



ICAO WCO IATA

## Management Summary on Passenger-related Information

### ['Umbrella Document']

#### Introduction

1. The purpose of this document is to provide a high-level executive brief that describes and distinguishes between the different sources and systems for passenger-related information required to be provided by international Carriers to border control agencies.
2. A growing number of States require airlines to provide information on passengers who intend to travel to their territories. The information usually exists in a Carrier's reservation system and departure control system operated by the Carrier. Some States also require passenger-related information from other modes of transport.
3. Taking into account the increasing number of air passengers, the increase in security-related measures, the environmental and efficiency-driven innovations which result in bigger airplanes, together with the need for more efficient passenger flows at airports, it is necessary to develop more intelligent and efficient methods to check passengers and their baggage. This means that decisions to check passengers will have to be made more on the basis of pre-flight risk analysis instead of generally increasing level of checks at immigration or cross border desks and baggage claim areas.
4. Mainly as part of increased security controls, passenger-related information, available in the systems of the airlines, are being used by border control authorities in the cross border movement of persons and goods. Security-related controls are often applied even before the passenger boards the aircraft at the beginning of the journey. In any case, such controls have to be applied before the arrival of the passenger in the country of destination, in order to perform risk-based targeted controls of persons and goods. These measures will also facilitate the flow of low-risk passengers at airports.
5. The use of passenger-related information is often challenged by persons and organizations concerned about the protection of the privacy of personal information. In most jurisdictions, the use of passenger-related information for law enforcement purposes is not permissible without proper guarantees for the protection of information received by border control authorities guarding against misuse and the proper safeguard of the privacy of passengers.

#### Passenger-related information

6. The flow of passenger-related information from Carriers to border control authorities can be divided into three main streams:

1. Passenger Name Record (PNR)

- A reservation can be made from approximately 360 days before departure till the moment that the check-in process is stopped, which is approximately 2-3 hours before departure (depending on the airport and route).

- Passengers who make a reservation and do not travel on the reserved flight are called

'No-show passengers'. Passengers who do not make a reservation and can be accommodated on the flight are called 'Go-show passengers'.

## 2. Passenger Manifest Information from the Departure Control System (DCS)

Approximately 48 to 36 hours before departure all PNRs are transferred from the Airline Reservation System to the Departure Control System (DCS)<sup>1</sup>. In the DCS the operational handling of the flight will take place, at check-in (e.g. intake of baggage and issuing of Boarding passes). It is common use that a passenger manifest is forwarded to the airport of destination for operational purposes (passenger and baggage handling)

## 3. Advance Passenger Information (API) from the Departure Control System (DCS)

As API Data is not generally required for Airline processes, it will normally be collected and stored only in case of a legal requirement<sup>2</sup>. There are three methods employed to collect the required information depending on the timeframe for the provision of this data:

- a. at the moment of reservation, by the passenger and/or his travel agent (manually entered into the reservation record);
- b. at the moment of check-in, by the passenger at Internet check-in (manually entered into the API section of the DCS), by the passenger at kiosk check-in (automated from the machine readable zone<sup>3</sup>), or by the Airline agent at desk check-in (automated from the machine readable zone);
- c. at the moment of boarding, by the Airline agent (automated from the machine readable zone).

Despite these collection points, the registration by the passenger at the moment of reservation is operationally the best moment; manually entered information has the risk that incorrect information is supplied (e.g. a zero instead of the letter O). The best option from a data quality perspective is the collection of the machine readable information, via an automated process.

## **Passenger Name Record (PNR)**

7. PNR information is the generic name given to records created by the airlines for each flight a passenger books. PNR records contain information provided by the passenger and information used by airlines for their operational purposes. PNR information may include elements of information that will also be reported under API. PNR provides a mechanism for all the different parties within the aviation industry (including travel agents, air carriers and handling agents at airports) to recognize each passenger in a common format, and have access to all information relevant to his/her journey, departure and return flights, connecting flights (if any) and special services required on board the flight.
8. The amount and the nature of the information in a PNR record can vary from airline to airline and from passenger to passenger, often depending on how the reservation was made. A PNR may contain as little information as a name, or may contain full address, contact details, credit card information and all data pertaining to the booking.
9. 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, telephone reservations office or via travel agents. Many scheduled Carriers create reservations 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.
10. 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

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<sup>1</sup> A number of Carriers use one system which accommodates both PNR and DCS information.

<sup>2</sup> EU-based Airlines are bound by strict privacy legislation and are therefore only allowed to collect and disclose API data in case of a legal obligation.

<sup>3</sup> If a travel document does not have a machine readable zone, the data must be entered manually.

date up to the day of departure for immediate travel. Information contained within the PNR may increase or be amended between time of creation and time of travel as necessary.

11. The basic information of a PNR may include:
  - Passenger name (first, last and gender indication; e.g.: Mr., Mrs., Mstr., Miss, Etc.);
  - Details of the intended travel;
  - Method of payment details, which may include (partially masked) credit card information;
  - Special Service Requests (SSR) such as preferred seating, assistance for persons with disabilities (reduced mobility), etc., as requested by the passenger;
  - Contact information (may relate to the traveler or to the agent making the booking);
  - Frequent flyer number;
  - Travel document information, which may include biographic information, as part of the obligation for airlines to provide API information to the border authorities in the country of departure or destination;
  - Additional remarks or comments (if any).
12. PNR information is used by governments to analyse and make, where appropriate, the necessary interventions. PNR information can be provided by airlines by sending the information electronically ("Push" method) or allowing the appropriate authorities to access the parts of their reservation systems where the PNR information is stored ("pull" method). However, internationally there is an agreement to utilize the "Push" method.
13. The message format, called PNRGOV, for transmission of PNR information to the appropriate border control authorities is developed by using relevant international messaging standards to ensure interoperability.

#### **Passenger information in a Departure Control System (DCS)**

14. The information included in PNR records may not only relate to reservation information but could also contain information gathered at check-in when the passenger presents himself to the airline representatives at the airport. Check-in procedures are normally undertaken in the DCS of Carriers designed specifically to perform airport handling functions.
15. Check-in generally describes a procedure by which a Carrier is alerted to a confirmation that a passenger intends to utilise the seat for which a reservation is held and to actually board and travel as intended. This procedure may vary significantly between different airline business models, and may include self-service check-in such as the internet, mobile telephone, airport kiosk or through check-in when travelling on a sequence of connecting flights for which participating Carriers have commercial arrangements in place, including code-share agreements. Conventional agent check-in at the airport may diminish over time as self service options become increasingly more utilised.
16. Given that DCS systems are normally deployed in airport environments to facilitate functions associated with airport activity, check-in records are created very close to departure, normally not earlier than approximately 48 hours, although this time will vary by airline system.
17. The processes implemented by 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;
  - Recording information such as number of pieces or weight of baggage which is assigned to the hold of the aircraft;
  - Collection of API (biographic information) as necessary to comply with any API program of the country/countries involved in the journey for which check-in is performed;
  - Confirmation or action of any special requests;
  - Some but not all systems may indicate whether passengers form part of a group or party.

18. Airport check-in provides the airline with its first opportunity to view a passenger's travel document(s). Passengers who elect to perform self service check-in (either through the use of the internet or a self-service kiosk at the airport) are still required to submit their documents for inspection by an airline 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 document holders, and to protect the airline against potential liability charges imposed by some States.
19. Passengers using self-service check-in will normally have their travel documents examined by an airline representative when depositing luggage. 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 from certain high-risk destinations. These are also collected at this moment in time. Transfer passengers and those travelling without checked luggage would be seen by an airline representative before or during the boarding process.
20. 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'.
21. 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 seat once onboard.
22. In many States it is a requirement that either a general declaration or passenger manifest is 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.

#### **Advance Passenger Information (API)**

23. API includes identification details from the passport or other travel document of the passenger together with basic flight information. The identification details can be obtained from the machine readable zone of Machine Readable Travel Documents (MRTDs), e.g. passports. The standard specifications for the machine readable zones in travel document are set out in ICAO document 9303.
24. The notion of an API system was conceived by the Customs and Immigration services of certain States, who had identified the need to address the growth of air passenger traffic, which had begun to put the resources of Customs and Immigration authorities under severe pressure resulting in lengthy delays in the processing of arriving passengers at airports. In order to facilitate travellers, a system was established by which identification data of passengers could be sent to the authorities at destination upon departure of the aircraft. This data could be processed against computer databases before the arrival of the passengers, which was envisioned as a means of addressing the twin objectives of improved compliance and faster clearance of low-risk passengers. The authorities should have procedures and resources in place for examining this data and analyzing it to some extent before the flight arrives, so that the inspection time for the passengers after arrival may be reduced. This approach is being gradually superseded by more demanding approaches in light of increased threats to security.

25. A definition of API System can be found in Annex 9 to the Convention on International Civil Aviation:

**Advance Passenger Information (API) System.** *An electronic communications system whereby required data elements are collected and transmitted to border control agencies prior to flight departure or arrival and made available on the primary line at the airport of entry.*

26. A standardized API system should include the following *Key Elements*:

1. An API system should be user-friendly, seamless and where appropriate facilitate the travel of passengers as a result of API data analysis.
  2. An API system should, as an important part of the required API data, contain the data from the machine readable zone of travel documents (see ICAO Document 9303).
  3. An API system should take into account the interests of key stakeholders.
  4. All relevant data requirements of the requesting border agency must be taken into account. The data requirements should originate from one representative agency of the requesting Control Authority.
  5. Control Authorities should work together to respect the data requirements of different Control Authorities and, to the extent possible, should minimise the impact upon Carriers of providing different data to different Control Authorities on individual flights.
  6. Management of contractors and costs in a collective way to ensure unilateral systems are capable of operating in bilateral and multilateral environments, taking account of international recognized standards to achieve a harmonised environment.
  7. With respect to the message format for transmission of API, systems should be developed to use the UN/EDIFACT messaging standard to ensure that interoperability is achieved. However, this should not be seen as constraining the ability to adopt other internationally agreed standards in the longer term.
  8. API systems should seek to minimize the impact on existing Carrier system and technical infrastructure.
  9. An API system should be capable of round-the-clock operation, with contingency procedures in place to minimize disruption to Carrier operations in the event of system failure.
27. Control Authorities choosing to introduce API systems should adopt the principles contained in this document. However, nothing in this document is to be construed as contradictory to national legislation or regulations.

#### **Interactive API (iAPI).**

28. The API approach has been gradually superseded by more demanding approaches in light of increased threats to security. For example in some States, a more sophisticated form of API is being deployed as an instrument to confront potential risks posed by airline passengers, especially in regard to aviation security, immigration requirements, drug trafficking and other threats to national security. This form of API called interactive API (iAPI) is an additional means of enhancing border security. A distinguishing feature of iAPI is that it provides for passenger-by-passenger online interchange of electronic messaging between the Carrier and the border control authority in the country of departure or destination. At the instant a passenger checks-in to a flight for boarding, passenger information flows from the Carrier's departure control system to the border control authorities, who in turn send (in real time) an electronic message response to the Carrier permitting or preventing the boarding of the passenger. This type of system is referred to as "Board/No Board", "Red Light/Green Light System" and "Authority to Carry".
29. iAPI is also a facilitative measure since the use of an iAPI system reduces the exposure of Carriers to penalties associated with bringing inadmissible passengers into the country of destination. Implementation of iAPI poses certain technical challenges in terms of system

availability, outage management, and reliability of electronic message transmissions, managing service levels, and maintaining data quality by systems operated by both the Carrier and State.

30. The WCO/IATA/ICAO Guidelines are intended to address the structure and processes relating to an interactive API system developed internally by a State, or which are developed by a commercial service provider based on the State's technical specifications. The WCO/IATA/ICAO Guidelines are not intended to address systems developed entirely by commercial service providers and then marketed to a State as a turn-key data exchange solution.

#### **Use of passenger-related information by immigration authorities**

31. Immigration authorities are responsible for facilitating the legitimate entry and exit of passengers and to prevent illegal immigration. With the use of passenger-related information, immigration authorities can make a decision if a passenger can be allowed to enter or leave a country before the passenger has presented himself to the immigration authorities. This can limit the number of physical inspections and facilitate the flow of passengers at an airport.

#### **Use by passenger-related information by customs authorities**

32. In most countries the customs authority is responsible for monitoring the cross border movement of goods and to prevent the entering of prohibited, restricted and regulated goods. Part of that responsibility includes inspection of carry-on and checked-in baggage. Passenger information has proved to be useful when following a risk-based approach in identifying high-risk passengers and to secure and facilitate the entry and exit of the baggage of passengers with minimal intrusive inspections.

#### **Legal basis**

33. The obligation for passengers and airlines to provide for passenger-related information must be based on national legal provisions, which should include rules for the collection, use and storage of passenger related information, together with measures to protect information and safeguard privacy.
34. On an international level basic rules for the use of API and PNR are developed in ICAO Annex 9–Facilitation to the Convention on International Civil Aviation (Chicago Convention, 1944<sup>4</sup>) and the Revised Kyoto Convention of the World Customs Organization. For API, Standard 3.47 of Annex 9 obliges each Contracting State that introduces an API system under its national legislation to adhere to internationally recognized standards for the transmission of API.
35. The Revised Kyoto Convention states in Recommended Practice 8 of Specific Annex J, Chapter 1, that the Customs, in co-operation with other agencies and the trade, should seek to use internationally standardized advance passenger information, where available, in order to facilitate the Customs control of travellers and the clearance of goods carried by them.
36. On PNR information, Recommended Practice 3.48 of Annex 9 states that Contracting States requiring PNR access should specify their data requirements and the handling of such data in conformance to guidelines developed by ICAO.

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<sup>4</sup> This also requires Airlines to disclose passenger information in accordance with the laws and regulations of the contracting State.

## **PNR Guidelines**

37. The PNR Guidelines were developed by ICAO in close cooperation with IATA and the WCO. Currently, the PNR Guidelines include an explanatory text for the use of PNR information and an Annex with a maximum list of PNR data. The PNR Guidelines also include a standardized message for the exchange of PNR information. The first version of the PNR Guidelines was published in 2006. The latest edition of the PNR Guidelines was published in 2010 as ICAO document 9944. The cooperation between the three organizations will result in the official association of IATA and WCO in the joint future development of the PNR Guidelines.

## **API Guidelines**

38. The API Guidelines were developed in 1993 under the auspices of the World Customs Organization (WCO) and the International Air Transport Association (IATA). In 2003 the International Civil Aviation Organization (ICAO) joined the development of the API Guidelines. The latest version of the API Guidelines was published in 2013. The API Guidelines comprise an explanatory section for the use of API, including iAPI details. The API Guidelines consist also of a maximum list of API data and an Annex with the international recognised electronic UN/EDIFACT message (PAXLST) and an implementation guide for the PAXLST message. The iAPI response message details for an UN/EDIFACT message (CUSRES) are also included in a separate Annex to the API Guidelines.

## **Electronic exchange of passenger-related information**

39. The electronic exchange of passenger-related information is a prerequisite for the efficient use of API, iAPI and PNR information. However, various data exchange requirements, often in different message formats and at various times, have resulted in the proliferation of sometimes conflicting national requirements, causing unnecessary cost for airlines. Standardized messages for API, iAPI and PNR are necessary to be able to efficiently exchange information between airlines and border control authorities.
40. The PAXLST and CUSRES message format used in API and interactive API transmissions must be approved by UN/EDIFACT (United Nations rules for Electronic Data Interchange For Administration, Commerce and Transport) to be able to function as international recognized standardized messages. The PNRGOV message has been developed for reporting PNR data. This message is based on EDIFACT rules and syntax. The message is supported by an airline industry directory identified as the PADIS directory.
41. The UN/EDIFACT rules comprise a set of internationally agreed standards, directories and guidelines for the electronic interchange of structured data, and in particular that related to trade in goods and services between independent, computerized information systems. The PAXLST message is the standardized message for API and interactive API messages. The CUSRES message is the standardised response message for iAPI. The PNRGOV message is the standardised message for PNR information.
42. It is to be expected that the standardised messages will be supplemented by modern message techniques, such as international XML standards or web-based applications.

## **International cooperation**

43. The developments on API and PNR are discussed and coordinated within each of the three organizations, WCO, IATA and ICAO. Interested governments and other stakeholders, including the airline industry, take part in these discussions with the aim to further develop common Guidelines and to maintain the standardised messages. More specifically, the work related to the maintenance of the API PAXLST and iAPI CUSRES message and the PNRGOV message is carried out by the WCO/IATA/ICAO API Contact Committee, assisted by the WCO secretariat.

**Structure of the Passenger Information Guidelines and Messages**

