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NEWSLETTER

EU-CHINA DIALOGUE ON MIGRATION AND MOBILITY SUPPORT PROJECT - PHASE II

FOREWORD

The 10th issue of the newsletter of the EU-China Dialogue on Migration and Mobility Support Project – Phase II (MMSP II) covers the period from June 2021 until April 2022. During this time the COVID-19 pandemic has continued to impact migration and mobility at the national and global levels as well as the pace of project implementation.

As a key mitigation measure, some events have taken place either in hybrid or fully online format to accommodate safety requirements. To ensure the successful achievement of its objectives, the project has been granted an extension until 30 June 2023.

The newsletter features project highlights while also providing updates on relevant policy and legal developments in China through the Policy Corner and IOM news.

We are grateful to our partners for their continued commitment to the MMSP II and look forward to working together in the final stages of the project.

The MMSP II Project Team

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PROJECT HIGHLIGHTS

Seminar on EU-China short-stay visas

On 16 March 2022, IOM held a seminar to present the findings of the research on EU-China short-stay visas to representatives of EU Member States, the Directorate-General for Migration and Home Affairs (DG Home) and the EU Delegation in Beijing.

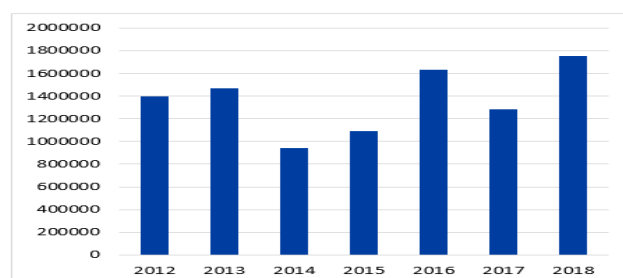
Presentations were delivered by IOM consultants and experts employed under MMSP II. The seminar aimed to increase knowledge of recent practices and challenges in the EU-China visa regimes based on the findings and recommendations of the research study.

The study focuses on short-stay visa travel in both directions, between the EU and China, and draws on the experience of representatives from selected EU Member States, China and other stakeholders involved in the visa policy domain.

Short-term travel flows between the EU and China were increasing before the COVID-19 pandemic. Tourists, students, businesspeople, and growing expatriate communities contributed to higher levels of exchanges and visa applications. The number of Schengen visas issued for Chinese applicants climbed from 1.7 million in 2014 to more than 2.8 million in 2019; in the opposite direction, the number of EU applications fluctuated somewhat in 2017 but overall grew until 2018.



Trips by EU residents to China (2012-2018, source: Eurostat)



During pre-pandemic years of increased travel and visa requests, the EU and Chinese visa application infrastructures and procedures started to expand and modernize. The increasing use of external service providers Visa Application Centres in the EU and China further allowed for the processing of larger volumes of visa applications.

However, the COVID-19 pandemic has put a halt to this development as border closures, quarantine policies and procedures significantly affected mobility reducing opportunities for the short-term travel between China and the EU. For example, the number of Chinese visa applications for the EU have plummeted from 2.8 million Schengen visas in 2019 to about 200,000 in 2020.

It appears that short stay travel between the EU and China will take time before reaching pre-pandemic levels. In the future, to raise the volume of visa applications it will be of paramount importance to strengthen coordination between the EU and China on travel and border measures and to proactively develop plans as to how to facilitate post-pandemic short term travel.

The research includes several recommendations for stakeholders and, inter alia, suggests that a fresh look may be given to the prospects of a Visa Facilitation Agreement that would result in visa processes that are more cost effective, better facilitated, and technologically modernized in support of travel resumption once the COVID-19 ceases or is brought under control.

MMSP II EVENTS

Training for EU Embassies and Consulates on the identification of victims of human trafficking

On 2 July 2021, the second edition of the training for EU Embassies and Consulates on the identification of victims of human trafficking (VoT) took place in Shanghai. After a successful first edition in Beijing, the training was repeated in another province to reach more EU consular and visa officers in order to increase their awareness of human trafficking. As visa and consular staff are often the first points of contact for a potential VoT, they play an important role in the complex process of combatting human trafficking.



Two IOM experts facilitated the training whose content was further enriched by valuable insights from experts connected online from the British Embassy in Beijing and the European Multidisciplinary Platform against Criminal Threats (EMPACT).

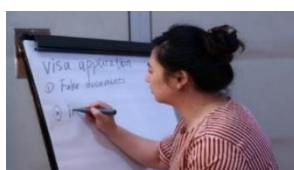


In their opening remarks, Ms. Maria Linder (EU Delegation to China) emphasised the complex nature of trafficking in human beings and Ms. Maria Madrid (DG Home) stressed the importance of identifying VoT at an early stage and highlighted the EU's most recent efforts to combat this crime. Ms. Laura Scorretti (IOM China) reiterated the importance of consular, visa and immigration liaison officers as agents for identification and protection of VoTs.

By sharing international best practices and standards, the training course increased participants' understanding of the implications of consular, visa and immigration liaison functions on early detection of potential trafficking cases in their day-to-day operations. Additionally, it strengthened the capacity of consular staff to detect indicators of trafficking while processing visa applications and conducting interviews with applicants, and encouraged dialogue and cooperation within and between consulates on these issues.



The training covered basic concepts of human trafficking, such as its definition and components, and reflected on global trends, main indicators of trafficking and interviewing techniques.



94% of respondents indicated that they will apply the course content to their work



The analysis of the pre/post-training participant survey indicated a significant improvement in their knowledge about human trafficking and identification techniques. The officers also presented personal takeaways from the training, such as advanced interviewing skills and greater awareness of the importance of the role of consular staff in fighting trafficking in persons.

Field visit for EU Member States Representatives to Xi'an and Yan'an, Shaanxi province

In close coordination with the Chinese National Immigration Administration (NIA), a field visit for representatives of EU Member States was organized to the cities of Xi'an and Yan'an from 11 to 14 October 2021.

The visit enabled participants to explore the systems and policies that facilitate the regular movement of people and counter irregular migration in Shaanxi province. It promoted exchanges and further strengthened working-level cooperation between Chinese and European counterparts.

The delegation included consuls, visa officers and migration liaison officers from Austria, Finland, France, Germany, Hungary, Poland and Portugal, NIA officials, and IOM staff. On-site visits and meetings were held at Xianyang Airport in Xi'an, Bosch Rexroth Company, the Xi'an Visa Application Center which provides visa application services for 20 countries, the Exit and Entry Administration Hall of Yanta Sub-Bureau in Xi'an, Xi'an Jiaotong University, as well as the Exit and Entry Administration Division of Yan'an Public Security Bureau.



Authorities in Xi'an and Yan'an briefed participants on airport operations including self-service inspection booths and control room functions. They also reflected on various facilitation measures for visa issuance and renewal provided to foreign companies and students during COVID-19.

The visit provided a unique opportunity to discuss challenges and opportunities in the area of migration management and laid a solid foundation for further exchanges and communications between the two sides.

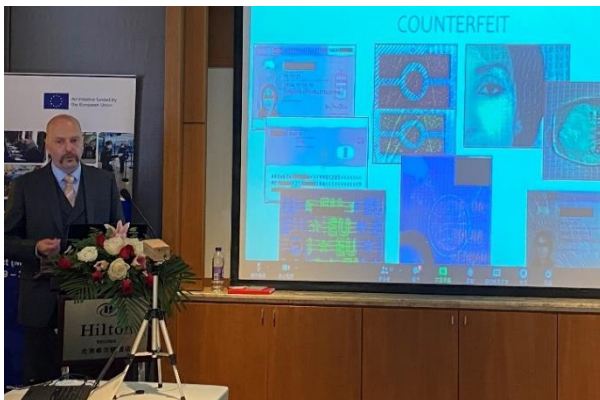


Seminar on innovative techniques to combat identity fraud

IOM China and NIA jointly organized a seminar on 19 November 2021 to increase mutual understanding and cooperation among participants on countering identity fraud to prevent irregular migration along the EU-China corridor.

It brought together experts and officials from NIA and the General Stations of Immigration Inspection in Beijing, Shanghai, Guangzhou, Shenzhen, Zhuhai and Xinjiang, as well as from IOM, the Finnish Embassy and the British Embassy in Beijing, the French Consulate General in Shanghai, the German Federal Police Headquarters, the Portuguese Immigration and Borders Service and Frontex – the European Border and Coast Guard Agency.

**Fraudulent documents
are used in over 90%
of illegal entry and exit
cases in China**



The seminar provided a helpful and valuable platform for European and Chinese immigration officials to share and discuss key updates in travel document forgery trends, new techniques for inspecting and detecting fraud, *modus operandi* used by perpetrators and challenges to detecting them.

Through the event, MMSP II contributed to the prevention of irregular movements between China and selected EU and non-EU countries. Participants appreciated the productive sessions and fruitful discussions, and highlighted the importance of international cooperation and information exchange in this field.

“Innovation is a process in continuous evolution, thanks to technological advancements, and it is, therefore, timely to discuss innovative techniques to combat identity fraud. Identity fraud, too, is a process in continuous evolution, fueled by the ever-evolving transnational organized crime, which not even the COVID-19 pandemic seems to be able to stop or slow down.”

– Mr. Giuseppe Crocetti, IOM China and Mongolia, in his opening remarks



Seminar on return management

On 16 December 2021, a seminar was held on return management.

Experts and officials from NIA and the Exit and Entry Administration Bureau of several provincial Public Security Departments, as well as experts from the DG Home and the IOM Regional Office for the EEA, the EU and NATO met online to exchange experiences and discuss recent developments in the field of return and readmission.



Participants agreed that the seminar was a valuable platform to share respective practices, experiences and challenges in managing migrants' return and reintegration, thereby paving the road for future in-depth discussions about return, reintegration and readmission.



"China contributes to the Global Compact for Migration and strives to promote the safe, dignified and sustainable return of irregular migrants. The cooperation of NIA and IOM on the Assisted Voluntary Return and Reintegration project is an important manifestation of the Global Compact for Migration's spirit."

— Mr Yuanpeng Fang, NIA Department of Foreigners' Administration

Upcoming events

- Workshop on EU-China Talent Mobility
- Presentation of research on Countering of Irregular Migration and Smuggling of Migrants
- Presentation of research on Irregular Migration from China to the EU
- Workshop on legislative reform and criminal investigation
- Presentation of the Reference Guide on Return and Readmission
- Workshop on Practical Cooperation on Return and Readmission

POLICY CORNER

14th Five-Year Plan for the Development of Immigration Management

The NIA has compiled and released the "14th Five-Year Plan for the Development of Immigration Management" (hereafter: the Plan), following the "14th Five-Year Plan for the National Economic and Social Development of the People's Republic of China and the Outline of Long-term Objectives for 2035" in combination with current developments in immigration management. The Plan specifies the main tasks of immigration in eight areas, including but not limited to: a) Strengthening national security and border stability; b) Reforming and improving immigration management services; c) Expanding international cooperation in the field of immigration; and d) Enhancing the legal system of immigration management.

More information on the Plan can be found [here](#) (Chinese).

Main data on immigration management work 2021

On 27 January 2022, the NIA [released](#) the main data on immigration management work in 2021. The number of foreigners that entered and/or exited China reached 4,53 million, a year-on-year drop of 65.9%. Immigration agencies nationwide did 128 million entry-exit checks, a decrease of 2.8%. The vast majority (over 95%) of this group were people who travelled between the mainland and Hong Kong, Macao and Taiwan.

IOM NEWS

IOM Director General meets with NIA Commissioner

In December 2021, IOM Director General Antonio Vitorino met via video link with Vice Minister of Public Security and NIA Commissioner H.E. Xu Ganlu to exchange views on matters of mutual interest and to discuss ongoing and future cooperation. DG Vitorino expressed appreciation to Vice Minister Xu for the support and partnership extended to IOM in China including in the framework of the MMSP II.

More information on the meeting can be found [here](#) (English).

IOM Country Strategy for China launched

In December 2021, IOM launched its first country strategy for the People's Republic of China (2021-2025). Building upon the achievements and lessons learnt since the establishment of an IOM office in China in 2007, the document articulates IOM's approach to addressing current and future migration trends and challenges through strategic priorities to be pursued in country programming and partnerships.

In doing so, IOM aims to bring greater coherence and development impact to its activities both in China, and with China in country partners, while also promoting a more joined-up approach to the way IOM designs and delivers its operations in China, as called for in the IOM's Strategic Vision. The IOM Strategy for the People's Republic of China will ultimately help IOM better support China in leveraging the potential of migration to achieve sustainable development outcomes for all.

