



**THIRTY-NINTH PLENARY (TRIENNIAL) SESSION**

(Videoconference, 12 July 2021)

**Agenda item 4:                    Presentation of the Focal Point reports**

**REPORT ON ECAC ACTIVITIES IN THE FIELD OF FACILITATION**

(Presented by Alessio Quaranta, Focal Point for Facilitation and Security)

**SUMMARY**

This paper presents the report of the ECAC activities in the facilitation field, as performed by the Facilitation Working Group and the two Sub-Groups on Immigration and Transport of Persons with Reduced Mobility during the 2019-2021 triennium.

**ACTION TO BE TAKEN**

The Plenary Session is invited to note the main achievements in the field of facilitation for the period 2019-2021.

## Introduction

1. ECAC's activities in the field of facilitation have previously focused mainly on immigration matters and the handling of persons with reduced mobility (PRMs), with an inevitable refocusing of activity on health matters during this triennium as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic. Particular relevance has been placed on the facilitation domain, in particular regarding its coordination function, e.g. between the aviation and other sectors (such as health and/or border and immigration) since the beginning of the COVID-19 pandemic.

2. The immigration and PRM activities have been performed by two sub-groups (immigration and PRMs) and by the Facilitation Working Group, which reports to the Facilitation Programme Management Group. The Facilitation Working Group and its sub-groups include representatives of ECAC Member States as well as observers from organisations (e.g. European Commission) and industry stakeholders. This ensures a comprehensive approach to the various aspects of facilitation (e.g. persons with disabilities, customs, health, immigration).

3. Regarding the management of these groups, 2020 saw the appointment of a new chair of the Facilitation Working Group - Ms Teresa Antunes (Portugal), of a new chair of the Sub-Group on Immigration - Mr Diantha Raadgers (Netherlands) and of a new chair of the Sub-Group on the Transport of Persons with Reduced Mobility (PRMs) – Ms Marie Hauerova (Czech Republic).

## Implementation of the 2019-2021 Work Programme

4. The 2019-2021 Work Programme in the facilitation field aims at developing efficient, effective and harmonised aviation facilitation measures on a Pan-European basis. This work supports the harmonised implementation of ECAC Doc 30 Part I Recommendations in the field of facilitation, and the promotion of European priorities in facilitation with international partners, regional and international organisations. It includes the following key objectives:

- To further develop ECAC Doc 30, Part I, Recommendations and its Annexes in order to meet the evolution of facilitation matters and current practices of Member States and the industry.
- To ensure consistency between ECAC Doc 30, Part I (Facilitation), and EU/EC Regulations, and ICAO Annex 9 Standards and Recommended Practices (SARPs).
- To promote the sharing of information and best practice on the implementation of facilitation measures among ECAC Member States.
- To support Member States in the effective implementation of Doc 30 Recommendations on facilitation and encourage the development of expertise in ECAC Member States.
- To promote Pan-European priorities and positions in international meetings.

5. **Further development of Doc 30, Part I:** In line with the aforementioned work programme, regular updates of ECAC Doc 30, Part I and its Annexes have been made, to ensure that its provisions reflect Member States' needs and practices as well as recent amendments to relevant EU regulations and ICAO Annex 9 SARPs. These updates have included a series of amendments reviewing the provisions on Advance Passenger Information (API), interactive Advance Passenger Information (iAPI), Passenger Name Record (PNR) and Electronic Travel Systems in 2019 and an amendment concerning multiple valid passports in 2020. In addition, a new Section for ECAC Doc 30, Part I, containing Recommendations on health matters, was included on the basis of the discussions held during the Directors General level European Coordination Meetings on COVID-19 organised since mid-March 2020. In 2021 an amendment relating to

Passengers with reduced mobility (PRM) matters in Section 5, along with several Annexes to the Section (e.g. on hidden disabilities and language related to service animals) and an amendment relating to immigration matters to reflect Amendment 28 to ICAO Annex 9 to Passenger Name Record (PNR) data and the ICAO Public Key Directory were approved, and these will be submitted for adoption by Directors General.

### **Sharing of best practice on facilitation measures**

6. **Facilitation surveys:** In order to facilitate the exchange of information on national initiatives between ECAC Member States, web-based surveys are launched on an annual basis on the following topics:

- Biometric and Automated Border Control (ABC) systems;
- API/PNR initiatives;
- Air carrier liability; and
- Passengers with reduced mobility (PRM) complaints.

7. The analysis of the responses is reported to the respective groups and allows the participants to have a better overall view of the level of implementation of the relevant ECAC Doc 30, Part I Recommendations and national initiatives in the different domains, and on this basis to agree on follow-up actions, as appropriate.

8. **Workshop on PRM charges:** A Workshop on PRM charges linked to PRM assistance quality criteria was organised, in cooperation with the ECAC Economic Working Group, in February 2019 covering the legal framework and recent PRM developments, criteria and procedures for establishing PRM charges, quality standards for assistance to PRMs, and the role of the regulators in establishing PRM charges.

9. Following that, a survey on PRM charges, jointly developed by the Sub-Group on Transport of Persons with Reduced Mobility (PRMs) and the Network of Chief Economists, was launched in 2019 and a study group to further assess PRM charges and develop recommendations was established. The study group on PRM charges has, since then, further identified relevant provisions, with a view to supporting harmonisation and simplification of the system of charging. A document on key elements on PRM charges, is also being finalised (see paragraph 13).

10. **Meeting with external experts:** For the first time in 2019, the Sub-Group on PRMs organised a meeting with experts from the private sector involved in delivering PRM assistance to exchange on topics of current interest, such as assistance dogs and their recognition, the identification of hidden disabilities and awareness-raising activities (e.g. autism). A second meeting was held in 2020. The meetings were considered very valuable by all participants, and there was consensus that a further such meeting should be held in 2021, back-to-back with a workshop on health matters related to PRM assistance.

### **Capacity-building activities in facilitation**

11. **Quality Assessment Programme on Assistance to Persons with Disabilities and Persons with Reduced Mobility:** The Quality Assessment Programme (QAP) was developed in 2019 as part of the facilitation capacity-building activities. It aims to create a systematic and harmonised method for air carriers and airports to be assessed by teams of experts from Member States, to ensure that passengers with disabilities and reduced mobility (PRMs) receive the same high level of service in all ECAC Member States. Following a Pilot Phase I in 2019 five pilot assessments were organised. Phase II of the QAP began in February 2020 with a workshop and a training session for nominated national experts. Several assessments were planned for 2020, but due to the COVID-19 pandemic, these assessments have been postponed to late 2021/early 2022.

## **COVID-related matters**

12. In 2020 and 2021, the work of the ECAC groups in facilitation was refocused on discussions related to health matters and the COVID-19 pandemic, including the role and importance of facilitation in this regard and the consequences the crisis has had on PRMs and immigration matters. The groups also actively contributed to documents presented to the European Coordination Meetings on the COVID-19 crisis, such as the key elements on the recovery in facilitation and the previously mentioned new Section for ECAC Doc 30, Part I containing Recommendations on health matters.

13. In addition, a document with key elements on PRM charges is being finalised. This stand-alone document will serve as initial guidance for ECAC Member States in their considerations regarding PRM charges, in particular during and following the COVID-19 crisis. It outlines potential best practice that States should consider, and should be considered as a living document, aimed at achieving a more harmonised approach towards PRM charges in the ECAC region, in particular during the COVID-19 crisis.

14. Following a joint risk assessment on COVID-19 related matters, the facilitation and security domains in ECAC agreed on enhanced cooperation (through joint meetings of the FAL Working Group and the Guidance Material Task Force). This initiative resulted in agreement on a regular informal consultation and exchanges between the respective chairs on matters that were identified as of joint interest, and proposals for including provisions on the facilitation-security relations are being discussed in the security domain.

## **International engagement**

15. In order to promote European positions in international meetings, the European Coordination Group on facilitation (ECG-FAL) prepared the European contributions for international meetings. In this triennium this has included the ICAO Facilitation Panel (FALP/11, 13-16 January 2020) and the 40<sup>th</sup> session of the ICAO Assembly (Montreal, 24 September – 4 October 2019). Activities in 2021 have included the preparation for the ICAO Facilitation Panel (FALP/12, 13-23 July 2021) and for the facilitation stream of the ICAO High Level Conference on COVID-19 (HLCC2021, 12-22 October 2021).

16. For the 40<sup>th</sup> session of the ICAO Assembly, coordination efforts focussed on developing key messages and strategies for Agenda Item 14 – *Facilitation*. Europe submitted one working paper on the Assistance to Aircraft Accident Victims and their Families (WP/127), which received overwhelming support, as well as an information paper on Standards and principles on the collection, use, processing and protection of Passenger Name Record Data (WP/530). Overall, through these coordination efforts, the European objectives were achieved, and lead to the inclusion of supportive references to assistance to aircraft accident victims and their families and accessibility for passengers with disability in the Assembly Resolution A40-16 at the initiative of European States.

17. With the aim of promoting the mutual understanding of facilitation issues with international partners and regional and international organisations, dialogue and regular exchanges are organised, for example with the United States Department of Transportation (DOT) on recent developments and future work on PRMs and the respective regimes for the supervision of the implementation of PRM requirements.

## **Action to be taken**

18. The Plenary Session is invited to note the main achievements in the field of facilitation for the period 2019-2021.