

## Opening the door to effective visa management

*“We have successfully put in place a highly automated, state-wide visa approval system and created opportunities for closer European integration.”*

**Jan Urva – Head of Information Technology Department, Citizenship and Migration Board**



### Challenge

Located in the heart of the Baltic Sea region, Estonia is one of the Baltic States that regained its independence in August 1991. Since then Estonia has witnessed rapid economic growth and in 2004 the country became a member of NATO and the European Union (EU).

Estonia’s accession to the EU has brought a number of significant new requirements for the management of visa registrations. In particular, it needed to prepare for joining the Schengen treaty, which enables people to travel freely across the borders of any countries that are signed up to the agreement. It also needed to develop its main visa registry so that it could interface with the European central visa management system.

Responsibility for managing this work resides with Estonia’s Citizenship and Migration Board (CMB), which is responsible for determining if people living in Estonia are either citizens or aliens and issuing identity documents to residents, confirming visa invitations and revoking or extending the length of visa permits. The CMB works closely with the Ministry of Foreign Affairs (MFA) in collecting and sharing visa information as the MFA has primary responsibility for all issues relating to visas and their issue. Visas can be issued by the Consular Officers attached to Estonia’s diplomatic offices or may also be issued in the border crossing points.

In addition, the CMB provides other government agencies with the data needed to perform their work. So, for example, the Ministry of Internal Affairs, The Police Board, the Security Police Board, and the Border Guard all identify people using information held in databases and application dossiers managed by the CMB.

Agu Leinfeld, former Head of the IT Department, Citizenship and Migration Board, says, *“The overall objective of the project was to develop a new national visa management IT system, compliant with recognised international standards and the national IT strategy, which would increase the operational capacity of the Consular Department within the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and also enhance our border control by ensuring compatibility with the requirements of the EU and the Schengen treaty.”*

### Solution

Following an extensive a state procurement Fujitsu (previously known as AS Mandator Estonia) won the contract to design and implement the new national visa (N-VIS) system, as well as updating the underlying IT architecture.

The main aim of the N-VIS application developed by Fujitsu is to streamline the issuing, withdrawal and ongoing management of visas or visa extensions, with effective decision

### SUMMARY OF KEY FACTS

#### Organisation

Citizenship and Migration Board, Estonia

#### Services delivered

Design and implementation of a new national visa system, including updating the technology platform, system architecture and working processes

#### Key metrics

- 1.3 million citizens

#### Benefits

- **Improved customer service** – visa applicants now receive a faster and more consistent service
- **Ensured national security** – improves the detection of visa-related frauds and provides actionable information
- **Increased efficiency** – automates the whole life cycle of visa applications and reduces duplicate information
- **Optimised productivity** – easy access to comprehensive information needed to assess and monitor visa applications
- **Reduced operational costs** – costs have decreased through simplification of processes and electronic sharing of data
- **Enhanced planning** – enables effective analysis of visa applications to improve performance and policies
- **Maximised flexibility** – provides a secure and scalable platform for ongoing developments and European integration

support tools and guidance on the parameters of the visa to be issued.

The system's key functionality includes components that are used to manage the identification and verification of applicants, user access control, production and printing of standard forms and templates, eg. visa stickers and passports, workflow and case management, tax accounting and the handling of complaints or errors. A context aware help system is also available to assist users with each activity.

N-VIS is fully compatible with CMB's other IT systems, with a range of common components for key activities such as the identification of applicants. It also includes secure interfaces to enable the exchange of data with the MFA and the Estonian Border Guard's (EBG) existing systems, such as the Population Registry, Commercial Registry and the Database of Border Crossings, and is capable of building links into Schengen systems (CS-VIS, VISION).

In addition, the N-VIS application incorporates a substantially renewed technological platform, system architecture and processes and is fully capable of working with the European central visa register using a range of advanced features, such as the collection, storage and forwarding of visa applicants' fingerprints to the joint EU visa information system.

The CMB launched the new visa register in October 2007.

*"Together with the new visa registry CMB has successfully put in place a highly automated, state-wide visa approval system, based on a substantially updated technology platform, system architecture and working processes, which has simultaneously also created opportunities for closer European integration and the fulfilment of future Schengen agreement requirements,"* comments Jan Urva, Head of Information Technology Department, Citizenship and Migration Board.

Agu Leinfeld adds, *"We now have a fully functioning consultation system, spanning across the Ministry of Internal Affairs, that allows us to centrally control all of the information held by Estonian agencies regarding visa applicants and, based on that information, make rapid, consistent and justifiable decisions about whether the visa applicant should be allowed into the state. As the visa register communicates with other state registries, using the new 'X-road' secure IT environment, we also have much more thorough and precise detail about people's identities and security profiles than was possible with the previous system."*

### Benefits

By consolidating and securely sharing information across multiple organisations the national visa application developed by Fujitsu is enabling Estonia's Citizenship and Migration Board to:

- **Improve customer service** – visa applicants now receive a faster and more consistent service
- **Ensure national security** – improves the detection of visa-related frauds and provides actionable information to other organisations eg. the Police can access data about border crossings and infractions of the Aliens Act
- **Increase efficiency** – automates the whole life cycle of visa applications and reduces duplicate information, saving considerable time and resources and minimising the risk of errors

- **Optimise productivity** – provides Consular Officers and Border Guard staff with easy access to comprehensive information needed to assess visa applications and perform follow-up checks
- **Reduce operational costs** – the cost of managing applications has decreased through the simplification of processes and electronic sharing of data with other organisations
- **Enhance planning** – enables effective analysis of visa application information in order to monitor and improve performance and management policies
- **Maximise flexibility** – provides a secure and scalable platform to support ongoing developments and integration with other European visa management systems.

Jan Urva says, *"The national visa management system is now an important tool in streamlining the management of visa applications, extensions and corrections in the MFA and diplomatic offices and in the detection of visa discrepancies by those involved in controlling and checking people at the border. N-VIS will also help us improve overall state security by assisting us with the statistical analysis of visa applications, issue and detected abuses and by providing other authorised government organisations with timely and fully harmonised access to accurate visa-related data."*

### Approach

Fujitsu put over 15,000 man-hours of development effort into the creation of the visa register system and the new technological platform in order to achieve the project's challenging 15 month timescale. All of the existing visa data was then migrated on to the new system, before switching over from using the old visa register.

Key to the project's success was the close working relationship between Fujitsu and CMB as Agu Leinfeld explains, *"It was a complicated project that needed a substantial input of manpower from both sides, but we had a clear vision of what we wanted to achieve, which Fujitsu understood and was able to deliver. By working closely together we were able to overcome some quite complex issues and complete this massive project on time and budget."*

### Expertise

With over 40 years experience of supporting the needs of customers, Fujitsu has a proven track record in providing complex systems integration and application development and management services that reduce costs, improve productivity and customer services and deliver a compelling return on investment.

*"Fujitsu has acquired the experience of one of the oldest Estonian software companies, including the successful development and implementation of the first Estonian State Visa Registry in 2001, which it subsequently maintained over the years on behalf of the CMB. As such, Fujitsu has a very good understanding of the way the department operates and its overall aims,"* says Agu Leinfeld.

### ASK FUJITSU

Contact us on +44 (0) 870 242 7998 or  
[askfujitsu@uk.fujitsu.com](mailto:askfujitsu@uk.fujitsu.com) or visit [uk.fujitsu.com](http://uk.fujitsu.com)