



Expansion of Advanced Border Control and Management Technologies in Armenia



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**Government of the
Republic
of Armenia**



**International
Organization
for Migration**



**US DoS Bureau for
International Narcotics
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**Aviainfotel
CJSC**

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The International Organization for Migration (IOM) is the leading organization working with migrants and governments in providing humane responses to migration challenges. Established in 1951 to resettle displaced persons in Europe, IOM currently operates in over 400 offices worldwide, managing some 1770 projects. IOM has 5600 operational staff and a programme budget of over USD 783.8 million. As an inter-governmental organization IOM unites 125 Member States and 16 Observer States, has Observer status at the United Nations and has formal cooperation agreements with many UN agencies. IOM works in four main areas of migration management: migration and development, regulating migration, addressing forced migration and facilitating migration.

Migration is considered one of the defining global issues of the early twenty-first century, as more and more people are on the move today than at any other point in human history. There are now about 192 million people living outside their place of birth, which is about three per cent of the world's population. This being the case, *migration management* is becoming an increasingly complex area of governance, inextricably linked to issues of economic and social development, human rights, security, stability and regional cooperation. The ability to address migration issues comprehensively and cooperatively is today a fundamental requirement for responsible national governance, effective international relations and full participation in international or regional institutions.

Passport and visa systems, immigration systems, and border management systems are processes used by governments to manage migration. These processes provide a framework for the management of permanent relocation and settlement and the administration of borders (the rules, techniques and procedures regulating activities and traffic across defined border areas or zones). Effective *border management* should prevent and detect local, regional and transnational crime.

Migration management has been one of the key priorities of the Republic of

Armenia (RA) since gaining independence. Since the 1990s, IOM has assisted the Armenian Government to improve its capacity to manage migration.

Through U.S. Government funded programs, IOM is assisting the Government of Armenia to expand the country's *Border Management Information System* (BMIS) to essential border crossing control points in order to establish a unified system and increased operational capacity for the management of migration processes in Armenia.

BMIS is a complete business application solution that combines all aspects of migration facilitation and management with border security and control. It caters to the functional requirements of any border—be it air, sea, road or rail. BMIS is produced by *Aviainfotel CJSC*, which is well-known for its technological solutions in the fields of international airport management, estate and premises management, and the administration of world-wide information systems.

BMIS was first installed at Yerevan Zvartnots International Airport in 1999. In 2000, under the framework of its *Capacity Building in Migration Management Programme*, IOM conducted an assessment on border management in RA. Based on the assessment report presented to the RA Government, the RA National Security Service (NSS) initiated expansion of the existing BMIS system to all border crossing points, synchronization of the borders and establishment of a complete border management cycle in which the system provides checks during each step of the border-crossing process.

IOM was invited by the Armenian government to participate in the expansion of BMIS and undertook an independent technical evaluation of the system. In 2004 and 2005 as part of *Expansion of Border Management Information System Project* funded by the US Department of State Bureau for International Narcotics and Law Enforcement Affairs (INL), BMIS was expanded to the Bagratashen land border with the Republic of Georgia. In 2007 – 2008 within the scope of the IOM *Further Expansion and*

Establishment of the Network of Border Management Information System: Republic of Armenia Project, funded by the US Government, RA Government and *Aviainfotel CJSC*, BMIS was expanded to the Meghri land border with Iran, Giumri airport, and three border-crossing points on the border with the Republic of Georgia (the Bavra and Gogavan land borders and the Airum railway station). Implementation of BMIS in two more border-crossing control points (Privolnoe and Jiliza land borders, both with Georgia) is ongoing as part of a RA Government-funded project.

This expansion is in line with the RA Government's border management reforms. RA Government Decision # 884-N of June 22, 2006, on “Introducing Electronic Border Management Information System” and its Implementation Schedule specify that the following bodies should be linked to the BMIS: (a) Procuracy General, (b) Ministry of Justice, (c) Ministry of Foreign Affairs, (d) Ministry of Transport and Communication, (e) Ministry of Defense, (f) NSS, (g) Police, (h) Civil Aviation Department, (i) Statistics Service, (j) Migration Agency, (k) Tax Service and (l) the courts. When requests are made for security and national defense purposes, access is granted to the whole database of information; such information is to be stored for a 7-year period. For other purposes, queries to the BMIS database can be made for limited periods only; such information can be obtained and used only with a court decision. BMIS can also be networked with external agencies for data exchange concerning concrete issues: (a) Foreign Consulates and Missions; (b) Interpol databases; (c) Travel / transport companies (such as airlines, railways, shipping companies, roadways); and (d) Authorized agencies (such as designated travel/ ticketing/tourist companies).

BMIS is being expanded to all border-crossing control points in Armenia, because the government recognises that highly effective border control technologies are essential in today's globalised world. Globalization has increased international travel, which has had many positive outcomes.

However, we are also witnessing harmful and undesirable effects such as human trafficking and smuggling, illegal trafficking of goods and international terrorism, which could be prevented by increased capacity to manage migration in origin, transit and destination countries. It is IOM's belief that well-managed migration benefits both migrants and societies.



A border guard checking a passenger's passport

Now, thanks to BMIS, the border crossing check-points of Armenia are equipped with a state-of-the-art technological solution for efficient border control and management.

BMIS Central Node has been rendered operational to provide synchronization of border control systems.

Thanks to the synchronized system, control of transit movements has become more efficient and complete, including:

- ⇒ Identification of transit vehicles,
- ⇒ Identification of overstays in the country,
- ⇒ Identification of vehicles that were registered at the border as

“transportation means” or “vehicles in transit,” but instead were dismantled and sold as spare parts in the country.

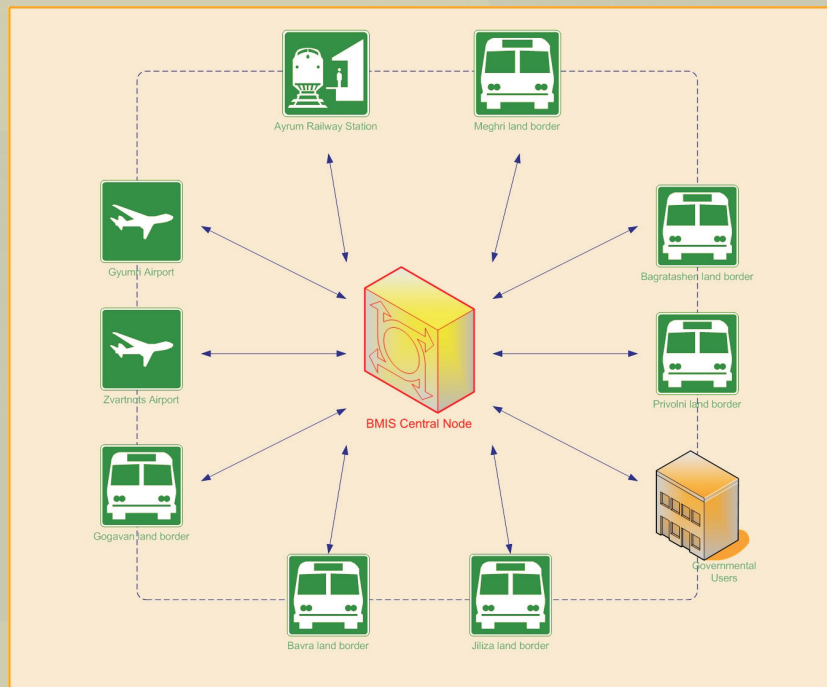
Under the synchronized system, a border-guard at any of the check-points can make a query and retrieve the visa and border-crossing history of passengers and vehicles, regardless of which entry/exit ports they used in the past.

Thanks to BMIS, the respective central border management authority can:

- ⇒ Make sophisticated analytical queries on passenger/vehicle flows,
- ⇒ Make fuzzy queries and get satisfactory answers, even if the query and/or database information is incorrect, or questioner has only statistical description on the subject of inquiry,
- ⇒ Get integrated reports on migration.

BMIS' key border management functions include the following:

- ⇒ Regular migration facilitation, border security and control,
- ⇒ Prevention of irregular migration, human trafficking, unlawful trade in drugs and weapons,
- ⇒ Identification of migrants whose visa applications have been rejected,
- ⇒ Remote visual chat on life image for wanted person (under investigation by police or Interpol) / unwanted person (prohibited to enter the country) recognition by remote witness,
- ⇒ Visa Processing and Issuance/e-Visa (electronic visa),
- ⇒ Vehicle and cargo border-crossing management; control of transit movements,
- ⇒ Analysis of migration (emigration, immigration) trends, refugees and asylum seekers, business, educational and tourist travellers, irregular migration, human smuggling and trafficking, etc.,
- ⇒ Performance of intergovernmental agreements on border control and management,
- ⇒ Management of border points' infrastructure and resources,
- ⇒ Facilitation of border crossing data exchange between law enforcement bodies.



The BMIS System connection with Border Crossing Control Points

BMIS has the following features:

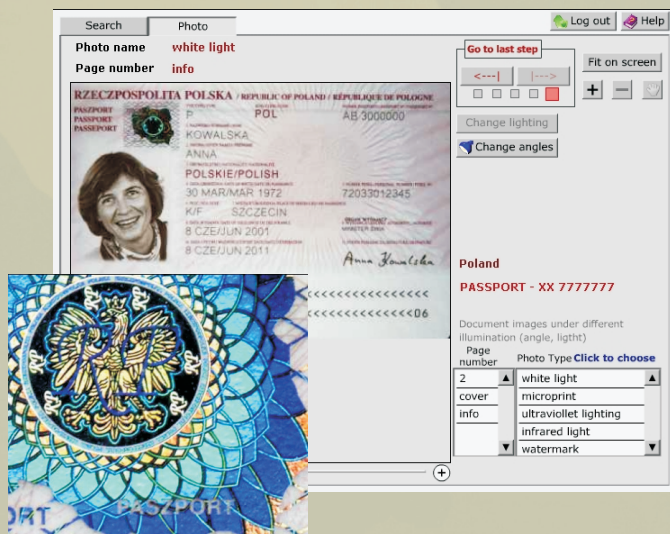
- Constant checks on entry and exit flows to match each entry with the corresponding exit and vice versa and to identify overstaying/missing people.
- Wanted people alert – multi-criteria check on person / document / cargo / vehicle, through NSS / Police / Interpol and other databases, at visa processing and during entry and exit at the border. Notification is given to special agents for secondary inspection.
- Extensive querying and reporting facilities integrated in a “neural network” across the system.
- User-friendly operation. Minimum data entry requirements as the

system enables extensive pre-populating of entry / user screens with data already available elsewhere across the entire system. Besides, a thin client with a browser front-end and a normal IP connection is adequate for Users.

- State-of-the-art technology. Compatible with document readers, distance / proximity / laser scan / bar code readers, and biometric devices. GIS based, GPS / RFID and WiMAX enabled; Compliant with ICAO recommendations and other standards.



The real-time proceeding at a border-crossing control point as viewed on the system. Remote witness can view live camera, installed at the border check-point and communicate with border-guards in case of need.



Identification Documents Information System

Some highlights of the BMIS system

- Database containing all the features of identification/ travel/ security documents (such as passports), issued by different countries: document types, serial number formats, quantity of pages, security signs, cover designs, binding type, page sizes, shape of security labels, etc.
- Storage of very high resolution (15 megapixel) and high fidelity images of important pages (under white light, UV, IR, etc., and under different observation conditions such as angle, light, etc.), and other data (watermarks, microprint, holograms, and other security marks and features) of all travel documents issued by various countries.
- Contains information on both genuine and fraudulent documents. The database has a large number of passport types from various countries, and is constantly being updated with new data.
- Consular officials from various countries can be granted access to

input information on document numbers, serials, types and invalidity declarations.

- Special agencies of various countries can be given a facility to input photos of disclosed falsifications into the system via IP. Information on disclosed falsifications will then be available to border-guards of all states using the system.

The Identification Documents Information System (DIS) can be accessed on 24/7 basis. Users need just a thin client and a normal IP connection and browser to be able to access the system.

Reforms of Border Management in Armenia will continue and there is potential for follow-up activities. These will include the following directions:

- (i) Integrated BMIS Implementation.

Creation of a migrants' information exchange environment for prevention of human trafficking, migrant smuggling and recognition of the readmission of irregular migrants.

This project has the objective of providing current/potential trafficking victims with capacity to access on-line contact with law enforcement bodies on migration problems they face. The service should be easy-to-access and easy-to-use. Availability:

Anywhere:

- Internet – enabled
- Slow Internet connection (dial-up) suffices
- No special requirements on the equipment at the User end
- No special software to install (standard web-browser suffices)
- Accessible also with mobile devices via GPRS, SMS protocols

Anybody:

- Multilingual Data Input and Visualization
- User-friendly Interface
- No software installations – No technical skills needed

Anytime:

- Well-organized data centers will allow round-the-clock year-round access to the system and permanent provision of the service

(ii) Implementation of Identification Documents Information System (DIS) for national, regional and inter-regional tasks.

IOM will continue assisting the RA Government in border management and migration management reforms.



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