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DIRECTORATE-GENERAL FOR HEALTH AND FOOD SAFETY

Public health, country knowledge, crisis management
Health Security and Vaccination

Luxembourg, 15 April 2021

Health Security Committee

Audio meeting on the outbreak of COVID-19

Summary Report

Chair: Stefan Schreck, European Commission, DG SANTE C ADV01

Audio participants (EU27): AT, BE, BG, CY, CZ, DE, DK, EE, EL, ES, FI, FR, HR, HU, IE, IT, LT, LV, MT, NL, PL, PT, RO, SE, SI, SK, DG SANTE, DG MOVE, DG JUST, SecGen, ECDC, EASA and Healthy GATEWAYS

HSC meeting dedicated on the Passenger Locator Form (PLF).

This HSC meeting served as an opportunity to learn about the latest developments on the exchange platform for PLFs developed by the EC, the European Aviation Safety Agency (EASA), and on the EUdPLF, the EU Healthy Gateways Joint Action digital repository, as well as to learn from the experience of several countries that are using the PLF and possible future plans. In the future, the PLF exchange platform will be hosted by the European Centre for Disease Prevention and Control (ECDC).

In-depth details about the PLF can be found in the **PowerPoints** distributed prior to the HSC meeting.

1. The Passenger Locator Form (PLF) project – DG SANTE

DG SANTE presented an overview of the **barriers for effective cross border contact tracing**, based on the availability of the PLF and how the digital PLF can facilitate the exchange of travel data. In addition, the **EU PLF draft implementing decision** was presented, including three annexes, which define the minimum data set for the PLF, the responsibilities of the participating MS (EWRS) and the responsibility of the ECDC as data processor.

Key messages:

- The PLF exchange platform is set up to **enable the secure, timely and effective exchange of data between the EWRS competent authorities.**
- If a Member State does not have a nationally developed digital PLF system, it could use the common **EU digital Passenger Locator Form System ('EUdPLF')** from the **EU Healthy Gateways Joint Action.**
- The purpose of the EUdPLF is to create a single entry point and database for the collection of PLFs.

Further details can be found in the **PLF PowerPoint by DG SANTE C3 - Cinthia Menel Lemos.**

BG wanted to know if it would be possible to join the PLF after June 2021 and what would be the consequences if a MS decides not to participate. The **Commission** responded that MS are able to join any time, voluntarily. However, the greater the number of MS, the greater the network, allowing for better contact tracing. Therefore, the Commission encourages MS to join. The Commission also noted that MS will have to comply with the obligations introduced by the implementing decision and the PLF aims to facilitate that.

BE asked whether contract-tracing is only possible within the EU countries, and what are the considerations for 3rd countries as some of them are using paper PLF. The Commission explained that the EU PLF for the moment only works for travellers within the EU and participating MS. The usual bilateral arrangements will apply for other MS and countries outside the EU. For example, some pilots in Italy have reached bilateral agreements with the US in the framework of COVID-19 Free flights. Solutions are currently sought for digitalising the paper versions.

FR asked whether there it is planned to include PFL data, as a QR code, in the EU Digital COVID certificate. The Commission responded that the PLF and Green Certificate have different purposes. However, there are plans to integrate QR codes, but for the moment, the discussion is too premature to add any further details.

2. Passenger Locator Forms – exchange platform – DG MOVE

DG MOVE presented the PLF in perspective of the other health measures under use for **reducing the risk of transmission** when using any means of transport and how the cross border contact tracing applications are related. The key principles of the PLF exchange platform were explained and the essential requirements, and the minimum data sets which should be collected by the PLF data. The key functions of the PLF exchange platform include: sharing information to enable contact tracing and the possibility to add additional epidemiological information on infected passengers. Further details can be found in the [PLF PowerPoint presented by Pierpaolo Settembri](#).

2.1 Presentation by EU Health GATEWAYS

EU HEALTH GATEWAYS provided general information on the **EUdPLF platform and app**. In addition, the presentation highlighted what MS need to do if they decide to use EUdPLF and mentioned the benefits of its use. Benefits of the EUdPLF include: single entry point and database for the collection of PLFs, multi-language functionality, established connection with EASA exchange platform (interoperability), flexibility, user-friendly, secure and GDPR compliant, IT and passenger's support. Further details can be found in the [PLF PowerPoint by EU HEALTHY GATEWAYS Joint Action](#) and on the [EUplf web portal](#) and [EUdPLF app](#).

2.2 EUdPLF experiences by Member States

Lithuania is using the dPLF for all modes of transport since April 2020. The country collects personal information, contact details, information about countries visited, information about sick leave if needed, laboratory test results, acquaintance with the rules of isolation and decision by the chief epidemiologist. The platform is available in several languages. Benefits mentioned were related to multi-language, functionalities, harmonised data collection, rapid retrieval and exchange of data between public health authorities in EU MS, common point of entry for all travellers in the EU. Further details can be found in the [PowerPoint presented by Lithuania](#).

Italy participated in the EUdPLF in collaboration with IATA (ALITALIA and DELTA) for flights between Rome and New York/Atlanta. Further details about the Airline Company and

passenger engagement, challenges, and roadmap implementation can be found in the PowerPoint presentation by Italy.

3. Presentation of the PLF exchange platform by EASA

EASA received a mandate to work on Health matters with ECDC to develop the Aviation Health Safety Protocol in May 2020. For the ePLF project, MS engaged in contact tracing (processes at different stages of digitalization): ca.15 MS have developed (or are in the process of developing) a digital national ePLF solution. Other MS implemented a paper based process or use a constellation of “local” digital systems. All national ePLF solutions are not enabling automated cross-border exchange of information for contact tracing. Further details about how the platform works and what the MS need to do if they have a nationally developed PLF system can be found in the PowerPoint presentation by EASA on Digital Passenger Locator Form Exchange Platform.

3.1 ePLF experiences by Member States

Spain highlighted that the EASA exchange platform served as a platform allowing for secure cross-border transfer of information in the EU and has several benefits. Further details the exchange platform, schedule forecast, strengths and issues can be found in the PowerPoint presentation by Spain on ePLF.

4. Round table: How to ensure the uptake by all MS and sustainability of the EU PLF

AT is participating in the JA EU Healthy Gateways and has already signalled interest in participating in the pilot testing of the dPLF. Currently, AT is coordinating with national stakeholders and is in contact with national airlines. Further data protection issues are being clarified at the moment.

BE looks forward to participate.

BG has not made a decision at national level on PLF yet, although they participated in Healthy gateways. BG would like to know more about the benefits of EU PLF and how it will contribute to national measures: it is necessary to clarify whether it should contribute to data collection, which is anyways happening at national level via other means, or to data sharing. BG expected more countries to present their experiences, so that the benefits are clear. BG asked whether the presentations are done by the most advanced countries or only by the countries participating in the pilot study.

CY has its own PLF national platform and is now considering whether to join the PLF system. Discussions are ongoing.

CZ has been using the PFL for a long time and is willing to join the EU PLF platform.

DE is interested in participating, but is currently examining how a system for contact tracing in the transport sector should be implemented. The potential use of existing data bases for travellers as well as legal, IT and technical aspects need to be assessed.

DK is considering the PLF system. Legal acts have to be taken into account.

EE has a national PLF system and is discussing the implementation of digital exchange, legislative and technical aspects, with the involved Ministries (Transport, Interior and Health).

EL has a national PLF, and is exploring the possibilities of connecting with the EUdPLF. There is a clear added value for the maritime sector, in particular cruise ships.

ES is exploring the possibility of connecting to the EU PLF and how this can be done. ES believes the dPLF system has an added value, for all transport modes, especially for cruises. It is intending to extend it to regional level.

ES has participated in the pilot study and would like other MS to join. It also saves a lot of time (cases otherwise need to be registered in EWRS, which is not adapted to the extensive data sharing).

FI is in the phase of discussing the use of a national PLF, and would be willing to join the EU PLF. There is currently no PLF system in place, but an ad hoc system to collect information from passengers entering FI.

FR is currently using paper PLF for contact-tracing purposes. FR has been following the EU Healthy Gateways and had a trial on its online portal. FR is working on how to improve user friendliness. FR is currently still working with Air France to see how the PLF can be best integrated to the passengers' check-in. The PLF should last beyond the pandemic, in order to be able to perform contact tracing, in case any serious public health threat is identified.

HR is in consultation with other stakeholders and the main gateway and biggest airlines of HR. The piloting will start shortly with the Croatian airline, Zagreb hub. Challenges remain for the maritime and ground crossing borders.

IE: Contact tracing operations are held at the centre of health service response to Covid-19. IE currently has a robust testing and tracing infrastructure to control the spread of COVID-19 domestically. This comprehensive, reliable, and responsive testing and tracing operation has been effective in addressing the domestic spread of the virus. The nationally developed digital PLF system plays a supporting role in this infrastructure. IE is currently exploring possibilities for the EUdPLF.

IT: Currently, Italy is working in two parallel directions: - exploring the possibility of developing a national digital platform for the management of the whole travel process related to COVID-19, in order to provide a single information system, capable of meeting specific needs and accessible by all stakeholders, health authorities, border police, carriers, and passengers. This digital platform on the one side should be combined with the EUdPLF, and on the other, with our national cross-border health information system. The implementation of this possible digital solution is still under investigation. Integration of national cross-border health information system application with EASA platform has already been completed.

LT is in process of transferring to EU PLF and changing its legislation accordingly. Moreover, LT supports the use of the PLF beyond the pandemic, possibly covering other communicable diseases.

LV has a national PLF, the implementation of this initiative is important, but LV still needs to discuss nationally cross sectorial issues, including the Ministry of Transport in discussions to ensure sustainability. LV agrees that the PLF system is needed beyond the COVID-19 situation, to cover all threats requiring contact tracing.

MT is looking at different options regarding digital systems to link up to the EU PLF. This is still under development. MT hopes to provide further feedback in the next few weeks.

NL: NL doesn't have a legal basis yet to ask passengers for the information required to fill the PLF. NL is interested in learning how other MS have adapted their legal basis to support this. In addition, how PFL will be used to identify travellers detected as infectious, will it include symptomatic persons and/or asymptomatic individuals?

PL is currently in the process of finding a solution and is in consultation with the Ministry of Health and other Ministries, on the creation of the PLFs IT system. It considers the solution of joining the EU PLF. PL will keep the HSC informed.

RO is discussing with the Ministry of transport, internal affairs and health, and is considering on accessing the EU PLF platform soon.

SE: SE does not see the useful effect of introducing this. SE needs to have more answers to the cost-benefit effect as well as a better evaluation of the introduction of PLF (in particular on data protection, GDPR requirements, who should be responsible, etc.).

SI: Slovenia was a pilot site for testing the EUdPLF system for the air sector. Currently SI is in the process of exploring the legal issues, data protection issues and a final decision about the implementation has not taken yet.

SK has their own national PLF platform, hosted by the Ministry of transport. It was involved in the pilot study with EASA.

No comments received on the HU and PT use of PLF system.

*The MS Passenger Locator Forms **comments** can be sent through the open consultation or directly to the SANTE C3 HSC <SANTE-C3-HSC@ec.europa.eu, by 22/04/2021. The link and email can be found back in the previous sent emails.*

*An EWRS survey was shared on 14/04 as selective message, on the use of the EWRS modules during the COVID-19 epidemics and possible future developments in line with the EU Health Union proposal, the MS and EEA countries are invited to provide their **input** until the 28/04, to the SANTE EWRS <SANTE-EWRS@ec.europa.eu>*

AOB

Digital Green Certificates

During the **next HSC meeting**, the Commission will ask the MS on their opinion on the digital green certificate proposal. In order to reach mutual understanding among the MS on whether certificates where it is stated that the person got a vaccine that is **NOT** authorized in the EU would be accepted. The current version of the regulation states: In order to support the work of WHO and to strive for better global interoperability, Member States are in particular encouraged to accept vaccination certificates issued for other COVID-19 vaccines having received a WHO Emergency Use Listing.

Next HSC meeting: Wednesday 21st of April at 11.00h.

Questions and comments received by the HSC (will be answered in the next HSC):

Questions/comments	Answers
<p>IE would like more information on the intended duration of the EUdPLF</p>	<p>For now the EUdPLF has the same duration as the Healthy GATEWAYS JA. Currently we are preparing the sustainability of the EUdPLF, the proposal is to ensure the functioning until the end of 2022.</p>
<p>SE: We need to have more answers to the cost-benefit effect as well as a better evaluation of the introduction of PLC (GDPR, who should be responsible, etc.).</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Estimation of the cost: we can assume that there will be the national PFL IT platform development cost, the piloting and running costs. The opening of the free movement of travellers across the borders, surely will have a higher positive economic impact. • Benefits can be identified based on the countries experiences using PLF at national level. PLF is a tool that ensure a single data entry point and database for the collection of PLFs, multi-language functionality, established connection with EU exchange platform (interoperability), flexibility, user-friendly, secure and GDPR compliant, IT and passenger's support. • On the data protection specific question, the following the draft implementing act of the EU PFL, art 2c the national competent authorities are joint controllers of the data processed in the PLF exchange platform, as defined in annex II. The EC/ECDC is the processor responsible to ensure the security of processing, including the transmission and hosting, of personal data exchanged through the PLF exchange platform and shall comply with the obligations of a processor laid down in Annex III.
<p>NL is interested to learn how other MS have put the legal basis in order.</p>	<p>On the legal questions, we will enquire to the countries that have implemented national PLF and share their experiences, to inform your decision.</p>
<p>BG would like to know more about how does EU PLF benefits and how will contribute to national measures? How does it complies with data security and data sharing?</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Benefits can be identified based on the countries experiences using PLF at national level. PLF is a tool that ensure a single data entry point and database for the collection of PLFs, multi-

<p>How come that not so many countries are presenting their experience? Where these the most advance countries with data or were these the only countries participating in the pilot study?</p>	<p>language functionality, established connection with EU exchange platform (interoperability), flexibility, user-friendly, secure and GDPR compliant, IT and passenger's support. friendly, secure and GDPR compliant, IT and passenger's support.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • On the data protection specific question, the following the draft implementing act of the EU PFL, art 2c the national competent authorities are joint controllers of the data processed in the PLF exchange platform, as defined in annex II. The EC/ECDC is the processor responsible to ensure the security of processing, including the transmission and hosting, of personal data exchanged through the PLF exchange platform and shall comply with the obligations of a processor laid down in Annex III. • Few countries that volunteer to pilot the EUdPLF and EASA platform were invited to present their experiences. As they have established the legal and data protection requirements.
<p>DK: When will the legal act be put to a vote? And where? In Decision No 1082/2013/EU, art. 18 it says that the Commission shall be assisted by a committee on serious cross-border threats to health. In our end we are not sure who the representatives in this committee are and how they will be informed. Could you please help clarify this issue?</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • DG SANTE is preparing the organisation on the 11/05 of the next meeting of the serious cross-border threats to health committee, when the legal act will be voted. • The MS will be invited through the Permanent representations to nominate a country representative to the committee shortly. The HSC members will be informed when the nomination letter will be send to the countries.