



Report of the Expert Meeting on Information and Communication Technology Use in Migration Management

27-28 October 2016

Riga, Latvia



The Project is funded by the
European Union



The Project is implemented by
International Organization for Migration



EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The meeting on information and communication technology (ICT) use in migration management held in Riga on 27-28 October 2016 accommodated the record number of nearly sixty participants including about twenty speakers. The wide range of sectors and diverse thematic fields represented by the participants – EU and EaP national migration, border guard, consular and security services, EU Commission, the EU Joint Research Centre, international organizations, academic institutions, civil society organizations and private sector – once again demonstrated the prominent role that ICT plays in contemporary migration management.

The meeting was co-organized by Latvia and Ukraine with support from the European Commission and the IOM Mission in Ukraine. High-level officials from both countries – Mr. Jānis Citskovskis, Deputy State Secretary of the Ministry of Interior of Latvia, and Mr. Maksym Sokoliuk, Head of the State Migration Service of Ukraine – as well as the EC representative Mr. Robert Rybicki delivered the opening remarks.

Session I was designed to provide a general overview of why and how ICT is utilized in migration management. Ms. Annalisa Pelizza from the University of Twente presented ICT as a factor which forms and transforms the migration management institutions. From one side, there are policy decisions embedded in the technical implementation of ICT in migration management; while from the other side the ICT systems shape and define policy development. The EC delivered two presentations: one on the EU-level large-scale information systems – Eurodac, SIS II and VIS, and the second on a pilot project in France devoted to enhance analysis of migration-related data with emphasis on geolocation. ICMPD talked about multiple aspects of the current migration crisis including the challenge of collecting accurate data, while IOM Ukraine outlined the national policies and practices related to ICT use in migration management based on the inputs submitted by the countries prior to the meeting.

Next session was entirely dedicated to the countries' own information systems and databases serving different purposes: for visa issuance – in Latvia, for issuance of residence cards to foreigners – in Azerbaijan, for border control – in the Czech Republic, for issuance of biometric identification and travel documents – in Ukraine, for verification of authenticity of breeder documents – in the Netherlands. The latter database, called DISCS, initially developed by the Dutch authorities, at present is being maintained through international support and it is also accessible for foreign peer agencies.

IOM representative provided an overview of the innovative tools capable to improve identity verification, such as IOM's standalone system VERIFIER TD&B used for detection of fraudulent or altered travel documents and identification of imposters. In this session, the participants also heard about the recent developments in Georgia – the Unified Migration Analytical System (UMAS) – and in Latvia – the Register of Natural Persons.

A speaker from the U.S. Department of Homeland Security shared the national experience of using the Electronic System for Travel Authorization (ESTA), which is particularly relevant for the EU countries since a similar system that the European Commission is working on. The Commission's plans regarding the development of such system, called the European Electronic Travel Authorization System (ETIAS), and the Entry-Exit System (EES) were presented to the attendees as well as the functionalities of the new Integrated Return Management Application (IRMA) – a web-platform for integrating all the EU return activities. Mr. Madis Sassiad from the Estonian company "GoSwift" presented a unique queue management service applied at the border crossing points in Estonia that significantly reduces the waiting time.

During a study visit to the Latvian State Border Guard, organized in the framework of the expert meeting, the capabilities of the Latvian Border Control Information System (REIS) were demonstrated in practice to the participants.

Thus, the event revealed how the modern technologies shape migration management and what new possibilities they bring in for enhancing security, increasing efficiency of the migration and border control agencies, benefitting migrants and travelers, tackling irregular migration, planning national migration policies.



27 October 2016 – Day 1

Welcome and opening

Mr. Robert Rybicki, DG Migration and Home Affairs (DG HOME) of the European Commission, greeted the guests and thanked Latvia and Ukraine for compiling the agenda and for selecting highly experienced professionals as speakers, as well as IOM Ukraine for supporting the Panel's work. The EC's official confirmed the Commission's commitment to ensure attendance of the future meetings by the EaP countries' representatives. He also briefly described the scope and the agenda of the current meeting on ICT use in migration management.

Mr. Janis Citskovskis, Deputy State Secretary of the Ministry of Interior of the Republic of Latvia, welcomed the meeting participants in Riga which is hosting the Panel meeting for the first time. In his speech he referred to the common interest the EU and EaP countries share in migration management, to the enhanced mobility in secure environment as a core objective of the EaP, to the need to regulate migration which itself is a positive phenomenon, and a distinctive role ICT plays in these areas. Mr. Citskovskis encouraged the participants to exchange their countries' experience in development of ICT solutions for migration management and internal security.

Mr. Maksym Sokoliuk, Head of the State Migration Service of Ukraine, focused on the importance of the ICT in the context of the current migration crisis with a specific example of Ukraine who, within a short period of time, built the unified demographic register and launched production of biometric documents issued by its means. Use of these ICT system and biometric documents will allow for visa-free travel of Ukrainians to the Schengen area thus contributing to enhanced and secure mobility in the region.

Session I. Information and communication technology in migration management

Moderator: Mr. Robert Rybicki, DG HOME, European Commission

Ms. Annalisa Pelizza, Department of Science, Technology and Policy Studies of the University of Twente, the Netherlands, presented ICT as interfaces which, from the constructivist perspective, form state institutions, but also transform them. The speaker underlined two challenges in design and implementation of information systems for migration management: (i) identifying policy decisions that are embedded in technical details and (ii) developing a long-term perspective on institutional change, foreseeing the transformations that these infrastructures bring with them (e.g. path-dependencies hampering data access to new agencies). [See the presentation "ICT as Interfaces"](#).

Mr. Philippe Van Triel, DG HOME, European Commission, delivered a presentation about the European Agency for the operational management of large-scale IT systems in the area of freedom, security and justice (eu-LISA), explaining its mandate covering operational management of the three large-scale IT systems – Eurodac, SIS II, VIS – and relevant communication networks – DubliNet, SIRENE Mail and VIS Mail, training of the operators and users, research and production of the statistics and reports. For more information on eu-LISA and the abovementioned large-scale IT systems please see [the presentation "eu-LISA: mandate and activities"](#).

Mr. Roland Hosner, International Centre for Migration Policy Development (ICMPD), spoke about multiple aspects of the migration crisis: humanitarian crisis, human rights crisis, solidarity crisis, crisis of the Common European Asylum System, crisis of migration management and data management, crisis of perceptions – a non-exhaustive list which can be continued with other debated crises related to migration. The various aspects were illustrated with examples and statistics which can be found in [the presentation "The Multiplicity of Migration Crises"](#).



Mr. Georgios Theodoridis, Joint Research Centre (JRC), European Commission, introduced a pilot project which has been implemented in France aiming at the enhancement of visualization of the available migration data with emphasis on geo-location, which would allow to investigate multiple attributes and cross-correlations of the data; improvement of the analysis of the migration flows with regard to the conditions existing in the individual MS and in the EU (e.g. infrastructure, human resources); and performing forecast of the evolution of the migration flows that the MS become capable to timely allocate the required resources. [See the presentation “Analysis of Migration Related Data – Pilot Project in France”](#).

Ms. Laura Scorretti, Mission of IOM in Ukraine, presented [the discussion paper](#) describing the countries’ situation related to the application of ICT in migration management. The paper was prepared based on the answers received from eight EU MS and six EaP countries to a questionnaire specifically designed for this purpose. The document provided overview of: (i) ICT usage in the sphere of migration, including why, where and how the technology is used, challenges associated with it and benefits brought by it; (ii) national information systems of the EaP countries and EU Member States, international and EU-level information systems and solutions; and (iii) innovative ICT solutions in the sphere of migration including those related to emergency situations and the current migration crisis. [See the presentation “Information and Communication Technology Use in Migration Management: Overview of National Experiences and Practices in the EU and EaP States”](#).

Discussion

Azerbaijan addressed their question to the EC regarding the types of trainings provided by eu-LISA and whether the EaP countries’ experts can benefit from the training. The EC answered that the trainings provided by eu-LISA are about using the EU IT systems hence they are oriented towards the EU experts, but potentially there are prospects to establish partnership between third countries and eu-LISA to arrange in-depth discussion of the related IT issues. Azerbaijan also added to the information contained in the discussion paper that the country has introduced biometric passports and will start issuing biometric national ID cards in 2017. Georgia noted that the main task is to find balance between challenges and opportunities offered by the ICT systems. It was also added that the country has been using biometric passports since 2010 and biometric IDs since 2011.

Session II. From idea to the working system – national practices

Moderator: Mr. Ivan Dvoilenko, Director of the IT Department, State Migration Service of Ukraine

Mr. Vilmars Mangalis, Office of the Citizenship and Migration Affairs of the Republic of Latvia, familiarized the participants with the Latvian National Visa Information System (NVIAS), a national system linked to VIS, including the technical aspects such as hardware and software used for running NVIS, its external service providers, algorithm of the processing of a Schengen visa application by means of NVIS. For visualization of different stages of the visa application processing – from enrollment of data to issuance of visa sticker – please see [the presentation “Latvian National Visa Information System”](#).

Mr. Niyaz Abbasov, State Migration Service of the Republic of Azerbaijan, presented the Unified Migration Information System (UMIS) of Azerbaijan, an information resource which collects information about foreigners and stateless persons residing in the country as well as own nationals residing abroad. The UMIS, introduced in 2010, is being used for issuance of permanent and temporary residence cards and refugee cards. For technical characteristics and the procedure for application processing please see [the presentation “Unified Migration Information System”](#).

Mr. Lukas Nimrichter, National Border Situation Center, National Control Authority, the Czech Republic, provided overview of the ICT used in the Czech Republic for border protection (“KODOX” – a border



control information system, and “OBZOR” – an advance passenger information system) and software for passport verification (“Golden Reader Tool” for electronic checks and “Assure ID” for electronic and optical checks). For more details of the mentioned ICT tools as well as plans for the future development of the ICT in border control please see [the presentation “National Practice on the Use of ICT Systems in Border Control”](#).

Mr. Ivan Dvoilenko, State Migration Service of Ukraine, described the Ukrainian experience in development and utilization of the Unified State Demographic Register, how it is used for issuance of biometric identification and travel documents, what electronic services are available for biometric document holders. The speaker also listed security measures applied to protect the Register and the documents. More information including encountered problems, their prospective solutions, and plans for future development can be found in [the presentation “Introduction of the Unified State Demographic Register and Biometric Documents in Ukraine”](#).

Mr. Eric Geestman, Immigration and Naturalisation Service of The Netherlands, presented the information system for civil status documents called DISCS, initially developed by the Netherlands and presently merged with the Edison system. Mr. Geestman informed that DISCS contains an extensive collection of images of breeder documents as well as information of a more tactical nature, such as information on issuing parties, state emblems, countries in general etc. It is used for verifying authenticity of breeder documents and is accessible for competent institutions from foreign countries. [See the presentation “Document Information System for Civil Status”](#).

Study visit to the State Border Guard

During the study visit to the State Border Guard the participants were briefly informed on the structure and the main functions of the Latvian State Border Guard and received more detailed information on the Border Control Electronic Information System “REIS-2002”, including the list of data accumulated in the System from different sources (e.g. from the Schengen Information System, on invalid documents, on entry bans) as well as possible outcomes of the checks conducted by means of the System: successful check, connection error, “yellow” problem and “red” problem. [See the presentation “Border Guard”](#). A practical demonstration of the System’s functionality has followed.

28 October 2016 – Day 2

Session III. Innovative ICT solutions in the field of migration

Moderator: Ms. Ilona Ceļmalniece, Head of the European Affairs and International Cooperation Division, Office of the Citizenship and Migration Affairs, Republic of Latvia

Mr. Sjef Broekhaar, IOM Headquarters, in his presentation covered the issue of identity verification and innovative tools used for this purpose. The IOM representative demonstrated features of the system VERIFIER TD&B developed by IOM and used for detection of fraudulent documents and impostors. Another tool presented was the Regional Biometric Data Exchange Solution (RBDES) used by the Bali Process members in order to contribute to the early detection of irregular migration, smuggling and trafficking of people and provide evidence for the investigation and prosecution of these crimes. For more information please see [the presentation “Innovative Tools to Improve Identity Verification”](#).

Ms. Nino Ghvinadze, Secretariat of the State Commission on Migration Issues of Georgia, shared information on the Unified Migration Analytical System (UMAS) presently under development in Georgia. Compared to administrative databases delivering efficient services and quality statistics, UMAS will produce quality analytics including almost automated Migration Profile and various analytical



reports, it will also contribute to Migration Risk Analysis and will serve as a unique source of data for researchers. [See the presentation “E-Systems in Migration Management”](#).

Mr. Uldis Apsitis, Office of the Citizenship and Migration Affairs of the Republic of Latvia, familiarized the participants with the Latvian population register, the State’s database containing basic information about each person residing in the country. The distinctive feature of the Register is that each registered person is assigned with an individual, unique and unchangeable personal identification code by which the person can be identified in various information systems administered by different authorities. For additional information about the Register please see [the presentation “Latvian Register of Natural Persons”](#).

Mr. Madis Sassiad, Sales Director of the company “GoSwift”, Estonia, presented a queue-management tool developed by his company and deployed at nine BCPs in four countries. By turning a physical queue of vehicles gathering before BCPs into a virtual one the product makes border crossing time predictable, improves truck drivers rest time management, enhances road safety and allows border control authorities to receive data on vehicles and persons planning to cross the border in advance thus improving risk analysis and allowing adjusting border control capacities. [See the presentation “From Border Queue Management to Advance Passenger Information?”](#).

Ms. Suzanne Shepherd, Department of Homeland Security, USA, provided an insight into the US Electronic System of Travel Authorization (ESTA) which is an automated system that determines the eligibility of visitors to travel to the United States under the Visa Waiver Program. The system allows for facilitation for both traveler and the government by informing a traveler ahead of time if there are restrictions for his/her entry to the country and by furnishing the state authorities with better data and reducing time for border checks. The speaker also provided some statistics related to the ESTA’s functioning, main lessons learnt from the utilization of the system including how to build robust communication with passenger carriers and how to set up the vetting framework. This information and the plans for launching the Electronic Visa Update System are contained in [the presentation “Electronic Travel Authorizations: Best Practices and Future Thoughts”](#).

Mr. Philippe Van Triel, DG HOME of the European Commission, in his presentation revealed the European Commission’s future plans in the sphere of migration management which include (1) upgrading of the existing systems (recast of Eurodac by broadening the scope of the personal data stored in it, adding possibility of fingerprint searches in SIS), (2) development of new systems (EES, ETIAS), and (3) improvement of interoperability (for example, in the case of EES, searches can be initiated from both EES and VIS). [See the presentation “EU Future Plans in the Field of Migration Management: Entry-Exit System \(EES\), European Travel Information and Authorisation System \(ETIAS\)”](#).

Mr. Georgios Theodoridis, JRC, European Commission, delivered a presentation about IRMA, the new web-platform integrating all the EU return activities by means of exchange of information, knowledge and services among the stakeholders, which aims to increase efficiency of returns in the EU in terms of numbers, time and cost. For more information on the IRMA’s development process, user access management, the platform’s main features, functionalities and content, including multiple workspaces, communication tools such as messages and forums, shared calendar and events, requests used for expression of needs please see [the presentation “IRMA – Integrated Return Management Application”](#).

Discussion

IOM Ukraine turned a series of question to the JRC: whether the use of IRMA is mandatory or not, what types of returns it covers – voluntary or forced, who the community of users is and at which stage of the return process the system becomes applicable. The JRC clarified that the users are the officials of the EU MS, the associated countries (Iceland, Liechtenstein, Norway, Switzerland) who are engaged in return activities as well as the officials of the EC, Frontex and EASO. IRMA covers all types of returns – voluntary and forced, not only the actual operations (travel of returnees to their countries of origin) but also all the concomitant activities (e.g. acquisition of a travel document). As for the stage when IRMA becomes



involved, since it is not a database of returnees neither it is a system to monitor the return procedure it is rather used for providing information and services to the EU MS.

The EC addressed a number of questions to the USA regarding how the updates are made in the ESTA in the period of time between issuance of authorization and traveler's arrival and who triggers the changes; whether there is a system of entry and exit in the USA and whether the length of visitors' stay can be controlled; whether there is a possibility for non-electronic payment for authorization. The USA further specified that ESTA is very dynamic and very interactive, authorization can be cancelled almost instantly and the airlines can be informed not to board a person whose authorization has been cancelled. The derogatory information comes from various sources: embassies, airlines etc. The USA has a very robust biographic (but not biometric) exit programme, but there is no formal exit control except for the API so the carrier has to give a manifest on departure control. A person-centric database called Arrival-Departure Information System (ADIS) that tracks people by identity and not by a particular document is also in place. Those travelling through land border can pay their authorization fee online and there are plans to develop an app for payment.

Ms. Kateryna Kulchytska, Europe without Barriers, Ukraine, asked the EC to provide details about the period of validity and cost of the travel authorization issued by ETIAS, and whether there are plans to start a customer support service for ETIAS. According to the EC, the expected validity of a travel authorization will be between two and five years, and the cost is expected to be much lower than EUR 11-15 as announced in some media sources. As for the customer support, there will be guidance online and a phone number to call.

Georgia expressed interest in knowing whether it is being planned to provide access to IRMA for countries of origin. The JRC noted that participation of third countries is not envisaged since there is no functionality in the platform that can be utilized by third countries. Two more questions Georgia addressed to the EC: why is it still challenging, with all the information systems in operation, to have the statistics on overstayers? And how will the 90/180 days rule apply in case of a two-year authorization? The EC responded that there is no statistics on those who overstayed since the data on entry and exit as well as on visas which are not used is not recorded in any of the existing systems. As for the second question, the 90/180 days rule will apply similarly to how it is applied in case of visas.

Latvia enquired how the decision making will be done under ETIAS (both regarding authorization and appeal): by a responsible MS or at EU level. The EC informed that these questions are presently in the center of the debate and most probably all the requests will be channeled to a central place where the majority of work on decision making will be done but also information from the MS will be used. The appeal will follow the same pattern as the authorization application.

Summary and closure

Mr. Robert Rybicki, DG HOME of the European Commission, reiterated gratitude to the hosting countries and extended it to the speakers, particularly those from the EC for attending the meeting in the period of active drafting of the migration-related legislation and those traveling from the USA. He expressed assurance that the meeting proved to be useful due to such factors as the content of the delivered presentations as well as interpersonal communication between the participants on the margins of the meeting. Mr. Rybicki encouraged the participating countries to consider hosting the future Panel meetings and announced that the next one, devoted to migration strategies, will be held in Minsk in December 2016.

Ms. Maira Roze, Office of Citizenship and Migration Affairs of the Republic of Latvia, summarized the meeting by acknowledging the substantive content of the presentations and high professional level of the speakers. She expressed confidence that the attendees got charged with new ideas which they can apply in their national contexts. Ms. Roze thanked everyone whose involvement ensured success of the



meeting: participants from various countries, the EU and EaP, especially Ukraine for co-hosting the event, USA for responding to the invitation, the EC and IOM, interpreters and her own team.

Mr. Maksym Sokoliuk, Head of the State Migration Service of Ukraine, emphasized that increased mobility of persons in the contemporary world poses a significant challenge for the governments who need to react swiftly and plan for many years ahead including modernizing their ICT systems, and in this context the meeting got extremely useful. He thanked the Latvian colleagues for insightful practical presentation of their border control systems and welcomed all those interested to visit Ukraine to get familiarized with its best practices. In conclusion, Mr. Sokoliuk outlined the most notable prospects for development of ICT in the sphere of migration management and identity management: accelerated border checks, person verification by a combination of identifiers (i.e. ten fingerprints, iris, 3D face recognition), verification by DNA, introduction of a global identification mechanism and issuance of a “world ID card”.

All the presentations mentioned in this report as well as all the materials related to the meeting can be found on [the Panel website](#). The presentations are accessible to logged-in users only.

