

Migration management in Ukraine: how modern IT solutions enhance state security



Migration has many advantages. To name a few, it is able to enrich countries with new cultures, knowledge and experience, to improve the demographic situation and, ultimately, to contribute to the development of economic potential. However, today, countries are facing more and more new challenges associated with irregular (the term “illegal” used to be more widely applied) migration. To successfully cope with them, Ukraine needs a modern and efficient migration management system.

The European Union (EU) and the International Organization for Migration (IOM), within the framework of the project “Support for Migration and Asylum Management in Ukraine” (IMMIS), are assisting the country in addressing today’s migration-related challenges. Over the four years of work, in close cooperation with government agencies, the implementation of the project has helped automate the processes associated with migration management and introduce advanced IT solutions and best international practices. In particular, with the help of the project the process of identifying foreigners using their biometric data has been improved and security in the state has therefore been enhanced.

In this article, we will analyze how many foreigners visit Ukraine annually, as well as how innovations have improved the work of government agencies that interact with foreigners.

How many foreigners visited Ukraine in 2020?

About 3.4 million foreigners from 192 countries of the world visited Ukraine last year, the majority came from neighboring states. Most of the foreigners entered the country as tourist or for private reasons, while 70,000 were in transit.

Top 10 countries which citizens came to Ukraine in 2020



from **192** countries,
of which 70,000 were in transit

Moldova 933,000	Hungary 217,000
Belarus 463,500	Turkey 149,000
Russia 390,000	Germany 74,000
Poland 272,000	Israel 57,000
Romania 229,000	USA 42,000

The source is the State Border Guard Service of Ukraine

IMMIS **MOVING FORWARD TOGETHER**

The path of a foreigner in Ukraine

A number of government authorities are involved in migration management in Ukraine, in particular, the State Migration Service of Ukraine, the State Border Guard Service of Ukraine, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Ukraine, the National Police of Ukraine, as well as the Ministry of Internal Affairs of Ukraine as the body that shapes the policy in this area.

WHO IS RESPONSIBLE FOR MIGRATION MANAGEMENT in Ukraine and what areas supervises



IMMIS **MOVING FORWARD TOGETHER**

Let's imagine a foreigner who is going to visit Ukraine. We are inviting you to go along various stages of his path from applying for a visa, to passport control on the border and later to applying for a residence permit, if he or she decides to stay here legally. Let's see how the solutions implemented by the EU and IOM project have improved these processes.

Applying for a visa

Meet Karim. He lives in a small country that has a visa regime for entering Ukraine. To get a visa, Karim needs to apply to the Ukrainian consulate. By coincidence, on the day of the appointment, the Internet connection disappears there. However, now the upgraded visa system can work offline, and Karim does not need to come another time. The information will be entered into the system as soon as the Internet connection appears.

The Ministry of Foreign Affairs officials are carefully checking Karim's documents, sending enquiries to the law enforcement agencies of Ukraine. Until recently, this process was not fully automated, and the response could arrive only after a few days. Today, consular officers have advanced workstations and are able to check information online in a matter of seconds.

In addition, thanks to the EU's support, 50 Ukrainian consulates, in particular in countries with the biggest migration risk, received new fingerprint scanners and modern software that allows for the biometric data of foreigners to be captured. Now, citizens of these countries will have their biometric data taken when they apply for visas to enter Ukraine. This will ensure that the person who received the visa is the same person who is crossing the border.

Karim is happy, as the check has been successful. He has been granted a visa and will soon fly to Ukraine.

Checking Advance Passenger Information

As soon as Karim checked in for the flight, his passport details and his route were transferred to the State Border Guard Service of Ukraine. Previously, this information was received by e-mail in various formats, and the inspector was forced to partially check the data manually, looking for information in various databases. Now, the updated system automatically checks information in the databases of the law enforcement agencies of Ukraine and Interpol. If an alarm signal is received, it is time for border guards to prepare for meeting the traveller to make further enquiries.

Border control

As Karim comes from a migration risk country, he has his fingerprints taken during passport control. The modernized information system used by the border guard automatically verifies if the visa in Karim's passport matches the visa that was issued at the consulate. The system also shows whether there is an entry ban for the arriving traveller.



Since last year, an additional "filter" - a face recognition system, has been used at the Boryspil airport to check all foreigners without exception. It allows for the capture of a "live" photo of a foreigner and immediately compares it with the image in the passport, and with the image in the microchip, if the foreigner has a biometric passport. The system is so accurate that it can even distinguish between identical twins. This prevents fraudulent use of passports as well as the possibility of crossing the border with the passport of another person with a similar appearance.

All is well with Karim`s documents, so the border guard lets him into the territory of Ukraine.

But let`s imagine a different scenario: the border guard has doubts about the authenticity of the passport, visa, or the legality of the grounds for entering Ukraine. In such case, a foreigner is sent to the second line of control where the documents are checked in more detail and the biometric data is taken, if it was not taken during the primary control. Now, based on biometric data, there is an additional opportunity to identify the person with the help of the registers of the State Migration Service and to check whether he or she in fact has a residence permit, and whether he or she has violated the rules of stay during previous visits to Ukraine.

Those who try entering Ukraine illegally or smuggle goods, often do it by bypassing the checkpoints through the territory patrolled by border units. Previously, due to the lack of online access to a unified database of the State Border Guard Service, the border guard units did not have real-time information on the situation in the neighboring area, and offenders could take advantage of this. This deficiency has now been rectified. In addition, the border guards are provided with the technical possibility to scan the fingerprints of the detainees in each border unit and to automatically enter information about them into the unified information system of the State Border Guard Service. All this allows keeping an automated record of offenders and

offences and prevents corruption issues among the personnel of the authority. As the system now immediately displays the previous detentions of a person, it is no longer possible to avoid including previous offences and, accordingly, to artificially reduce the amount of a fine.

Applying for a residence permit

Karim likes Ukraine so much that he decides to stay and study here. Before the termination of the visa period, he needs to apply for a residence permit at the territorial unit of the State Migration Service.



Data about foreigners used to be kept in the territorial offices as paper files. This was unreliable and did not make it possible to quickly find information about a person.

Over the past two years, using EU funds, a modern automated centralised system that stores data in electronic registers has been created. An employee of the State Migration Service can check online what type of visa and Karim was granted and when, where and when he crossed the border, and whether he has committed any offences. The system helps to reduce corruption risks, since access to data and the possibility of entering them are clearly regulated and monitored by the system.

Instead of the old paper residence permit, Karim receives a modern plastic ID card with a microchip on which biometric data is stored. It is a user-friendly document of compact size with that has a high level of protection against counterfeiting and complies with European standards.

In the next article we will talk about what biometric data is and whether one should worry about the possibility of it being used unlawfully.

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