Automated Border Control Gates for Europe

ABC4EU pilot phase approaching

The following summer and fall will start a new phase in the ABC4EU project. From the beginning the big challenge has been to build and test the Automated Border Control gate in the pilot phase. Here, the technology and the solutions that have been developed in the project will be tested in a real environment with real passengers.

The pilots will be held at air and sea Border Crossing Points (BCPs). The first pilot will be organized at the international airports in Lisbon and Madrid, which are amongst the busiest airports in Europe.

The tested model is so-called segregated two-step model. It consists of two separate (segregated) sections where the first step is to validate the traveller's identity and authenticate their passport. Then, a temporary token is created for the passenger to go to the actual gate, and to physically cross the border.

Another model of the gate is a so-called mantrap. Here, the traveller enters a space between two gates. The border check process that is described above is done simultaneously, and as the check is completed the latter gate opens and lets the traveller through.

The end user opinion valued in the project

The ABC4EU project's end users are versatile, composing of the border authorities, law makers, academia, industry and travellers, as well as other interested parties. In other words, the ABC4EU project wants to integrate all entities that either use or operate, or alternatively prepare or supervise the use and development of the Automated Border Control gates. Furthermore, as the ABC4EU project is not the only project developing Automated Border Control (ABC) solutions, it is important to cooperate with other development and integration projects in this field.

In May 2016 the 2nd End User conference was held in Amsterdam. The participants experience was extensive making the event useful and highly interesting. Besides the ABC4EU project members also representatives from the FastPass (EU FP7 funded project) and the BoDeGa (Horizon 2020 funded project) attended the meeting, too.

In the conference, the participants were asked to describe their understanding of ABC solutions, and how they think the travellers are perceiving the said solutions. This happened on the first day by using Service Design Methods. On the second day the participants were presented with case examples of our project and asked for their input and opinions based on their experience. The preliminary results were interesting, bringing forward many new aspects and lessons learned in previous trials and other projects. The next meeting will be held in the fall of 2016 to present the experiences and lessons learned from the first pilots.

To demonstrate the input that has been already gained from the End Users, a few examples have been collected here:

- Law regulating ABC solutions are still under discussion at the EU Commission even though a proposal for new regulation was given already in 2013. The attendees addressed the issues as the lack of proper legislation also hinders the technology development. It affects many aspects of the development, like the software, technical solutions of the biometric scanners, and so on. Hence, the existing state-of-the-art solutions in the market and the solutions that are considered legal are far from each other.

   - The End Users' concern on the Data Protection issues while using the ABC gates is not as high as what has been expected. These very preliminary results have been gained from a survey that was launched in Finland in May 2016. The survey will be spread to other countries and for a larger audience in 2016 to get a wider understanding of the "European Citizen's" opinion on such issues.

      - Another preliminary result that surprised the ABC4EU partners was the concern for hygiene. According to some respondents of the survey, some surfaces of ABC-gates are seen as unhygienic and thus the willingness to use the gates is lowered.

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