

The Belgium Refugee Bureau Deployment

Motorola Biometrics bolsters Belgium Refugee Bureau capabilities



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Brussels, Belgium

The increasing flow of foreign visitors seeking asylum in the European Union is elevating the need for advanced biometrics technology in border control/immigration monitoring situations. Tasked with capturing the fingerprints of all immigrants applying for asylum, the Belgium Refugee Bureau is operating an automated fingerprint identification system (AFIS) to check each claimant’s identity against the national database of the Asylum Agency and EURODAC, the EU’s database of asylum seekers.

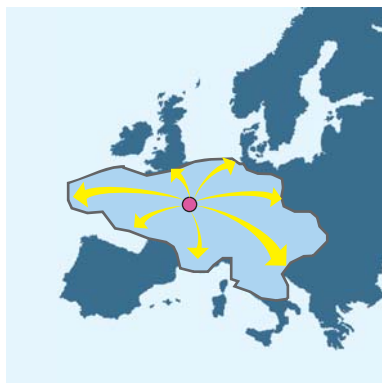
The Belgium Refugee Bureau is a centralised service working with numerous government agencies – including the Ministry of the Interior, the Office of Illegals, the Asylum Agency, and federal and local police services. Based on analysis of the Netherlands and Switzerland systems, the Bureau calculated that false asylum claims alone were costing the Belgian government €21,600,000 annually and slowing aid to those in real need. Furthermore, illegal aliens stopped and found to be without valid documents were arrested and held until their deportation could be arranged – putting pressure on the country’s prison service.

The Belgium Government’s solution was to introduce three Centres for Illegals to securely house individuals attempting to enter the country, while allowing those already in the country to register their claims at the Refugee Bureau. An automated fingerprint identification system (AFIS) system designed by Motorola using biometrics technology was then installed at the Bureau’s Brussels-based headquarters, and the results were immediate.

“Motorola’s biometric system has a task to fulfil and it does this very well,” states Rita Tuerlinckx, one of the Bureau’s two AFIS System Managers. “A combination of fingerprinting technology and a tightening of our asylum procedures has enabled us to more than half the number of applications being made and avoid the duplication of cases being processed.”

The identity management solution deployed by Motorola provides the Belgium Refugee Bureau with benefits such as:

- Up to 28 positive IDs out of 90 asylum applications made each day
- Significant reduction in the number of duplicate claims being made within months
- Today, the Bureau processes approximately 30 asylum applicants each day



Motorola’s biometric technology provides agencies with identity management capabilities across the country.

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History of trust: The Bureau has been a Motorola customer since it installed its first AFIS system more than ten years ago and, according to Jan Moerman, continuity has played an important role in the success of subsequent projects. “Working with a trusted supplier makes the whole process quicker and easier,” he points out. “And if you’re happy with the company and the system, then it’s logical to continue this partnership.”

Identity Management in action

Under the EU’s Schengen Agreement, Belgium no longer enforces controls at its geographic borders, so all asylum applications ‘at the borders’ originate either at airports or the Harbour of Antwerp. Consequently, claimants entering via geographic borders are not considered as having entered the country officially and are held at the Centres for Illegals, where their fingerprints are captured and sent to the Refugee Bureau for analysis. The majority of asylum applications are made by individuals found to be without valid visas or identification documents. These individuals are referred to the Refugee Bureau to make their asylum claim, which is processed as an inland procedure via the AFIS system.

Using Motorola’s biometric solution, the Bureau has established a quick and efficient asylum registration procedure:

- Fingerprints are searched against the Asylum Agency’s database to ensure the application is not being made under a false identity
- The claimant is then photographed and issued with the necessary documents
- Their information is stored in the agency’s main database
- The refugee is then free to leave the Bureau until their case has been reviewed
- Once refugee status or Belgian nationality is approved, personal records are deleted from the Asylum Agency’s database, which cannot be cross-referenced during criminal investigations under Belgian law
- Failed applicants are held at the Centres for Illegals until deportation is arranged

Motorola’s innovative new biometric solution delivers new efficiencies

The Belgium Refugee Bureau recently implemented Motorola’s latest, ninth-generation biometric identification solution – deploying three Motorola LiveScan workstations that allow an asylum seeker’s fingerprints to be scanned directly into the AFIS system; plus two PrintScan stations, so that inked fingerprint cards received from the Centres for Illegals can be scanned. Once processed, the search results from the Asylum Agency’s database are kept on the Bureau’s central Advanced Data Server (ADS) and are accessed remotely by operators via fingerprint identification workstations, where search results are viewed on screen for fast and accurate comparisons.

The Bureau now has a number of new capabilities at its disposal:

- Fingerprints can be captured, either in the field, or at the bureau and searched against the Asylum Agency’s database in 60 seconds
- Fingerprints are automatically forwarded in NIST file format to EURODAC under a fully-automated process that results in a ‘Hit/No Hit’ message from EURODAC being returned rapidly to the Bureau’s ADS.

Motorola’s enhanced user interface has enabled the bureau to increase the quality of its fingerprint procedures, while reducing the time it takes to identify and process each asylum applicant from three weeks to fifteen minutes. “Now that we have the latest identity management solutions from Motorola, we are able to conduct AFIS searches very quickly and accurately,” confirms Jan Moerman, the Bureau’s other AFIS System manager. “We also wanted to have more operational flexibility by deploying mobile terminals, so that embassies and police can capture fingerprints out in the field.”



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