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Future Group on Travel Intelligence and Border Management

Outcome of the 4th Workshop – 3 & 4 February 2020

Introduction

On 3 & 4 February 2020 the fourth workshop of the Future Group on Travel Intelligence and Border Management, jointly organised by Frontex and Europol, was held at the Headquarters of Europol in The Hague, The Netherlands. This report presents the outcome of that workshop, along with the related highlights of the discussions. This fourth Workshop is part of a series, aimed at identifying operational opportunities stemming from recent policy developments related to security, border management and interoperability at EU level.

Main focus of the meeting

This fourth workshop was aimed at further discussing the concepts of border management that were developed during the second workshop, especially concerning the person-centric approach to data management and the related back-office function to support first-line and second-line border checks. In addition, specific attention was given to the risks associated to EU citizens (including long-term residence card holders) and possible measures to contain those risks.

Border crossings of EU Citizens

A detailed discussion was held on the risks and issues of border management related to EU citizens and residence card holders. The current checks and processes are less thorough than needed and the new intruments, like EES and ETIAS, and the adjustment of VIS focus mainly on Third Country Nationals.

The future prospect of interactive API

A presentation was delivered on the future of API, which needs to become interactive to make ETIAS and the revised VIS mechanisms work in practice. In the future, air carriers, but also ferries and cross-border trains and buses have to check before departure if passengers have a basis for admission to Schengen. This can be a travel authorisation (ETIAS,Visa) or an EU passport. The data from the Machine-Readible Zone (MRZ) will be checked against the systems for non-EU citizens, whereas for EU citizens some checks might be relevant as well against possibly relevant data repositories. That should not trigger a hit for the carriers, but only an alert for law enforcement.

Person-centric data management

In follow up to previous discussions, the Future Group had an in-depth discussion on the concept of person-centric data management by which the data is focussed on the individual traveller along the border continuum, so bringing together all relevant information of the different stages to inform the border guard on the admission, refusal or reference to second line. To enable the border guard to quickly digest the information from the many different systems and sources, the person-centric data management envisages the integration into a single screen, which highlights the points of attention, such as inconsistencies between data in the passport and the travel authorisation or hits against SIS.

Back-office function for border management

In support of the frontline border checks, the Future Group has discussed the concept of a back-office function, fulfilling the more complex tasks in support of the first-line check and possibly preparing the interviews for the second-line border check. In this back-office function at least a form of pre-assessment of arriving travellers on the basis of advance passenger information would be done. Depending on the situation

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and set up of competent authorities per Member State, this may also include the work of the PIU and possibly customs. While in some countries these functions may remain separated, in others it may turn into a national targeting centre.

On this point of the back-office, the possibilities for support from Europol and Frontex may be relevant. Concrete examples that were discussed relate to collecting signals from front-line on suspicious trends, routes and modi operand; assessing those in terms of scope and impact and sharing those with the relevant PIUs, Europol APs, border forces, customs services and other relevant competent authorities. Vice versa, also of potential relevance is the active skimming and analysis of criminal trends and patterns related to the suspicious movements of persons and goods from on-going investigations, of which the results can be reported as travel intelligence to relevant partners.

Operational pilot(s)

The Future Group discussed as a practical example an on-going case, in which the specifics of the modus operandi were asked to see if targeting by PIUs would be possible. In addition, the investigation was requested to specify the questions that could be asked by border guards from travellers that relate to the criminal phenomenon, so to systematically collect information as input for the AP. The questions and description of the phenomenon would be dispatched to border forces through Frontex, and the answers would be channelled back into the AP for analysis by Europol.

Attendance

The Workshop was attended by representatives from several Member States, Frontex and Europol, from varying professional backgrounds and competent authorities, which allowed to approach the topics discussed from multiple relevant angles. The setting was informal among experts, without official, national or organisational positions, which stimulated the open and out-of-the-box orientation of the discussions.

Next meetings

- Workshop 5: 30 & 31 March 2020; Frontex Headquarters, Warsaw
- Workshop 6: 7 & 8 May 2020; Europol Headquarters, The Hague

Due to the absence of any Customs representatives at some of the previous workshops it was agreed to have a dedicated focus on Customs cooperation at the forthcoming workshop in March.

Further information

The current report on the outcome of the third Workshop of the Future Group will be shared with the stakeholders associated to Frontex and Europol. Further information can be obtained by contacting:

- [redacted] at Frontex via [redacted] or
- [redacted] at Europol via [redacted].

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