



The IT perspective

Paul Sillers goes behind the scenes with airport suppliers, Thales and Vision-Box, to get their perspective on what the EU's Entry-Exit system means for airports. Paul Sillers reports.

"From the early stages of the EES proposal, we have concentrated our efforts on creating equipment and solutions specifically designed for this system," Françoise Bergasse, Market Owner Biometric Border at Thales, tells *Regional Gateway*.

"Our portfolio features an extensive EU EES Border Management System that has been specifically designed to address the functional and operational requirements of the European Union, National Border Authorities, and International Airports."

Thales' EES-compliant self-service solutions have been installed Europe-wide, including border kiosks and tablets in France; kiosks, face pods, gates and tablets in Spain; and border kiosks and gates in Belgium.

These solutions, Bergasse says, enable self-service registration to be accomplished in under a minute, using an interactive user interface coupled with high resolution cameras, direct lighting and fingerprint scanners.

The information captured is embedded into a single biometric identity token which is relayed to border control, and as the visitor proceeds to the border checkpoint they are identified using the token and their information (along with any flags

displayed on the border officer's screen).

All of this enables the officer to decide whether to wave them through or send them for further inspection.

Bergasse adds that the benefits of EES-related technology include enhanced security, increased passenger flow efficiency, and better traveller satisfaction.

"However, challenges remain," she says. "Such as the need for interoperability with existing systems, potential privacy concerns, and the need for comprehensive staff training to effectively manage and maintain these advanced technologies."

SMOOTHING THE TRANSITION

Bergasse notes that user acceptance, along with usability and speed, will be key towards ensuring a smooth transition.

She adds that Thales is working closely with clients to address these challenges head on and "has worked with authorities to perform selected user group evaluations, gathering feedback from travellers for the final design".

Ultimately, Bergasse believes consistent Europe-wide implementation of EES will determine the success of the scheme.

"Achieving alignment between all [EU] member states regarding final readiness will be essential, as they will all need to

apply the new regulation from day one to ensure secure and consistent border control across all EU frontiers."

Commenting on regional airports, Bergasse says: "Even smaller airports can benefit significantly from our technologies, empowering them to enhance safety without sacrificing customer experience. We are proud to support them in modernising their border control processes by offering solutions that require minimal space and are easy to deploy.

"A prime example of this is the adoption of our biometric self-service border kiosks by over 20 regional airports in France and Spain for the pre-registration of third country nationals. This implementation provided them with the ability to process travellers more efficiently while remaining compliant with international standards."

ADDRESSING THE CHALLENGES

Meanwhile, at Vision-Box, an Amadeus company, Jeff Lennon, Vice-President of Strategy, Sales, and Global Partnerships, tells *Regional Gateway*: "Smaller airports in particular face challenges related to capacity, staff resources, and infrastructure. The additional steps required for biometric data collection can

lead to longer processing times and put strain on existing resources.”

To address this, Lennon explains that Vision-Box’s Seamless Journey Platform “intelligently orchestrates the flow of passengers, in combination with our several human-centric touchpoints that are designed to comply with EU guidelines, while considering each type of expected passenger’s eligibility and profile.”

By minimising the number of touchpoints and ensuring that processes are streamlined, he says “Vision-Box’s approach allows smaller airports to meet EES compliance without overwhelming their capacity”.

This ensures that airports – even those with limited infrastructure – can maintain smooth operations while adhering to new regulations.

BORDER CONTROL ADJUSTMENTS

Given the complexity of the EES, Lennon says that while disruptions are inevitable Vision-Box’s platform includes built-in redundancy, ensuring that if one system experiences a failure, operations can continue seamlessly with minimal impact on passenger flow.

He adds: “Continuous monitoring and predictive maintenance tools help identify potential issues before they escalate, combined with a high-availability enabled IT infrastructure.”

Beyond the technology, Lennon notes that the success of EES implementation hinges on effective change management for both airport and government staff.

“Introducing EES requires significant adjustments in how staff manage border

control operations,” he says.

“Vision-Box has developed a comprehensive suite of ‘Service Design’ capabilities to support this transition, focusing on aligning stakeholders with new processes and technology.”

Vision-Box supports this with tailored training and collaboration, ensuring a smooth transition and reducing operational slowdowns.

This approach, Lennon says, ensures that staff are “equipped with the necessary skills and knowledge to manage the EES effectively, reducing the risk of operational slowdowns during the transition period” – while helping airports to improve their flow design and maximise the limited estate of available square metres to “support the authorities in fulfilling their mission with optimised staff coverage”. ■

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