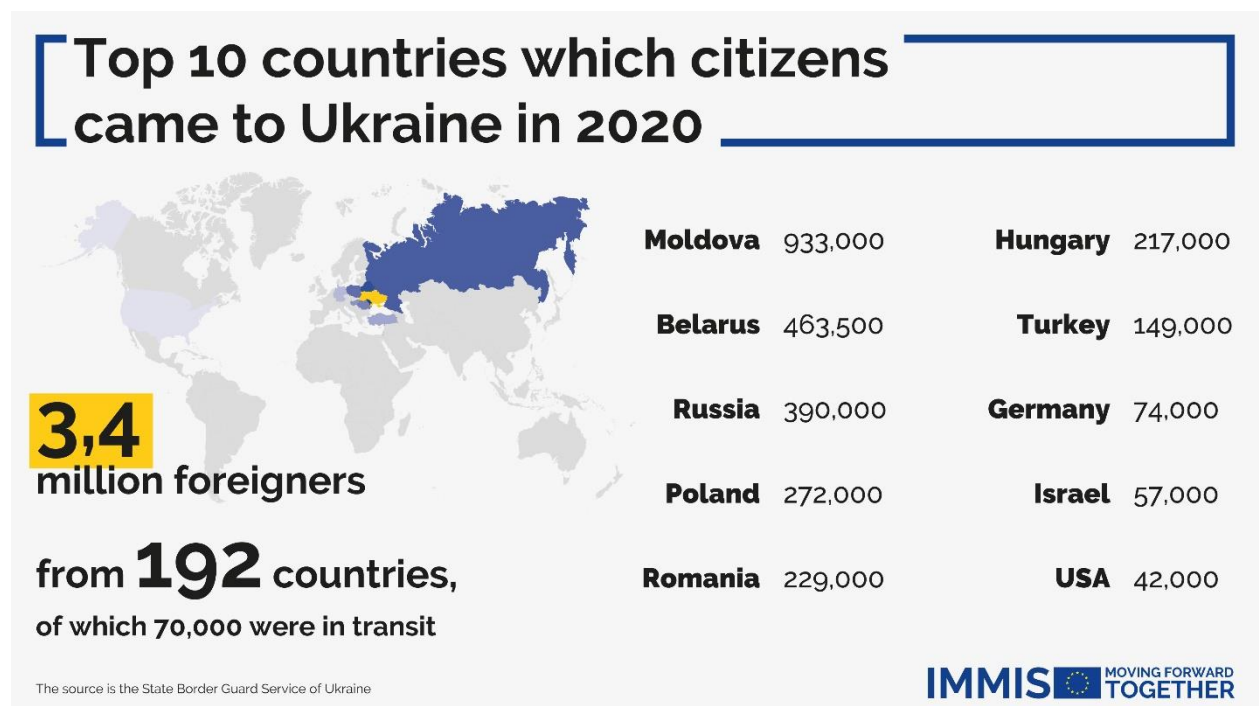


EU financial support helps Ukraine to implement up-to-date IT solutions for migration management

Migration processes require increased attention to them. To comply with the best European practices, Ukraine is introducing a number of new instruments at the border.

Ukraine and migration processes

The geographical and geopolitical position of Ukraine makes it attractive for migrants. According to the report "Migration in Ukraine: Facts and Figures," despite armed hostilities in the east of the country and economic difficulties, the country remains attractive for many migrants.



Some of them arrive in the country to work or study, but there are also those who see Ukraine as a temporary asylum and a starting point for further movement to other European countries.

Due to reinforcement of migration control in the EU and the Russian Federation, many irregular migrants are looking for new routes, and some of them pass through our territory.

Migration management: How to make decisions effectively

Migration management processes demand increased attention. For high-quality management of migration processes, Ukrainian specialists need tools enabling them to make decisions about foreigners in the light of information available.

APPLYING FOR A RESIDENCE PERMIT

At the end of 2020,

293 614
foreigners

were permanently residing in Ukraine

Russia (53%)

Moldova (7%)

Azerbaijan (4,8%)

Armenia (4,3%)

Georgia (3,8%)

151 360
foreigners

were temporarily staying
in Ukraine

India (12,5%)

Russia (9,2%)

Turkey (7,6%)

Morocco (5,6%)

Azerbaijan (4,7%)

The source is the State Border Guard Service of Ukraine

IMMIS  **MOVING FORWARD TOGETHER**

The project "Support for Migration and Asylum Management in Ukraine" (IMMIS) funded by the European Union (EU) and implemented by the International Organization for Migration (IOM), helps to foster the management of migration processes in Ukraine in accordance with the best international and European practices.

Technological solutions for migration management supported by IMMIS

According to Project Manager Mark Richmond, IMMIS is the largest single-country migration management project ever funded by the EU. The total project budget has exceeded EUR 27 million.

The project "Support for Migration and Asylum Management in Ukraine" was launched in December 2016. At that time, many of the migration management processes performed by government bodies were paper-based and were not always effective. In addition, such non-automated approach to information management and to interaction of various government authorities entailed high corruption risks.

The analysis of all existing processes and procedures in the field of migration management showed that automation was needed to optimize them. To this end, within the framework of the IMMIS project, a number of innovative technological solutions were introduced that not only automated the work processes related to migration, but also provided the ability to collect and process biometric data of foreigners and stateless persons.



Mark Richmond says: *"Such IT systems related to migration and border management were the dream of government officials. We must be aware that employees of these government bodies look individually at each case and make a decision whether to issue a visa to a particular person, to allow them to cross the border, or to issue a residence permit to live in Ukraine. This is a great responsibility, because every decision can have certain impact and consequences. That is why it is so important to have enough data about a person to make an informed decision concerning them."*

The information necessary for making these decisions can be stored in various databases of government authorities – the National Police, the State Migration Service, the State Border Guard Service, etc. For example, some of these data may be deliberately held back by applicants when applying for a visa to Ukraine.

IT solutions introduced under the project will allow authorized persons of government bodies involved in migration management to receive online the necessary information about a migrant.

For example, in the State Border Guard Service one can promptly find out when and through which border crossing point a foreigner has entered Ukraine, or if a person has exceeded the 90 days visa-free period of stay; at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs one can learn if a person has been granted a visa to enter Ukraine; in the State Migration Service, one can inquire whether a person has legal grounds for staying in the territory of Ukraine (for example, has a residence permit) and whether a person has previously been prosecuted for administrative offences after violating the rules of stay in Ukraine.

An automated and well-regulated system of sending inquiries and responding to them virtually wipes away the possibility of having illegal access to data of foreigners and narrows down the potential corruption risks.

Technical specificities of IT system for migration management

IT systems developed or upgraded within the project have a number of unique capabilities. The acquisition of biometric data of foreigners and stateless persons in the process of applying for visas in Ukraine is among them. This will allow Ukraine to work in line with the best international practices.

To expand the possibilities of working with biometric data, the project has significantly modernized the National Biometric Verification and Identification System. As mentioned earlier, after the adoption of the necessary law, the government authorities – the users of this system – will be able of receiving the necessary information about a person from other authorities online in response to their inquiries. For example, when granting a residence permit to a foreigner in Ukraine, the State Migration Service will be able in a matter of seconds to receive information whether a particular foreigner has been awarded a visa to enter Ukraine from the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, or the details about the time and place of crossing the border by the applicant from the State Border Guard Service, as well as the information from the National Police on whether this person has committed an offense in Ukraine. Informed decisions in such matters directly impact the security situation in the country.

In addition, thanks to funding from the European Union within the framework of the IMMIS project, the State Migration Service and the State Border Guard Service also received the most advanced infrastructure for storing and backing up digital data accumulated in the IT systems of these bodies.

These are the personal data of citizens of Ukraine (for example, data on issued ID cards, passports for traveling abroad, etc.) and foreigners (data on issued permanent and temporary residence permits, refugee status granted, administrative offenses committed by foreigners in Ukraine, citizenship of Ukraine granted to foreigners).

The airport advance passenger information system was also improved under the IMMIS project. Now, when a person checks in for a flight in another country, the data about this person is immediately sent to the information system of the State Border Guard Service, which automatically checks the data received against information in the databases of Ukrainian law enforcement agencies or Interpol. If an alarm signal is received, the authorities will be ready to meet the offender at the border crossing point.

In addition, a pilot project has been implemented at the Boryspil airport aimed at testing the face recognition technology. This system automatically compares the photo of the traveller taken by the system with their photo in the passport and in the embedded microchip (if it is a biometric passport). In such way, the system immediately detects when a traveller uses someone else's passport. The accuracy of this system is very high. It can even recognize identical twins. Further implementation of the system will speed up border checks and improve the quality of the border control. It is planned to launch the technology at all border crossing points of Ukraine.



The need for systemic changes

All technical solutions created within the IMMIS project have been developed and successfully tested, yet the fully featured use of some of them requires legislative changes.

First, it concerns the collection and processing of biometric data. An analysis of Ukrainian legislation in this area has shown that there are still many regulatory issues that need to be resolved. However, the positive thing about it is that steps are being taken in that direction.

Recently, the president signed a law obliging foreigners and stateless persons to submit biometric data when applying for visas to enter Ukraine. This innovation will allow knowing for sure that the border is crossed by the same person who received the visa.

There is still a lot of work ahead to improve our regulatory framework. The EU provides Ukraine with expert support, but the adoption of the necessary legislation remains the exclusive competence of the Ukrainian side. The political will of Ukrainian government will determine how quickly Ukraine will get to a new level of border and migration control.