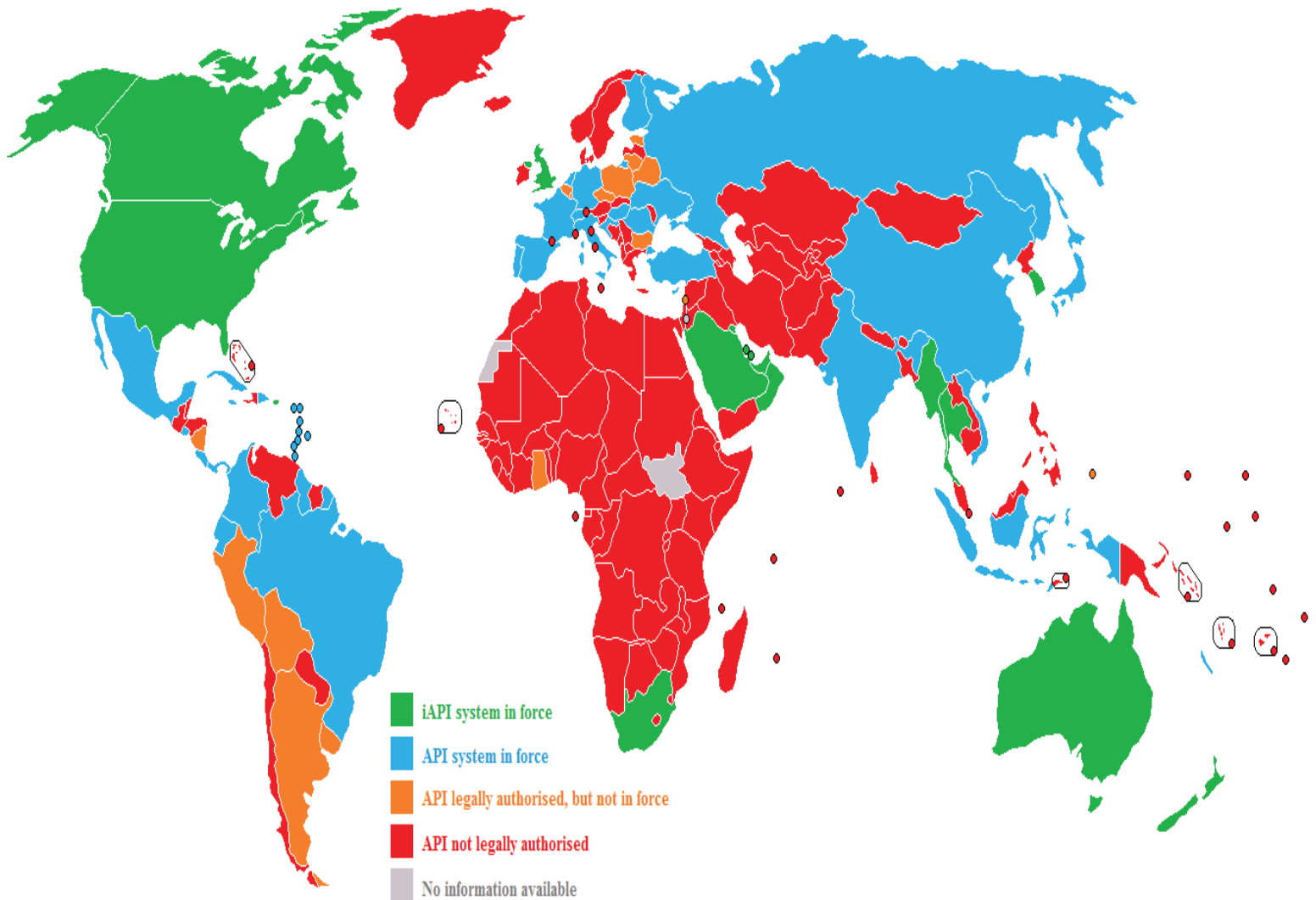


## Overview of the use of Advance Passenger Information (API) in the OSCE Area

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*This document aims at highlighting the use of Advance Passenger Information (API) systems among OSCE participating States and Partners for Co-operation in line with the recently adopted MC.DEC/6/16. It also outlines the support the Transnational Threats Department (TNTD) offers through national workshops in exploring the functions and benefits of API in combatting terrorism and transnational crime, in determining the technical assistance needs of participating States, and in identifying potential donor assistance for capacity building.*

## **What is an Advance Passenger Information (API) system?**

An API system is an electronic communications system that collects biographic data from a passenger's passport and basic flight details provided by airline operators. Airline communication networks then transmit the data to border control agencies in the destination country or country of origin. Once transmitted, the data are then, in practice, checked by the relevant control agencies against various sanctions lists and watch lists used for immigration, customs and security purposes.

API systems vary significantly in complexity, depending on costs, technical specifications and level of security. In this regard, they may be divided into two distinct categories: non-interactive batch-style API systems and interactive API (iAPI) systems.

On the one hand, in a batch-style API system, an airline operator provides the requesting authorities with an API message in a batch-style transmission, meaning data for all passengers on a particular flight are communicated together, after the flight has closed. On the other hand, an interactive API system (iAPI) transmits the API message on a per-person basis to the requesting authorities using real-time communication, thereby giving national authorities the opportunity to issue a board/no-board advisory message to the airline operator. Essentially iAPI is processed per passenger at the time of check-in.

While API and Passenger Name Record (PNR) data can both be termed passenger data, they are different sets of data, communicated via different message structures at different times and often via different systems. PNR data consist of reservation information, such as ticketing and payment details, and itineraries, collected from passengers by travel management systems when flights are booked. PNR data is thus not based on a government-issued travel document.

## **What are the benefits of an API system?**

The main contribution of API systems to border management is that details of arriving/departing passengers are received prior to the arrival of the flight, in the case of batch API, and prior to departure in the case of iAPI. Thus, law enforcement officials can know in advance whether potential or known offenders or inadmissible persons are travelling. This not only provides border control authorities with adequate time to utilize their resources more efficiently, but also helps to reduce their workload through the use of technology and automated means.

The use of API can also contribute to more efficient passenger facilitation by allowing border control officers to focus on high-risk individuals, thereby allowing for a faster throughput of low risk travellers when undergoing arrival formalities.

## **What are the international commitments of the OSCE participating States regarding API?**

In September 2014, the United Nations Security Council (UNSC) adopted [Resolution 2178](#), which “*calls upon [UN] Member States to require that airlines operating in their territories provide advance passenger information to the appropriate national authorities in order to detect the departure from their territories, or attempted entry into or transit through their territories, by means of civil aircraft of individuals designated by the [Al-Qaida Sanctions] Committee*”. The UN subsequently issued a [report](#) highlighting gaps in API use and recommendations for expanding its use to stem the flow of foreign terrorist fighters. This call was further reiterated in UNSC [Resolution 2309](#), passed in September 2016.

Following the adoption of Resolution 2178, the OSCE participating States consensually agreed in a [Ministerial Declaration 5/14](#) which commits participating States to fully implement these Resolutions and tasks the OSCE with supporting them. Since then, the OSCE has promoted API as an effective instrument in the fight against terrorism. At the 2016 Ministerial Council, OSCE participating States adopted [Decision 6/16](#) on Enhancing the Use of Advance Passenger Information (API). This decision commits participating States to:

1. Establish national API systems in accordance with the provisions contained in [ICAO's Annex 9](#) and aligned with the WCO/IATA/ICAO [Guidelines on API](#), including those on privacy and data protection, in order to effectively collect passenger and/or crew data from airlines operating in their territories;
2. Consider establishing at the national level an interactive system to exchange API data (iAPI) in order to prevent the movement of foreign terrorist fighters in line with UN Security Council resolutions 2178 (2014) and 2309 (2016);
3. Adhere to [ICAO Document 9082](#) "ICAO's Policies on Charges for Airports and Air Navigation Services" in the context of establishing an API system, recognizing that States are responsible for ensuring the implementation of adequate security measures at airports;
4. Collaborate with all relevant national stakeholders in the implementation of national-level API systems, and consider establishing one authority to receive, on behalf of all other authorities, all forms of passenger data through one single window data entry point;
5. Increase the added value of API data by seeking to establish automated cross-checking of this data against relevant national, regional and international watch lists, in particular Interpol databases and UN Sanctions Lists;
6. Provide assistance to support other requesting participating States in establishing an API system;

### **What countries have already implemented API systems?**

Currently, only 19 OSCE participating States and 56 UN Member States use API systems (See Annex 1 for a map of API use among OSCE participating States).

There are numerous reasons that explain this. Firstly, API systems are complex and therefore require a high degree of technical capacity and skills. They can also be expensive to purchase, maintain and operate. Moreover, to implement API effectively, several legal and institutional changes might be required to ensure suitable data privacy oversight and regulation by States.

### **What types of support does the OSCE offer to participating States in relation to API?**

In order to address some of the existing shortcomings that prevent the establishment of API systems and to promote compliance with UNSC Resolutions 2178 and 2309 and with OSCE Ministerial Council Decision 6/16, TNTD is offering national workshops to enhance the use of API.

The ultimate goal of these national workshops is to design a Road Map indicating the main steps to follow to move towards an API-enabled environment. In addition the workshops provide participants with a thorough understanding of the functions and benefits of API, and bring together all relevant national stakeholders in the field of aviation security in order to promote cooperation and synergies as they implement an API system. The workshops make use of the international best practices and standards highlighted above, as well as the [Passenger Data Toolkit](#) of the International Air Transport Association.

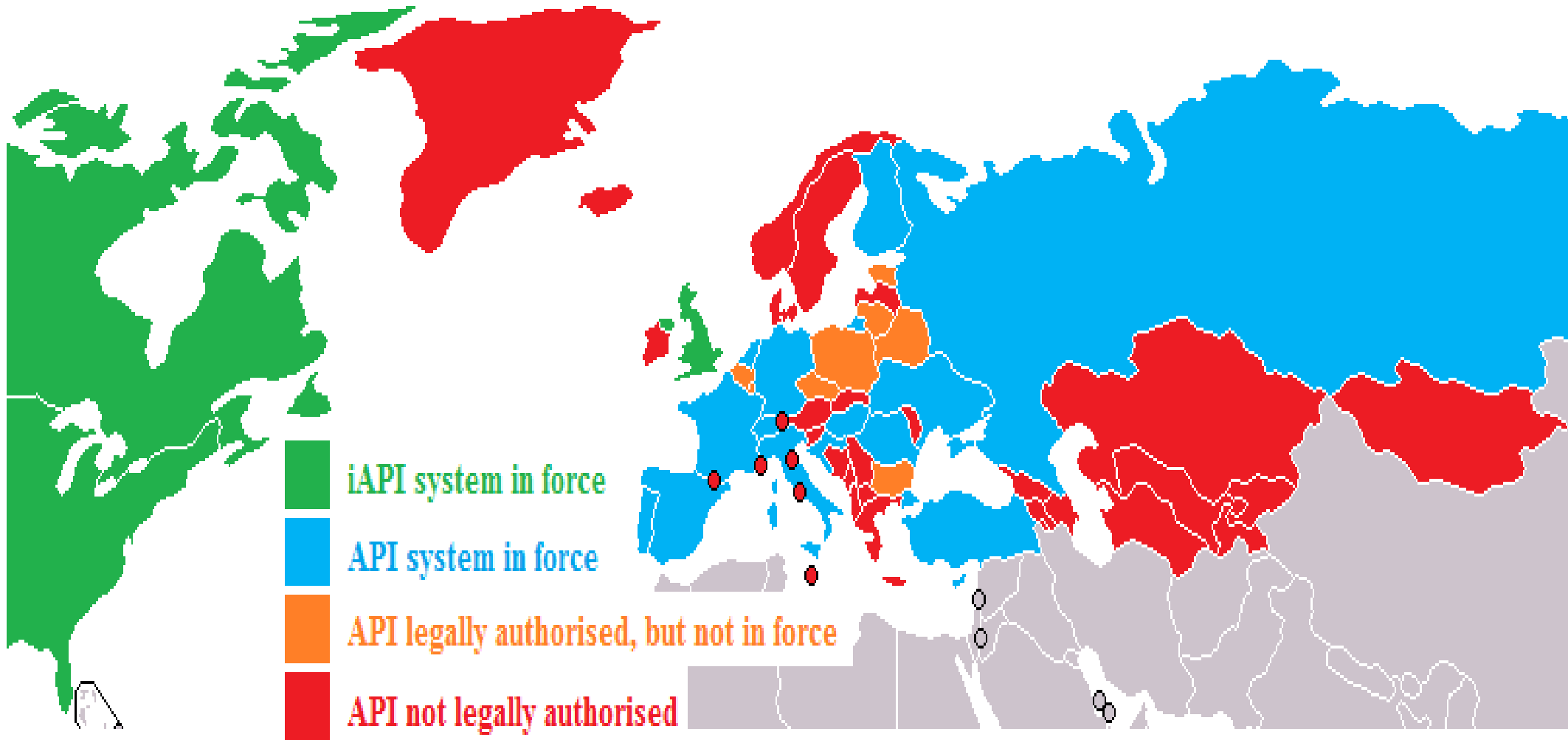
The most recent workshop was held in Serbia, a press release can be found [here](#).

Additionally, the OSCE is planning to organize OSCE-wide seminars on information exchange mechanisms, including API systems, and to utilise the OSCE Border Security and Management National Focal Point Network in order to facilitate the sharing of information practices in the implementation of API systems.

**States interested in requesting the above-mentioned national workshops or in providing donor support should contact Simon Deignan from TNTD for further information on this subject:**

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Data is supplied via the IATA API/PNR World Tracker