



FORTY-SECOND PLENARY (TRIENNIAL) SESSION

(Strasbourg, 9-10 July 2024)

Agenda item 4: Presentation of the Focal Point reports

REPORT ON ECAC ACTIVITIES IN THE FIELD OF FACILITATION

(Presented by David Benito, Focal Point for Facilitation)

SUMMARY

This paper presents the report of the ECAC activities in the facilitation field, as performed by the Facilitation Working Group, its two sub-groups on Immigration and Transport of Persons with Reduced Mobility, and the Task Group on State Assistance to Air Accident Victims and their Families during the 2022-2024 triennium. It also reports on the preparation and implementation of the new ECAC Quality Assessment Programme.

ACTION TO BE TAKEN

The Plenary Session is invited to note the main achievements in the field of facilitation for the period 2022-2024.

Introduction

1. ECAC's activities in the field of facilitation, while continuing their traditional focus on the handling of persons with reduced mobility (PRMs), cargo and customs matters, and immigration matters, have been expanded in the post-COVID-19 pandemic environment. Health and cargo had already been added to the topics contained within ECAC's work in this domain, and assumed particular relevance as a result of the immediate impacts of the pandemic.

2. Since then, and as a result of lessons learned from the pandemic, further focus has been placed on the facilitation domain, in particular regarding its coordinating function, e.g. between the aviation and other sectors (such as health and/or borders and immigration). This has brought with it a broader range of facilitation activities for ECAC Member States to address nationally and at a global level.

3. The effect of this has been to continue to raise the profile of facilitation as an aviation discipline, and the work of ECAC in this domain has developed accordingly. It has resulted in a general stepping-up of activity across the range of facilitation topics. This has been reflected in facilitation being given a higher level of visibility at global events, including the 41st ICAO Assembly, the organisation of two joint events with ICAO EURNAT Office, focused on dissemination of the lessons learned from recent events in the facilitation domain; and in greater engagement of industry and civil society organisations in the facilitation work.

4. More specifically, this triennium saw the piloting and adoption of the Quality Assessment Programme on Assistance to Persons with Disabilities and Persons with Reduced Mobility, representing a significant addition to ECAC's capacity building work.

Organisation

5. The immigration and PRM activities have been carried out 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).

6. In January 2024, following approval from Directors General, the State Assistance to Air Accident Victims Task Group has been established for an initial 12-months period with a mandate to help ECAC Member States to develop family assistance plans through the sharing of best practice.

7. Ms Teresa Antunes (Portugal) remains chair of the Facilitation Working Group since her appointment in 2020. Mr Laurent Noël (Switzerland) remains as deputy chair of the working group. Ms Marie Hauerova (Czechia) remained as chair of the Sub-Group on Transport of Persons with Reduced Mobility until February 2024. After stepping down she was succeeded by Mr Mark De Laurentis (Italy). Ms Kirsi Tervola-Joutsen (Finland) was appointed as the deputy chair of the sub-group in April 2023. Ms Diantha Raadgers (Netherlands) continued as chair of the Sub-Group on Immigration until stepping down in January 2024, and was appointed as chair of the State Assistance to Air Accident Victims Task Group. She was joined at the same time by Ms Chiara Cicirello (Italy) as deputy chair of the task group.

8. Ms Teresa Antunes (Portugal) acted as chair of the European Coordination Group for Facilitation (ECG-FAL) in 2022 and 2023. The current chair of this group is Ms Denia Priami (Italy) who took this role up in January 2024.

9. Mr David Benito (DGCA, Spain) was appointed Focal Point for Facilitation in September 2023, thus taking over as chair of the Facilitation Programme Management Group. Under his leadership the Management Group held a meeting in February 2024.

Implementation of the 2022-2024 work programme

10. The 2022-2024 work programme in the facilitation field aims at developing efficient, effective and harmonised aviation facilitation measures on a Pan-European basis. It includes the key objectives:

- To further develop ECAC Doc 30, Part I (Facilitation) 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 SARPs.
- To promote the sharing of information and best practices on the implementation of facilitation measures among ECAC Member States.
- To support Member States in the effective implementation of Doc 30, Part I (Facilitation), Recommendations on facilitation and encourage the development of expertise in ECAC Member States.
- To promote Pan-European priorities and positions in international meetings.
- To further develop ECAC Doc 30, Part I (Facilitation), in order to reflect and address the management of pandemics and related health measures.

ECAC Doc 30 Part I (Facilitation)

11. Under the work programme, a study group was set up in 2022 to review the Doc 30, Part I Further development of Doc 30, Part I and its Annexes. This work was broken down into a series of updates to reflect substantial changes to relevant EU regulations and ICAO Annex 9 SARPs, as well as the development of broader guidance and understanding in ECAC of facilitation matters. The 13th edition of Doc 30 Part I was published in January 2024 following approval by Directors General (DGCA/161, 7 December 2023), reflecting changes including in relation to Advanced Passenger Information and Passenger Name Records (API and PNR), disinfection and disinsection, unruly passengers, PRMs (accompanying persons and lifting practices) and wildlife trafficking communications. Further work is being carried out in 2024 and will likely be continued into the next triennium.

Surveys of ECAC Member States

12. Facilitation surveys have continued to prove useful for facilitating the exchange of information on national initiatives between ECAC Member States and allowing participants to have a better overall view of the level of implementation of the relevant ECAC Doc 30, Part I Recommendations. Annual web-based surveys have continued on the topics of PRM complaints and air carrier liability (with the exception of 2023, as additional analysis was being undertaken to improve the usefulness of the survey for facilitation experts).

13. New surveys were also carried out to bridge knowledge gaps and identify the need for further work on the topics of assistance dogs (launched in January 2023) and assistance to air accident victims (launched in September 2023). Following analysis of the results of these surveys, they will be used to determine areas of work where ECAC could add value in these fields.

Passengers with reduced mobility

14. Following meetings with external experts in the area of PRMs in 2019 and 2020, it was agreed under the current work programme that it was important for the Sub-Group on PRMs to continue to discuss its activities with experts from the private sector involved in delivering PRM assistance to exchange on topics of current interest. The meeting of the Facilitation Experts Group on the Transport of Persons with Reduced Mobility was formally incorporated into the annual work programmes with meetings held in 2022, 2023 and planned for 2024. Experts discussed topics of importance including PRM codes used by airport operators, assistance dogs and the update Doc 30, Part I.

Quality Assessment Programme (QAP)

15. During this period, The second pilot phase of the Quality Assessment Programme on Assistance to Persons with Disabilities and Persons with Reduced Mobility continued with assessments in May 2022 and March 2023. On the basis of the progress made over the course of the pilot phases, Directors General approved the launch of the programme as of 2024 (DGCA/160, 6 May 2023).

16. The main objective of the QAP is to develop a standardised method for ECAC Member States to ensure the effective and harmonised implementation of ECAC Doc 30, Part I, Section 5 recommendations. The programme has been designed to provide ECAC Member States with advice and support in their compliance monitoring activities and to support all operators providing an assistance service, such as airport operators, air carriers and ground handling companies, to work in partnership to ensure professional and seamless service for persons with disabilities and PRMs.

17. The Programme is managed by the Secretariat, and nominations for the first assessments of the QAP were received in early 2024, with the first three assessments being organised between September 2024 and the end of the year. As part of the programme, it was agreed that all assessors should be required to complete an ECAC training course and certification in advance of carrying out an assessment under the ECAC QAP. This has been developed and is currently being run by the ECAC Secretariat. A pilot training course and certification was carried out in October 2023, which resulted in the certification or provisional certification of eight assessors (from seven States and the ECAC Secretariat). The second training course took place in April 2024, resulting in a further six assessors (from five Member States).

International engagement

18. 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 41st session of the ICAO Assembly (Montreal, 27 September – 7 October 2022) and the 13th ICAO Facilitation Panel (Montreal, 26 February – 1 March 2024).

19. For the 41st session of the ICAO Assembly, a paper was submitted on 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). While the time allowed in the 41st Assembly for facilitation topics was very constrained, the European objectives were achieved, and led 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 A41-16 at the initiative of European States.

20. During the 13th Facilitation Panel, papers submitted by individual Member States were well supported, including on topics of collective interest to ECAC such as assistance dogs and the IATA One Click initiative. A paper was presented by the ECAC Secretariat, in its capacity as observer to the Panel, promoting the use of quality assessments to support the development of harmonised approaches and a benchmark level of assistance for persons with disabilities and reduced mobility. The papers were agreed for further consideration under the ICAO Working Group on Accessibility.

21. Two joint workshops were held with the European and North Atlantic (EUR/NAT) Office of ICAO as follows:

- Regional workshop on assistance to aircraft accident victims and their families - February 2023 in Milan
- Joint workshop on National Facilitation Committees and Programmes - March 2024 in Athens.

22. These events were noted as a valuable means to chart progress across ECAC Member States, as well as an opportunity for States to learn from each other's experiences and to help develop best practice in facilitation. Directors General agreed in April 2024 that further workshops, including a follow-up one on the topic of National Facilitation Programmes, should be planned in future.

23. In Spring 2023 the ECAC News was dedicated to the topic of facilitation under the title of *Sustainable Recovery – How can facilitation deliver for the passenger?*

Action to be taken

24. The Plenary Session is invited to note the main achievements in the field of facilitation for the period 2022-2024.

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