

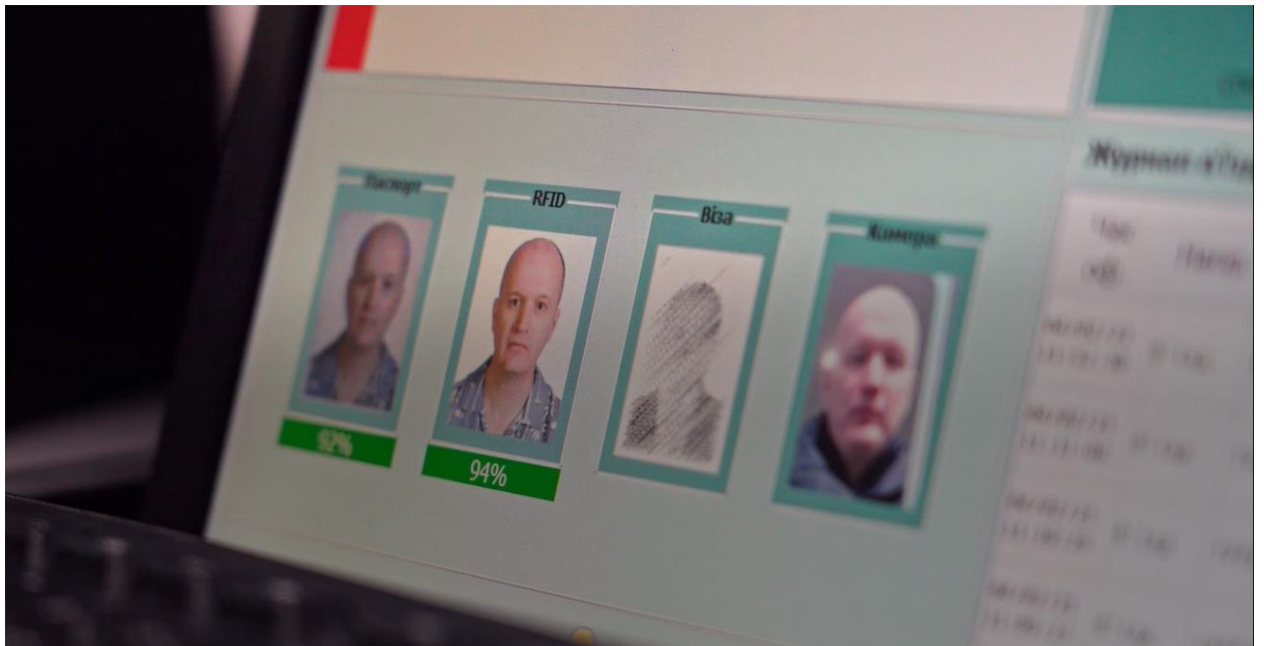
How biometric data collection helps combat irregular migration in Ukraine

Human history and a number of adventure movies have shown us how competent criminals can be in their counterfeiting techniques, in particular those who adopt false identities, and cross the borders of different countries. However, technology has now reached the next level, and it is not so easy to forge personal identity documents as it was in the 19th century or even up until recent times. The use of biometric identification technologies drastically changes border management and decreases the risks associated with the use of fraudulent identity documents by travellers.

To help Ukraine create a modern border and migration management system, the Mission of the International Organization for Migration (IOM) in Ukraine, with financial support of the European Union (EU), has been implementing the project "Support for Migration and Asylum Management in Ukraine" (IMMIS) since December 2016.

In this text, we will understand what technologies have been introduced in Ukraine, whether it is true that a biometric passport cannot be forged, and whether or not international criminals can successfully travel to the Ukrainian border.

What the Ukrainian biometric personal identification system includes and how it works



In Ukraine, the National Biometric Verification and Identification System uses digital fingerprints, digital facial image and digital signatures. If a foreigner has provided such data at least once, for example, at the Ukrainian border, or during detention for illegal crossing of the state border, or in the process of applying for a residence permit to the State Migration Service, then this person will be easily identified in the future. If he or she were to be found undocumented, the lawfulness of his or her stay in Ukraine could be checked effortlessly.

"If employees of the consular office of Ukraine in a foreign country enroll fingerprints during the processing of a foreigner's visa application, the biometric data of this person will be eventually checked by border guards when the person arrives at the crossing border point. And later, if this person applies for a residence permit in Ukraine, it can be known for sure that this is the same person who entered the country. Collecting biometric data practically makes it unrealistic to have opportunities for impersonation at different stages of this process," an employee of the State Border Guard Service said.

The State Migration Service, in turn, also collects biometric data of citizens of Ukraine, such as digital signature, digital facial image and fingerprints.

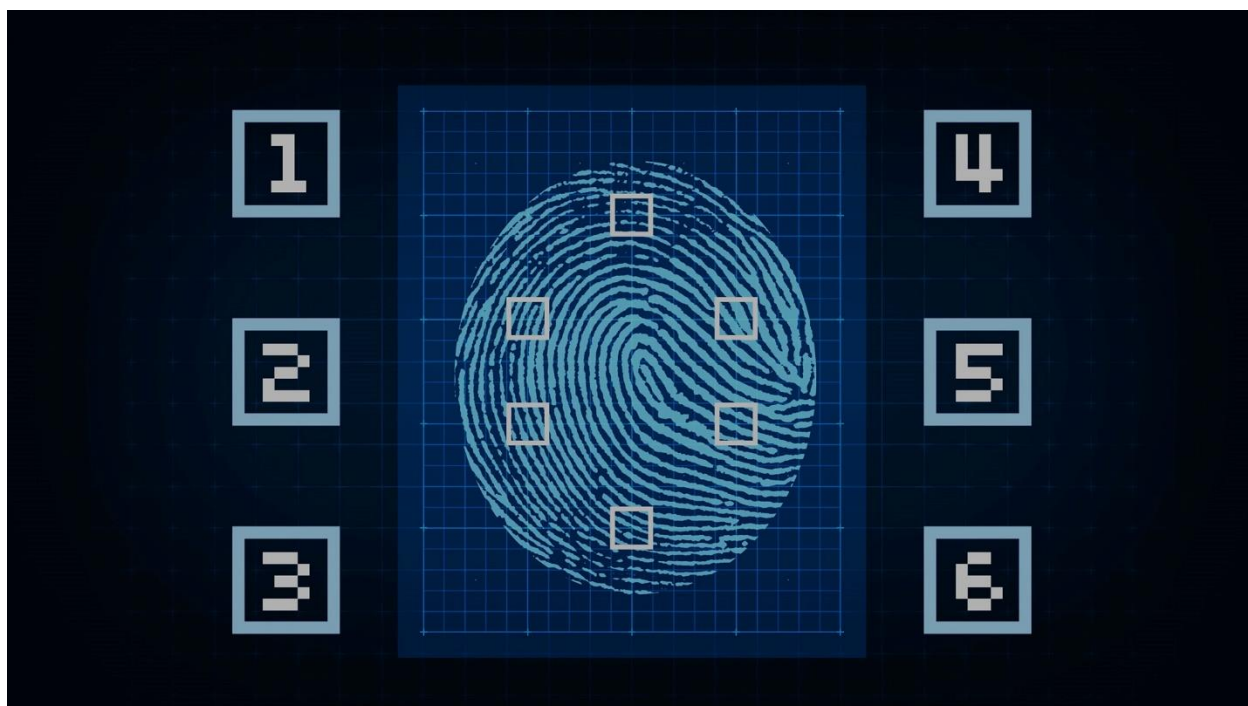
According to the Deputy Chairman of the State Migration Service of Ukraine Ivan Dvoilenko, the appearance of biometric documents has enhanced personal data protection.

"The introduction of foreign biometric passports in Ukraine has eliminated subjectivity and the possibility of abuse when exercising control, and secondly, it has reduced the control time. This contributes to better personal identification and better document security, minimizes forgery and counterfeit risks," the State Migration Service said.

In addition, the Ukrainian biometric passport is among the most secure in the world. According to the State Border Guard Service, no forgeries of Ukrainian biometric passports have yet to be identified.

IMMIS in Ukraine: what has been completed and what is targeted for implementation

In an effort to achieve better control over the entry and exit of foreigners, their compliance with the rules of stay in our country and in order to improve national security, from January 1, 2018, border guards have been enrolling digital fingerprints of citizens from migration risk countries.



The process of capturing biometric data at border crossings virtually makes it impossible for a person to attempt the use of somebody else's identity.

"If a person, upon entering Ukraine, enters the country with a passport of one country and previously had entered Ukraine with a passport of another country with the modified identification data, it is possible to verify the person's identity by checking fingerprints. If a border guard has doubts about the validity of the passport, then this person is obliged to pass to the second line (more thorough) control procedures (in-depth check, including consulting databases)," the State Border Guard Service of Ukraine said.

Plastic surgeries, change of the name or an attempt to forge a biometric passport – all this will not help a person avoid identification at the border.

With the money provided by the project, the administrative offence system of the State Border Guard Service was substantially updated and automated.

"This system allows automating procedural actions and recording violations during the border crossing, in particular, fingerprinting foreign offenders. We are now modernizing it so that our employees at border crossing points can quickly find information in this database," the employee of the State Border Guard Service said.

Also, under the IMMIS project, **the Arkan inter-agency integrated system** has been modernized. Thanks to this system, public bodies, within the limits of their powers, can exchange collected data. For example, the State Border Board Service has the data on the detention of offenders or details of illegal border crossing, and the State Migration Service and other authorized agencies can use this information. Or, for example, during the execution of border control, a border guard immediately sees information about the visa issued by a consulate of Ukraine, which instantly enters the State Border Guard Service database via the Arkan system. So, one can immediately see whether the details of the visa issued match the one presented by a traveler at the border.

Along with the upgrade of the systems that use fingerprints for personal identification, with the help of the IMMIS project the Face Recognition system based on the principle of high accuracy comparison of mathematical models of face image representations used for identification was introduced at border crossing points. The system checks if the person's face photo taken at the checkpoint matches the passport photo and the digital image in the passport microchip.

"Why the photo" you ask? It is because fingerprints are not submitted by all travelers at the border, but only by foreigners from migration risk countries. This means that the Face Recognition system provides an opportunity of ensuring more thorough monitoring at the border.

"We did an experiment: two twins first used their own passports and then exchanged them. Well, the system recognized the mismatch in the second case," the employee of the State Border Guard Service said.

To date, this system is successfully operating at the Boryspil international airport, but the system is intended to be introduced at all border crossing points of Ukraine.

What are the advantages of introducing a biometric data collection system for Ukraine and its citizens?

The identification systems implemented thanks to the IMMIS project help speed up the process of personal identification and improve security.

Collecting data from foreigners who enter the territory of Ukraine is a matter of national security. Moreover, the system ensures proper migration management and monitors migration flows in Ukraine.

The State Migration Service confirmed that this is a fairly efficient tool for monitoring the terms of the stay of foreign nationals in Ukraine.

"Now we are creating a database with biometric data of foreigners and stateless persons who visit Ukraine for different purposes. With developing electronic information exchange, in the future the search for biometric data of persons entering Ukraine can be performed through databases of foreign and interstate law enforcement agencies," Deputy Head of the State Migration Service of Ukraine Ivan Dvoilenko said.

Further, the system will be improved. Once the law has passed, the reliability of identification will be strengthened by enabling cross-checking of biometric data against the existing databases of Ukrainian government bodies, and in some cases even against the Interpol database. Thus, a person on the wanted list in Ukraine or around the world will not be able to cross the Ukrainian border, even by adopting false identities.

Automation of processes, integration of databases, quick searches for persons and their identification – all this are the advantages of innovations introduced in the context of ensuring reliable guarding of the state border of Ukraine and countering irregular migration.