February 2024

eu travel tech

OSDM / TAP TSI – eu travel tech observations

Introduction

Following the recent distribution of the draft revised Regulation on Technical Specification for Interoperability relating to Telematics Applications for Passenger Services ("**TAP TSI**" with the Railway Interoperability and Safety Committee ("**RISC**") and the Telematics Expert Group in November 2023, we hereby submit our observations on these drafts and their possible interaction with the Open Sales and Distribution Model ("**OSDM**"). Based on previous exchanges on these issues, we seek to clarify our views on how the EU legislative framework can best facilitate the use of efficient and transparent rail distribution standards.

We remain fully supportive of EU legislation intended to create a more open rail ticket distribution system but also underscore the need consider the practical implications of the obligations under consideration in the TAP TSI revision.

Basic Objectives of OSDM

Considering the significant past discussions about OSDM, its design and purpose, it is worthwhile to consider the basic aims of the initiative from the ticket vendor perspective.

1. Lowering RU content integration and distribution costs for distributors

OSDM's basic intention is to remove some of the current complexity involved for ticket vendors in handling a variety of proprietary Railway Undertaking ("**RU**") Application Programming Interfaces ("**APIs**"). Thus, OSDM can serve to remove a barrier to entry for some ticket vendors. This could be particularly useful for non-rail/innovative platforms entering the market and for smaller ticket vendors, although engineering efforts needed to enter this market remain high. In essence, OSDM simplifies part of the rail content sales process through unified shopping, booking, ticketing and aftersales flows.

Practically, OSDM lowers costs by ensuring that there is no need for ticket vendors to build complex shopping/pricing engines to determine the available trains/seats/ticket prices based on filed data, as the complexity is centralized on the RU instead of being duplicated on each ticket vendor. In addition, there is reduced risk of a misinterpretation of filed data (fares, pricing rules, real time schedule updates…) due to this centralization. Through harmonized data models/taxonomy, the standard also facilitates the comparison and/or combination of offers from one or several RUs on a given journey.

2. OSDM was conceptualized as an open and interoperable framework

Since its inception, the initiative has been fully open to participation by any interested rail or mobility stakeholders. Interoperability with other rail standards to facilitate interactions has been a priority (OSDM is derived from Transmodel).

3. What OSDM does not address

Regarding the offer concept: As has been discussed on previous occasions with DG MOVE and ERA, OSDM is not designed to ensure comprehensive commercial availability of RU's

content. In a usual scenario, RUs will be building an offer and push it to ticket vendors who can then build journeys and make them available to customers.

This system does not prevent ticket vendors from making several requests to access components of a larger itinerary to one or several RUs operating on these components (i.e. splicing). These components can then be recombined by the ticket vendor to potentially construct a more attractive journey, provided that the ticket vendor duly informs the travelers of his/her passenger rights. The use of a harmonized taxonomy across RUs to categorize the offer will allow Ticket Vendors to more easily inform travelers on their passenger rights.

OSDM does not significantly alter the status quo in this context. Vendors already rely on APIs to receive data from operators, and OSDM would just be a variation to that model. OSDM would not reduce functionality compared to the current scenario.

Basic Objectives of TAP TSI

Our understanding of the basic objectives of the TAP TSI and its ongoing revision is that it seeks to enable efficient data exchange between a variety of rail stakeholders, including RUs and ticket vendors. It has the ultimate goal of ensuring travelers can make informed and efficient bookings and remain up to date on their journey.

As mentioned in the recitals of the November 2023 draft version of the Commission Implementing Regulation on data sharing in rail transport and a technical specification for interoperability relating to the telematics subsystem of the rail system ("**the draft**"), access to rail-associated data should be improved, enabling EU citizens to benefit more widely from the Single European Railway Area. The draft further acknowledges that "innovative solutions of the market in relation to the reuse of data" should be facilitated.

The 'Mother-Directive' of the draft (Directive (EU) 2016/797) further states that the "drawing-up of TSIs and their application to the Union rail system should not impede technological innovation, which should be directed towards improving economic performance".

EUTT views on requirements on TAP TSI draft

The November 2023 version of annex to the draft ("**the annex**") includes a range of concerning provisions under Chapter 4, which we outline below.

We welcome the efforts to make more data available and ensure that data is of better quality. The offline system put forward by TAP-TSI can offer interesting opportunities for existing and new vendors. However, the industry has moved towards API-based system and is not geared for consuming offline content as the only option.

The experience of eu travel tech members with existing National Access Points ("**NAPs**") shows that they are unsuitable to facilitate modern rail ticketing/distribution. For both static and particularly for yield managed (incl. integrated reservation tickets) fares, a direct API-connection between an RU and the respective ticket vendor, or alternatively a connection intermediated by a B2B distributor, is unavoidable. NationNAPs are not

suitable to enable the necessary dynamic communication between RU and TV. This comes in addition to the lackluster implementation of NAPs in certain Member States. For static data (e.g. timetables, connection times), a NAP-based solution may be viable. Nonetheless, eu travel tech is supportive of any obligations for RUs to share their data, as such data may be used in contexts other than usual ticketing/distribution. Our concern is that NAPs should not be the only vehicle to enable RU-ticket vendor data exchange.

With the current versions of the draft and annex, DG MOVE foresees a full implementation of the Network and Timetable exchange ("**NeTEx**") standard regarding timetable data, reference data and fares data, which is to be shared with ticket vendors through NAPs. The obligation under 4.2 (4) of the annex tackles a main concern; the question of which technical standard will be implemented in ERA technical documentation, rendering it an obligatory standard for RUs. We understand that NeTEx is currently under consideration for this purpose. We see a few challenges with this approach:

- This would still require relying on APIs for the data outside the scope of TAP-TSI.
- Third party ticket vendors may be forced to use NeTEx-based solutions as a result of the obligations put on RUs, which would render rail ticket distribution more challenging. Adapting to an offline mode would be costly and extremely difficult – if not impossible for many distributors who have built their IT and reselling infrastructure around APIs.
- NeTEx lacks the standardized API necessary to implement shopping, booking, ticketing and aftersales services in a uniform manner. It would thus not lower entry barriers for TVs based on lower distribution costs.
- A simple catalogue of fares to be shared by RUs in compliance with future ERA technical documentation would bring little added value for ticket vendors. Static fares are becoming less relevant, as the use of yield-managed fare components rises, particularly for the high-speed, long-distance services which are currently most relevant to ticket vendors.

We therefore suggest the TAP-TSI review takes the following into account:

- We urge the Commission and Member States to allow the use of solutions developed by the sector (such as OSDM) if all involved parties agree. This would prevent the introduction of an obligation to use NeTEx in cases where both RUs and TVs agree that another approach would be more beneficial.
- An obligation for RUs to fully and transparently share rules for yield management, sales and after sales would be beneficial. This would nonetheless force ticket vendors into implementing pricing engines on their end with the risk of pricing rules misinterpretation and increased need for controlling both on retailer/distributor sides.
- Access to yield-managed fares and real-time data remains a core issue for ticket vendors, even in light of obligations of the Rail Passenger Rights Regulation. Any effort to make that more accessible would be welcome.

eu travel tech remains fully committed to policy/regulatory solutions which facilitate the broadest possible availability of RU content to third-party ticket vendors under fair, reasonable and non-discriminatory ("**FRAND**") conditions. Without comprehensively

addressing the commercial restraints related to access to rail content and distribution by third parties, any revised EU framework on technical standards will be of limited use. The issue of restrictive commercial conditions and a lack of content access for ticket vendors, and ultimately for consumers, cannot be addressed only through a technical lens. Our concerns with the draft and the annex should not be misconstrued as opposition to any policy objectives aimed at ensuring a more open distribution system based on FRAND.

Legal obligations on transparency and access to full content of railways in a FRAND manner, regardless of the technology, would enforce railway obligations independently from current and future technical evolutions. OSDM as a standardized API can foster innovation and creativity from the ticket vendors as well as from the railways, and to the benefit of the travelers provided that it is standardized and non-subject to interpretation, as well as giving access to all content of the provider that implements it (to avoid having to use still the proprietary APIs in parallel for specific use cases).