

Electronic Documents and Certificates Task Force (EDC TF)

1st Meeting, 09 Feb 2023

Agenda Item 1. Introductions

The ICAO Secretariat team introduced themselves. Individual introductions were proposed to be managed within domain specific streams (see Agenda Item 3)

Present (ICAO Secretariat)

Ian Knowles	Secretary, FLTOSP
Maimuna Taal	Secretary, AIRP
Tatiana Pak	Secretary, XBT-TF
Olivier Grisel	Secretary, PTLP and EPL TF
Lynn McGuigan	Secretary, DGP
Miguel Marin	Chief, Operational Safety Section

Agenda Item 2. Background to the work

2.1 Presentation of the work of the Electronic Personnel License TF (EPL TF)

To provide background and context for the discussions of the EDC TF, a presentation of the work of the EPL TF was made. This presentation will be made available through the EDC SharePoint site which will be established on the ICAO Secure Portal.

The presentation helped to underline the importance of the general principles, discussed under Agenda Item 2.2, which included the statement that implementation of the EPL (and EDC) would remain as an optional activity for States.

Following the presentation, a question was raised regarding a possible ICAO managed central web tool to help States implement EPL (and potentially other electronic certificates). This had been discussed by the EPL TF but in reality would involve ICAO managing a large amount of data and provision the resource to keep this up to date and accessible was not possible.

2.2 Outline of the Flight Ops Panel work programme and related Job Card

The job card relating to the use of electronic documents and certificates was then reviewed. This job card will also be made available through the EDC TF SharePoint site. It was noted that this reflected the initial view of what was required and that if modifications or additions are needed, these could be managed through the EDC TF reporting back via the FLTOSP to the ANC.

Following the review of the job card the group then reviewed the initial proposal for addressing the work, that had been presented and agreed to in FLTOSP/9 (Montreal and Virtual, 2022).

2.2.1 General Principles

Electronic versions remain optional

Implementing an electronic format of documentation required to be carried on board the aircraft should be optional for States. There is no intent to mandate the use of electronic versions of any documents.

The format of all electronic versions should match the ICAO standard templates

Use of an electronic version should not alter or amend in any way the presentation of the information, where this is specified in the Annexes or other documentation, for example the AOC and Ops Spec templates in Annex 6 Part I, Appendix 6. Where a local version is desired, including in languages other than English, an option should be available to display the document in the required format and similar layout, as provided in Annex 6, in English for the purposes of inspection.

Suitable security measures need to be included

While 'simple' electronic versions of the relevant documents are possible, the intent of the EPL Standard in Annex 1 is to improve the security of licenses by the incorporation of specific security features. For certain other documents (see section 2.2 below) this should also be the requirement. Such security features aim to distinguish the electronic document from a simple static image which would be easy to manipulate digitally.

Both offline and online verification should be available for specific documents

Section 2.2 below outlines the different categories of document carried on board the aircraft. For some of these, there is no need for specific security or verification means. Other documents, such as the certificate of registration and certificate of airworthiness, may need to be verified on a ramp inspection, and a means to allow this both online and offline needs to be incorporated (such methods are under discussion now with the EPL work). The intent is to ensure the integrity of these documents and reduce the possibility of falsification or manipulation of the information provided. All documents to be carried on board, including the personnel licenses, should use the same means of verification to avoid the proliferation of verification systems.

Implementation should not impose a burden on other States

A key element in the verification method is that the State that needs to verify the document should not be subject to any undue burden. While the implementation of electronic documents is entirely optional by a State, other States have the requirement to recognize them as valid. Verification of the electronic documents must therefore be possible in such a way that the State needing to verify them is not required to implement specific solutions, or pay for additional services etc.

2.2.2 Categorization of documents

Not all documents will need the full implementation of active security features and online/offline verification. A hazard analysis and risks identification process should be performed to assess which level of protection and authentication capabilities is required for each document. Four categories of document have been identified as follows:

Category A – Authentication required

Documents in this category should be protected by active security measures to prevent digital manipulation, and be able to be verified both online and offline to ensure the authenticity and accuracy of the information provided. Specific examples of documents in this category are the AOC, certificate of airworthiness and the certificate of registry.

In general the consideration for inclusion in this category is that the document grants an authorization for something – the AOC is an authorization for commercial operations, for example.

(Note: The radio station license is required by Article 29 of the convention, however this is typically covered by a different authority than the State CAA, as well as being regulated by ITU, and is not considered here).

Category B – Assurance of accuracy

Documents in this category typically represent a record of actions taken which are required to be kept, such as details of maintenance actions taken in respect of the continuing airworthiness of the aircraft. Here there is no specific requirement to be able to authenticate the document (indeed this would probably not be possible due to the continual updating of information contained in it), but there would be a need to ensure that the information recorded could not be subsequently amended. An analogy here is an accounting system which stores records of every transaction made on the account. Errors could be corrected, but only by making a subsequent entry to correct the mistake, thus retaining the history of the work carried out.

Category C – Operational documents

This category refers to documents which are generated for the flight and which may be required to be kept for a specific time following the flight in case there is a need to review them for any purpose (such as an accident/incident investigation). Examples would be the operational flight plan, mass and balance calculation and dangerous goods notification to captain (NOTOC). The integrity of these documents is also relevant, however there should not be a need to implement a strict log of all changes made – rather the document will be produced for the flight, annotated as required and then filed for reference purposes.

Category D – Reference documents

This final category of documents include items such as the Ops Manual which may be carried in electronic form on an EFB or other suitable medium. These documents typically do not change on a flight by flight basis, although regular updates are expected and a process would need to be in place to manage this. There is no restriction on Category D documentation.

Agenda Item 3. Proposed working arrangements

The EDC TF is established as a multi-disciplinary group reporting primarily to the FLTOPSP as owners of the job card.

Within this group, four separate streams will be established initially to look at the documents in each domain and to start working on a way to address how these can be managed in electronic format. They are:

Flight Ops – To include the AOC, operational documents, manuals and other items as identified by the group.

Airworthiness – To consider the Certificate of Airworthiness, continuing airworthiness records and other items as identified by the group.

Registration – To consider the certificate of registration and other items as identified by the group.

Dangerous Goods – To consider the NOTOC and other items as identified by the group.

The streams then report back to the Plenary group to ensure a consistent harmonized approach is being taken, in particular with respect to any Annex amendments that may be proposed for the introduction of electronic versions of these certificates and comments.

As an initial step, each group will convene to review what documentation is included within their remit, and to begin putting together initial ideas around document categorization, the approach to managing implementation of electronic version etc. A subsequent Plenary meeting tentatively planned for May 2023 will then start to review these initial proposals.

Agenda Item 4. Discussion – Categories of Docs, working arrangements etc.

The group did not raise any significant issues relating to the proposed approach, however it was clarified that at this early stage everything presented was intended to start the work and allow for a more focused discussion. Nothing presented at the 1st meeting was intended to be definitive or final.

Next Steps

1. The Secretariat will establish an EDC area on the Secure Portal SharePoint site. Once established, access will be arranged for all participants of the EDC TF. Further details on this will be sent separately.
2. The next meeting of the Plenary will be tentatively planned for a date in May, to allow for the streams to meet at least once to review their specific documents.
3. Participants are requested to confirm who will be involved in the work of the EDC TF going forwards, since the meeting invitation was widely circulated and forwarded many times. In providing this information, please indicate the individuals name, email address and the stream to which they will mostly contribute (flight ops, airworthiness, registration or dangerous goods).