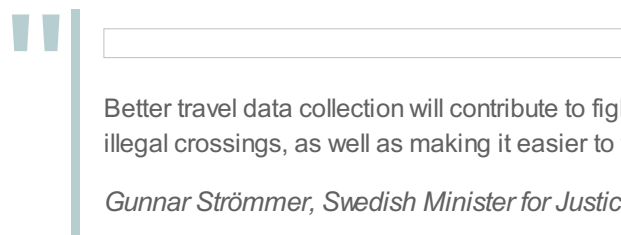


Air travel data: Council adopts position on EU laws about data collection and processing

The EU member states ambassadors today agreed on the Council's negotiating mandate for two legislative proposals on the collection and transfer of advance passenger information. Advance passenger information (API) contains identification details from the travel document and basic flight information. The goal of the two draft laws is to facilitate border management at the EU's external borders as well as to fight terrorism and serious crime.



Better travel data collection will contribute to fighting crime more efficiently and help border guards stop illegal crossings, as well as making it easier to travel by air.

Gunnar Strömmer, Swedish Minister for Justice

The two regulations will put in place a router that receives the API data transferred to it by air carriers. The router, in turn, transmits API data to national border and law enforcement authorities. The development of a single router, a central tool which will be developed by an EU agency, makes it easier for air carriers to transfer the information to national authorities and reduces the risk for errors and abuse.

Air carrier data collection

The two laws stipulate what API data air carriers must collect and transfer to the router. API data will consist of a closed list of traveller information such as name, date of birth, nationality, type and number of the travel document, seating information and baggage information. In addition, air carriers will be obliged to collect certain flight information, for instance the flight identification number, the airport code and time of departure and arrival.

More effective crime fighting

The new law will enable law enforcement authorities to combine travellers' API data and passenger name records (PNR). The PNR is a larger set of air passenger data and contains details about the itinerary of a passenger and information of the flight booking process. When used together, API and PNR are particularly effective to identify high-risk travellers and to confirm the travel pattern of suspected persons.

Better border process

Border authorities will get a more complete view of travellers arriving at airports. They will be able to perform pre-checks before arrival and as a consequence manage their border controls more efficiently. This should increase the chances of preventing unwanted border crossings. Passengers should benefit from shorter waiting times and smoother passport checks.

Next steps

Today's agreement on a Council position will allow to start negotiations with the European Parliament, once it has agreed its own standpoint, in order to reach a common position.

Background

Organised crime uses air travel to smuggle persons, drugs and other illicit goods. International travel also plays an important role in terrorist activities. Having complete and timely information about travellers is essential to fight serious crime and terrorism. However, under current rules, the collection and processing of API data by competent authorities is inconsistent across the EU.

The present proposal closes this security gap.

2019 figures from the International Civil Aviation Organisation show that over half a billion air passengers enter or leave the EU every year. Efficient border management is therefore essential to smoothly manage travellers and prevent illegal border crossings. The rules in place now do not impose the collection of API data for all flights and allow for latitude as to which data must be collected and how.

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