper.

2. DISCUSSION

2.1 A review of various States' eVisa or ETA programs, determined that there are benefits to implementing an ETS, but also determined there were impacts to the travelling public and aircraft operators when not all of the elements of the ETS are implemented.

The proposed key elements for an ETS are as follows:

Electronic lodgement – an official electronic platform where individuals or airlines, if feasible, can make an online application for an eVisa or ETA. 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.

Automated processing – including continuous vetting of relevant alert lists to the same level as the equivalent manual process.

ETS processes – integration with government systems to facilitate vetting of travellers prior to arrival.

Electronic verification system – to replace paper print outs showing approval to travel (not enter) and accessible to the individual.

Electronic verification to air carriers – confirmation via a departure control check-in system that confirms the acceptance of an individual for travel.

2.2 IATA/CAWG intends to continue developing work on the operation of ETS programs. The working group on ETS will attempt to identify best practices and guidelines for implementing an ETS within the following categories:

1. Application process (i.e. information required from the traveller, electronic lodgement, automated processing, electronic verification for travellers, etc.)
2. Requirements for Airline Verification/System required verifying
3. Government's Communication Strategies
4. Cost and validity
5. Benefits of an ETS

2.3 IATA/CAWG would welcome input from the ICAO FAL Member States – especially from those who have experience of operating ETS's or who have plans to operate an ETS – to assist in identifying best practices and possible SARPS to Annex 9 for consideration by a future ICAO FAL Panel.

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