International Organization for Migration (IOM)
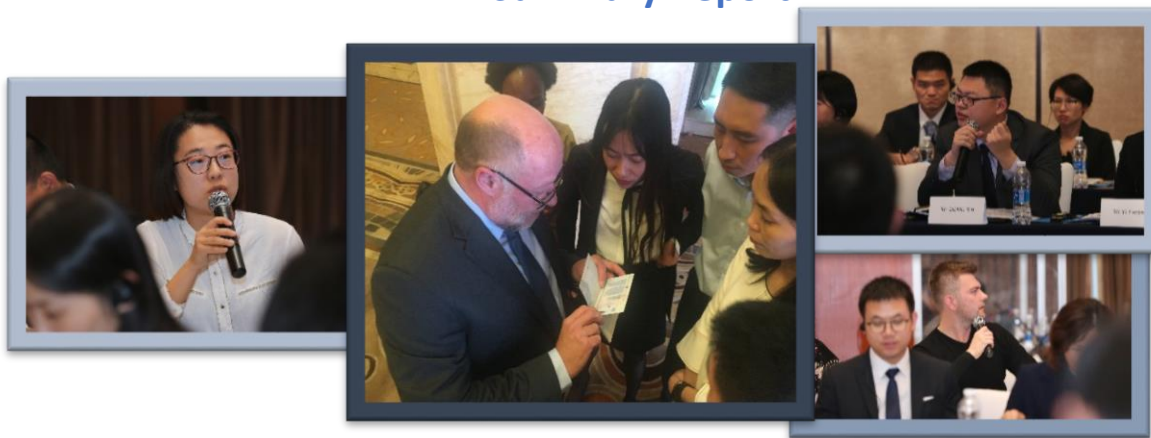
International Labour Organization

EU-China Dialogue on Migration and Mobility Support Project
支持中欧人员往来和移民领域对话项目

A5.1 Workshop on Best Practices and Innovative Techniques in Examination of Fraudulent Documents

Kunming, 18-19 October, 2018

Summary Report

On 18-19 October 2018, the International Organization for migration (IOM) facilitated a workshop on *Best Practices and Innovative techniques in Examination of Fraudulent Documents* in Kunming.

Organized under the framework of the "*EU-China Dialogue on Migration and Mobility Support Project*", the training falls under the scope of IOM's continuous efforts to enhance China's capacity to combat irregular migration. The workshop gathered 60 Chinese officials from the National Immigration Administration (NIA) and the Document Examination Centre of the Bureau of Exit and Entry Examination (BEEA) from 25 provinces and cities. The Chinese delegation was led by Director of Immigration Inspection Division (NIA), JIN Weicheng. Representatives of six Embassies and Consulates of European Union (EU) Member States also attended the workshop.

IOM invited experts from BEEA Document Examination Centre, FRONTEX and European Union (EU) Member States namely: Mr Claudio Kavrecic, Head of Excellence for Combating Document Fraud, (FRONTEX); Mr Didier Godard, Deputy Head of Forgery and Identity Fraud Division (French Border Control Police); Ms Ermelinda Rodrigues, Chief Inspector (Servico de Estrangeiros and Fronteiras, Portugal); Mr Klaus Seibert, Head of Document Examination Unit (Federal Police District Office for Crime Control Airport, Germany); and Mr Peter Vieveen, Head of Data Lab (Immigration and Naturalisation Service, Ministry of Justice and Security, The Netherlands). From the Chinese side, participants heard from Mr CHI Shangkun from the Document Verification Centre, who provided an overview of document verification systems in China, complemented by a presentation of case studies by Mr PAN Pingyi, Shanghai General Station of Exit and Entry Frontier Inspection.

Opening Remarks

Director JIN pointed out that governments worldwide have been facing new challenges related to irregular immigration and consequent security threats. As a transit, source and destination country for migration, China too has strong interests in continuing to build its capacity on ascertaining the authenticity of passports and identity documents. The Chinese government has already adopted different measures to crack down on irregular migration including equipping the Document Examination Centre with highly professional examination devices that facilitate the detection of document forgery.

Mr Richard Fairbrother, IOM's Officer in Charge, noted that the workshop is part of IOM and China continuous efforts to encourage inter-governmental cooperation and promote knowledge sharing as irregular migration cannot be addressed effectively in isolation and requires concerted efforts with international partners.

Workshop highlights

Mr Kavrecic gave **an overview of FRONTEX,** a European Union Agency founded in 2004 to support, coordinate and develop EU external border security, ensuring efficient, high and uniform level of border control. Specifically, Frontex's Centre of Excellence for Combating Document Fraud (CED) was established to maximize EU Member States and third countries operational capabilities in combating document and identity fraud. While CED expertise focuses on operational response, Frontex has other units that jointly contribute to document verification, namely, Risk Analysis Unit, Research and Innovation Unit and Training Unit.

In 2011, the Risk Analysis Unit developed the **European Document Fraud (EDF) network**, a joint information sharing network on fraudulent travel documents within the Schengen area. With nearly 177,000 records of detected fraudsters and 210,000 records of detected fraudulent documents, the EDF database constitutes a unique network on document fraud and a successful example of inter-agency and inter-government cooperation in combating irregular migration. Besides facilitating the identification of fraudulent documents, data collection also provides valuable information for the development of capacity building programs and the design of adequate border technologies, and it constitutes a tool to monitor latest trends and identify areas that need intervention.

Information sharing networks play a crucial role in combating irregular migration. **Mr Godard (France)** shared that the French Border Control Police has built a structured network of document specialists with an average of 10,000 people trained every year on forgery detection. However, such an organized network has not developed at the international level yet. The lack of international information sharing networks is further complicated by the absence of standardized requirements for breeder documents (documents required by a State to issue passports or other ID documents) both nationally and internationally. This makes it very difficult to assess the authenticity of documents outside their area of issuance. At the same time, it facilitates the use of false breeder documents to build up a portfolio of other documents (e.g. create a passport from a fake birth certificate). **Standardization of documents and international collaboration for information sharing** should be pursued to allow governments worldwide to maximize their efforts in identifying fraudulent documents.

Mr CHI Shangkun provided an overview of the latest trends in **document fraud detected in China**. Data shows that although the number of forgery cases has decreased, the quality of forgery has become highly professional and specialized. Between January and September 2018, 81.8% of fraudulent cases were detected in Shanghai, Zhuzhai, Beijing, Shenzhen and Guangzhou. Those cases reveal that most of the times officers rely entirely on the electronic chip to assess the authenticity of the documents. This in turn affects the development of new forgery measures. In many cases, in order to circumvent the verification of electronic information, fraudsters damage the chip or implant a new chip, while paying less attention to physical details.

Mr PAN's presentation of case studies involving alterations of Polish and Swedish passports illustrated the above challenge. In both cases, the sole use of electronic chip readers would have not been sufficient to detect the forgery. Document inspection should be carried out against all security features both physical and electronic. In order to carry out such a comprehensive inspection, front-line officers must receive **specific document verification training**.

Similarly, **Mr Klaus Seibert (Germany)** pointed out that advanced document verification technologies should always be complemented by **traditional verification techniques**: "feel, look, tilt, compare". Document authenticity verification is done against fine details such as watermarks, needle perforation, printing etc. that only a trained officer can recognize: without basic knowledge, it is virtually impossible to recognize forged documents. Mr Seibert provided a comprehensive overview of different techniques for document verification. This practical component of the presentation was very much welcomed by the Chinese participants who actively engaged in the technical discussion on document verification strategies.

Ms Rodriguez (Portugal) walked the participants through different forms of document fraud – from alteration of authentic documents to their entire reproduction. In order to make forgery more challenging, governments design increasingly sophisticated documents. Technical aspects of these innovative solutions were explained to the participants through examples of identification documents from different countries including the **new Portuguese e-passport.** Generally, these techniques aim at "personalizing" the documents by adding more technical and physical security features, making the documents more secure, more difficult to forge, and a harder target for fraudsters.

In another presentation, Mr Kavrecic introduced **FRONTEX's work dedicated to training and research**. Besides providing training, FRONTEX periodically publishes a series of reports, manuals and other evidence-based documents. Some of these documents, such as FRONTEX Reference Manual, FRONTEX Document Alerts and FRONTEX Quick Check Cards, are reference material based on real case studies which provide practical tools and knowledge to support the work of front-line officers. Together with ad hoc training, these products constitute important means to spread best practices on forgery detection and circulate knowledge on the topic. In fact, due to the ever-changing nature of the threat posed by irregular migration, it is crucial to continuously update tools and knowledge. Mr Kavrecic also touched on the types of cooperation that FRONTEX has: working arrangement agreements with15 non-EU countries; risk analysis work with about 20 African countries as well as a light approach where FRONTEX collaborates on a demand-basis, priority basis (set by EU on the basis of threats linked to illegal migration) and for information sharing or on the basis of geo-political influence (BRICS).

Mr Peter Vieveen (The Netherlands) presentation focused on an innovative technique used for detecting and preventing document fraud: **Big Data analysis**. As an emerging tool in the document verification sector, the use of big data still poses many questions including issues related to privacy and information sharing, as well as reliability of collected information. It is important to remember that new tools and traditional analysis are complementary. Big data analysis is mostly applied to identify and design risk profiles, and to predict possible case scenarios based on identified patterns and clusters. In predictive analysis, data quality is key and it requires a holistic approach across all information to ensure a workable solution or application developed is useful for immigration management. He shared some practical examples from IND datalab.

Key takeaways

The workshop provided a platform to share innovative techniques and best practices adopted by different countries to detect fraudulent documents. The presentations and Q&A sessions highlighted the need to further pursue international and inter-agency collaboration in information sharing. The sharing of information is key to develop capacity building, identify forgery trends and trajectories and, in turn, enable immigration and border agencies worldwide to tackle irregular immigration more efficiently without impeding regular migration flows.

The various experts highlighted that as criminals continue to better the quality of forged documents and expand their range of activity, periodical training is essential for border officials. Regular training for front-line officers is crucial in this regard.

The Chinese participants showed interest in learning more about the elements that make effective border control systems at the national level and how Europe, through agencies like Frontex, manages its external border through an integrated approach.

Participants' Feedback

At the end of the workshop, participants were asked to complete an online feedback questionnaire. Due to technical issues, only 41 participants took part in the survey. The majority of respondents felt that the workshop' content and materials provided were very relevant to their daily-work, and in particular they appreciated the possibility to learn technical and practical aspects of document verification. They felt that European and Chinese immigration and border officers face many similar challenges in their daily work. The majority of respondents strongly agreed that the workshop provided a platform for China and EU to share some common areas of interest in examination of fraudulent documents. Ninety-three percent of the participants strongly agreed that participation and exchange were encouraged and felt that the seminar will facilitate and enhance possible cooperation and exchanges between EU Member States and China.

Annexes:

Annex 1: Agenda
Annex 2: List of participants
Annex 3: Evaluation Report