

## Future Passengers Traffic

### READY OR NOT, HERE THEY COME

Is Europe ready for the estimated 600 million extra passengers forecast to be flying 20 years from now?

This question was posed by Edgar Beugels to begin the European Day for Border Guards' discussion about future passengers traffic and the Head of the Research and Development Unit at Frontex took it upon himself to answer it before introducing the panel: "Sometimes I have the impression Europe is not," he said.

Although the growth in passenger numbers in Europe will be relatively low compared with other regions of the world, Beugels brought in David Trembaczowski-Ryder, Head of Aviation Security at ACI-Europe (Airports Council International), to expand on the potential developments and changes that will occur. "Will Europe be hubs or feeders?" he asked.

Trembaczowski-Ryder pointed out that in the aviation industry "historically it's been North America and Europe that have led the way" but that Heathrow had already lost its number one position to Dubai, and ACI's figures predict Europe will face challenges processing the higher numbers. As there are not any plans to build new airports, the increased capacity will have to be handled by "largely the same or roughly the same infrastructure" we have today.


Huub Dijstelbloem, Professor of Philosophy of Science and Politics at the University of Amsterdam, described how airports, icons of globalisation for the "kinetic elite", have evolved from being based on train stations to being modelled on shopping malls and then in the 90s borrowed a new metaphor from the internet, in particular Amazon's "one-click formula". For passengers it feels like "one flow" and they are not even aware of crossing a border, "with one click you could go everywhere." Ominously, he said the future holds an increased use of robots not only for "manual labour but also mainly in information processing" which potentially will have implications for security as "a significant amount of work might be taken over by robots."

Charlotte North, Border Force Strategy Officer at the Home Office, hastened to say airports were "not run by robots yet." Her rules-based targeting of high-risk travellers, an intelligence-led process involving staff from a range of agencies, will form part of the "tool-kit" for border guards and would not replace the need for border guards. However the intelligence, from Advanced Passenger Information (API) and Passenger Name Record (PNR), creates profiles of passenger behaviour and matches patterns to identify risks that will facilitate the flow for "legitimate travellers" and move the interventions earlier in the process so that they are not in the arrivals hall.

Finding a balance between airport security and improving passenger movement is shared by Trembaczowski-Ryder and he believes by moving to a risk-based strategy, like the American "pre-check" system" and Border Force's processes, eventually the need for 99.99% of passengers to take off jackets, shoes and other items would not be necessary; "divestment" will be gone in a few years, he said. "The issue is that current regulations don't allow that," he reminded the audience.

Both North and Trembaczowski-Ryder agreed more integration between intelligence gathering by border guards and airports will improve the experience for passengers. "We're clearly striving towards the same aims," North said, "we're singing from the same hymn sheet."

Regarding new technologies and methods to speed up the processes, Dijstelbloem cited a recent statistic which seemed to show people do not have a problem with technology, "77% of the U.K. population wouldn't mind having more body scans." Beugels wondered if body scanners were in response to a poor job of predicting behaviour. Trembaczowski-Ryder agreed that looking for "bad objects rather than bad people" was a problem,



although he pointed out the three-second scan was less intrusive for passengers than a full hand pat-down, and better for security staff, too.

Another area that should be looked at to create “friendly customer service” at airports, Trembaczowski-Ryder said, was customer service training for airport staff. In the airports where this has been tried the results have been “less aggression between passengers and staff” and it was quicker for everybody concerned. Dijstelbloem added that training was essential to get the best interaction between people and computers.

North reiterated her strategy of targeting “intention” rather than “objects” was preferable and providing border guards with the right tools and nuanced training in a layered approach would facilitate more targeted interventions, which are “vastly more effective than a cold stop.”

What about the potential for discrimination, Beugels asked. North insisted an intelligence-led approach would have to make sure the information that’s collected is proportionate and that data that “don’t strictly fit the rules and criteria” are discarded, while Dijstelbloem said it was a challenge for the future which would require appropriate laws and limits put in place.

Referring to the latest Skytrax awards for the best airports which seemed to show European travellers prefer mid-sized airports rather than the large hubs, Beugels asked Trembaczowski-Ryder to comment. He said it was obvious people would prefer their local airport for the sake of convenience and that it was probably the effect of low-cost carriers which “fragmented” the flow of people. On this fragmentation and its implications on security North said “probably it means we need to work smarter,” but that she believed this was already happening.

Before taking questions from the audience, Dijstelbloem got the last word on technological developments and admitted there would always be problems, specifically because of the swiftness in the way they are implemented. In other fields there is a luxury of having many years of testing and assessment, he said comparing the pharmaceutical industry which tests every new drug sometimes for decades before launching.

From the audience a question came about what the future held for land borders rather than airports. Dijstelbloem and North said a more comprehensive interaction between all border crossing points would lead to gathering richer data to target threats. On the point of discrimination a representative of the police wanted further discussion. North highlighted the need for people to be reassured of the best intentions of everybody working to maintain safety and security. A Frontex staffer asked about a possible conflict of interest with the introduction of technology and job losses that might result. Dijstelbloem said he believed people’s fears were exaggerated and that jobs lost in one area would be replaced by new jobs in other areas. Trembaczowski-Ryder said there would always be a need for a “human interface” saying “a machine is not the be-all and end-all.”

The concluding remarks came first from Trembaczowski-Ryder who emphasized the need for risk-based processes to avoid screening 100% of passengers. North suggested better use of intelligence and the ability to share that intelligence with other agencies. Dijstelbloem said the focus should be on the human element of border security and then curiously advised Frontex to change its name.