The Turkish electronic passport

How Turkey is taking the lead in the digital revolution
One of the world’s fastest-growing economies
The Republic of Turkey is at a strategic gateway to the world. With eight international borders to neighboring countries in Europe and the Middle East, it is home to over 79m citizens (75m live in Turkey and 4m abroad). In recent years Turkey has been one of the world’s fast-growing economies and has long been an early adopter of digital technologies in areas such as payment, identity and authentication.

The Turks are young (average age is 30) and connected. Turkey is Facebook country No. 7 (Facebook users) and the No. 8 country for Twitter.

The challenge of implementing new international standard travel documents
With an ambition to meet ICAO standards, Turkey embarked on an ambitious program to migrate its old-style passports to e-passports. The program combined the challenge of annually issuing home and abroad over 6 million machine-readable passports as well as meeting the latest security parameters, with a demanding timetable. Nine suppliers were shortlisted for final selection in early April and the new system had to be ready in six weeks - for 1 June 2010.

The Turkish electronic passport
How Turkey is taking the lead in the digital revolution

The new biometric e-passport at a glance
- Embedded chip to contain in particular: a digital portrait, passport number, name, surname, nationality and birth date.
- Dedicated PKI (Public Key Infrastructure) for ePassport data country unique signature for Basic Access Control (BAC)
- Highly secure production and personalization
- Adaptability of the RFID microprocessor for future use cases
Global expertise and local presence
Turkey’s Ministry of Foreign Affairs (MFA) had a number of key objectives: to improve security, prevent fraud and make immigration processing faster, easier and more efficient. Given the short timeframe, it was essential to find a partner experienced in the personalization and successful deployment of e-passport programs, as well as flexible to handle unanticipated implementation issues.

MFA selected Gemalto working with partners Proline and Primekey. Global expertise and local support were key. MFA visited Gemalto’s manufacturing and personalization facilities as well as reviewed its experience in 25 ongoing secure identity service operations all over the world to fine-tune the program’s requirements. Gemalto began work on deploying its Coesys Issuance solution – personalization and integration services - in mid-April 2010.

The solution and its benefits
Enrolment takes place in over 430 locations in the country and 150 abroad to fulfill e-passport applications for Turkish citizens and diplomatic personnel. Gemalto helped create an integrated infrastructure to handle e-passports from different sources and suppliers – with a new personalization service center at the Turkish Police center in Ankara linked up the existing MFA issuing center. Customized training on personalization processes and ICAO parameters helped ensure the tools would deliver a fully secure and reliable solution capable of delivering 19,000 e-passports per day – and up to 3 million per year. The system is highly flexible, with the possibility of adding additional workstations to handle up to seven times more demand during peak periods in the year, such as December and before pilgrimage to Mecca.

Despite a series of logistical challenges, including a two week grounding of all flights during the six week implementation period, teamwork and close cooperation among the partners enabled Gemalto to ensure the first e-passports were issued two days before the deadline. Since then, the new program has delivered on its promise to all stakeholders: helping citizens to obtain their e-passports more quickly, reinforcing the credibility of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs in service modernization and reassuring international authorities on the security and reliability of Turkish e-passports. Each and every new ePassport is directly sent to its holder from the personalization center. Average time between enrolment and delivery home takes one week in 2013.

In September 2015, Gemalto announced that it is supplying its Sealys eCover for ePassports to Darphane, the Turkish Mint and Stamp Printing House. With this new contract, Gemalto now provides these Turkish authorities with a complete end-to-end passport service, offering a one-stop implementation plan.

According to the multi-year agreement, Gemalto is providing its ICAO Common Criteria certified software, embedded in the highly-durable passport inlay with secure microprocessor. Gemalto’s Sealys eTravel product embeds the latest ICAO compliant operating system and guarantees seamless integration into Darphane’s ePassport processes.

At the Ankara personalization center, the system is highly flexible, with the possibility of adding additional workstations to handle up to seven times more demand during peak periods.
ABOUT GEMALTO

Gemalto is the world leader in digital security with 2014 revenues of €2.5 billion. In the public sector, Gemalto provides secure documents, robust identity solutions and services for governments, national printers and integrators in the service of citizens. Its products and solutions are deployed in more than 100 government programs worldwide.

Gemalto is contributing to more than 40 eID initiatives and over 30 ePassport programs with specific expertise in border and visa management projects. The company is active in major eHealthcare schemes and numerous e-driving license and vehicle registration projects.

Gemalto also collaborates with its clients to report and share best practices from around the world.