The components of the Integrated Electronic Consular System (E-Cons)

- The National Visa Information System (NVIS)
- Visa Application Portal (E-Visa)
- The Integrated Electronic Management System for Travel Documents (E-Pass)
- Contact and Support Center for Romanian Nationals Abroad (CSCRNA)
- The Electronic System for the Integrated Management of Services for Romanian Nationals (ESIMSRN)
- Electronic Record of Documents (ERD)

The Consulate, closer to your home
The Romanian presence abroad has been constantly growing during the past few years. In this context, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs has been faced with a constant increase in the number of consular services requested by Romanian nationals abroad, having to operate within the limits of a tight budget, which reduced the possibility of hiring additional staff or of opening new professional consular offices.

Therefore, taking into account the fact that almost 20% of Romanian nationals have taken residence outside the country, the activities falling within the tasks of consular diplomats have lately been multiplied and diversified at an unprecedented rate.

Taking into account the objective circumstances that the consular network needs to deal with at present, the Consular Department within the Ministry of Foreign Affairs initiated a comprehensive campaign to modernize and adapt consular instruments, so they may meet the present-day requirements and challenges.

Both the modernization and the rethinking of consular activities are aimed at improving all the structural components within the Consular Department.

In order to serve the growing number of Romanian nationals abroad, but also to increase the efficiency of consular activity, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs is implementing the integrated electronic project whose overall name is E-Cons. The E-Cons platform will integrate several electronic systems used in the consular domain, which require a substantial change in the activity in this field.

After the entire E-Cons project is rendered operational, consular activity will enter a new phase. This will be the modern format that will mark an important evolution of consular activity, which will thus be in line with 21st century technology standards.

The electronic systems that will be included in the E-Cons platform are:

- The Electronic System for the Integrated Management of Services for Romanian Nationals (its implementation is ongoing);
- The Visa Application Portal - E-Visa (implemented and operational);
- The National Visa Information System – NVIS (implemented and operational);
- The Integrated Electronic Management System for Travel Documents – E-Pass (implemented and operational);
- Contact and Support Center for Romanian Nationals Abroad - CSCRNA (testing in progress).
In order to meet all inherent conditions for visa issuance in compliance with Schengen requirements, to cooperate with Schengen member states, and in order to implement all the stipulations in the European legislation in this field (the EU Visa Code, the VIS Regulation) since the joining date, the National Visa Information System was rendered operational at the National Visa Center within the Consular Department.

The National Visa Information System is compatible with the central European visa information system, the Central Visa Information System (C.VIS).

The entire process of receiving/issuing of the Romanian visa is carried through the National Visa Information System, this system being fully compatible with the Central EU Visa System.

The National Visa Information System and the equipment related to the system were installed in all Romania’s diplomatic missions and consular offices abroad.

This modern electronic system will enable Romanian nationals to access quality consular information in an efficient and transparent way, with increased comfort due to the possibility to interact with the Ministry of Foreign Affairs staff, to send requests using electronic means without having to go to the enquiry office personally, thus eliminating red-tape and geographical barriers. As a consequence, all consular service requests will be received and answered electronically (other than visa and travel document applications – passports and temporary travel identity documents). Moreover, the Electronic System for the Integrated Management of Services for Romanian Nationals will include a scheduling component for those who request consular services. For Romanian nationals, the project aims to simplify the request-answering procedures for consular services provided by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, which will mean enhancing the nationals’ trust in Romania’s consular network.

This project’s main goals are:
- The possibility for Romanian nationals to access consular services more easily;
- Uniformity of consular services provided within Romania’s entire consular network;
- Uniform coordination of consular services. The Monitoring Center set up within the Consular Department will make it possible to track and analyze in real time all consular services provided by any diplomatic mission/consular office;
- Concrete modernization of consular activity carried out within the diplomatic missions/consular offices both by eliminating bureaucracy and lengthy procedures, and by introducing 21st century electronic instruments in the daily activity of consular employees.

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The E-Visa Portal was created in order to render the Romanian visa application procedure more accessible to foreign nationals who wish to travel to Romania.

The main aim of this portal’s implementation is to give the foreign nationals of any state the possibility to request a Romanian visa online, without discrimination, from any computer connected to internet, through the following website: http://evisa.mae.ro.

Thus, the E-Visa Portal renders the visa application procedure much simpler, facilitating and at the same time optimizing the visa-related work carried out within Romania’s diplomatic missions and consular offices abroad.

Some of the expected benefits in implementing the E-Visa electronic portal are:

- Reducing waiting time – queuing at the desk of Romanian consular sections and offices to file visa applications;
- The possibility to obtain information (including customized information for the specific situation of each and every interested person – according to the person’s nationality, their travel document and the type of visa that they want), by accessing the portal’s informational component directly, this being an additional and different avenue from having to contact the diplomatic mission or consular office;
- The possibility to make online visa applications easily, in a comfortable and efficient way, after which the visa applicant will go to the diplomatic mission or the consular office where the request was filed but only when the requester’s file has all the necessary documents, this being established with the help of the consular staff, through electronic communication; the aim of implementing this procedure is to reduce – and even eliminate – any inherent vulnerability of post-office communication, in the case of foreign nationals who are located at a considerable distance from any Romanian diplomatic mission or consular office.
- The efficient and modern managing of one’s own visa application by receiving e-mail messages on the processing status of the application or on the status of any request, from the diplomatic mission or the consular office, regarding the visa application filed through the portal;
- The possibility to continue a session for the completion of the online visa application file, if the applicant wishes to manage their request progressively (in several stages).

Moreover, it is necessary to mention that rendering the portal operational benefits visa-related activity carried out in-house, within Romania’s diplomatic missions and consular offices by lowering the pressure of overcrowded enquiry offices.
The integrated system for travel document management relies upon advanced technology and is created based on extremely effective and secure software.

In the evolution of its form and content, once the biometric identification elements have been included – such as facial image and fingerprints – a reliable correlation is made between the lawful holder of the document and the respective document.

At present this system fully covers the activity related to passports (diplomatic passports, official passports, simple electronic passports, and simple temporary passports) and to temporary travel documents, which is carried out by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs/the Consular Department and the diplomatic missions and consular offices.

With the introduction of electronic passports, and of the new temporary simple passport format, the jurisdictional Romanian authorities have kept to the principle of “one individual – one passport”, which means that for each individual, regardless of their age, a passport is issued; the concept of an individual acting as companion and who would be included in the holder’s passport is no longer in use.

Using the E-Pass system both in diplomatic missions and in consular offices, and within the Consular Department/ the National Center for Diplomatic Passports and Work Passports brought countless advantages for Romanian nationals who request the issuance of travel documents and contributed to increasing the latter’s satisfaction regarding their relation with Romanian authorities. Here are some of the advantages of using the E-Pass system:

- Providing up-to-date and quality consular services for requesters;
- Rendering consular activity more efficient and consistent;
- Reducing waiting time for passport issuance. After the requests are received at the headquarters of diplomatic missions or of consular offices, they are sent online, in real time, to the jurisdictional Romanian authorities who can validate, approve and customize them;
- Facilitating the unrestricted movement of Romanian nationals abroad and regulating the terms of their stay in their country of residence by issuing travel documents directly at the headquarters of diplomatic missions/consular offices (temporary passports, temporary travel documents);
- Providing consular assistance to Romanian nationals who are in special situations (conflict zones, accidents, earthquakes, natural hazards) – the E-Pass mobile stations being used to issue travel documents outside the headquarters of diplomatic missions and consular offices, directly in the specific locations where Romanian nationals were.

Taking into account this system’s complexity and importance, one of the main concerns of the Consular Department, through the National Center for Improving Healthcare (CNPDS), is to analyze the objective circumstances of consular activity and to constantly adapt the system to these circumstances.

In this respect, a number of changes to the E-Pass application have been implemented in the process of receiving information and recording requests of simple electronic passports and temporary passports to be issued by diplomatic missions/consular offices, in order to simplify the stream of travel documents that are received and issued and to keep records of such requests in the integrated electronic system.
The Contact and Support Center for Romanian Nationals Abroad was created by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs to provide consular information to individuals outside Romania. At present the Center is a pilot project, in the testing phase, which precedes the project’s final implementation. The project’s main goal is to gradually include in the system all Romanian diplomatic missions and consular offices abroad.

The staff of the Contact and Support Center for Romanian Nationals Abroad ensures 24/7 consular assistance both giving the general public information on the consular services provided by Romanian diplomatic missions and consular offices abroad, and in case of emergency situations that involve Romanian nationals abroad.

Through this mechanism, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs serves Romanian nationals who are abroad as tourists, who stay abroad temporarily or reside in a foreign country, in giving them consular information and providing assistance in case of an emergency (accidents, disease, death, detention, security risks generated by terrorist acts, stolen or lost identity documents or other emergency situations).

The project is one of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs’ newest, undertaken by Romania as an EU Member State and it represents a way to provide more modern and uniform services for Romanian nationals.

The goals of the Contact and Support Center for Romanian Nationals Abroad are the following:

- The quickest possible access to consular information, both through the telephone answering machine, and through telephone operators who are available 24/7;
- Improving consular services for Romanian nationals abroad;
- Providing information to raise Romanian nationals’ awareness of their rights and obligations while abroad;
- Sending, by telephone and e-mail, the consular information requested by Romanian nationals, in compliance with applicable law on personal data protection;
- Providing information on customized consular services according to geographical areas, by meridian or community;
- Providing immediate consular consultancy by facilitating quick access to the requested diplomatic mission/consular office, for emergency situations announced by Romanian nationals or in order to answer consular requests.

Calls can be made to the Contact and Support Center for Romanian Nationals Abroad 24 hours a day/ 7 days a week, by using the telephone numbers of Romania’s diplomatic missions/consular offices which are located at the area of residence of each Romanian national. For example: Romanian nationals located in the consular jurisdiction area of the Embassy of Romania in Madrid may call the Romanian diplomatic mission by using the telephone numbers posted on the following website: madrid.mae.ro.

Information on all consular services is provided by a telephone answering machine which allows Romanian nationals to select their topic of interest. If a Romanian national needs additional information, they may contact a CSCRNA operator. Requests will be answered within the shortest possible delay.
The Consular Relations Department is one of Romania’s most important contact points both with the foreign diplomatic and consular service and with Romanian nationals abroad. Countless proceedings are recorded daily, coming from public authorities, institutions, organizations, associations, Romanian diplomatic missions and consular offices abroad or from the foreign diplomatic missions and consular offices accredited in Romania, and other legal entities, along with petitions on various topics that are sent by Romanian nationals.

The Consular Relations Department processes around 40,000 documents per year, which is the main reason why this system was implemented.

The Electronic Record of Documents is a document monitoring system created to facilitate the handling of the huge volume of notifications received by the Consular Relations Department, both on an inter-institutional level and from applicants.

The countless printed records have been replaced by an electronic version, thus adapting to the need to render record keeping more efficient to existent technology.

The Electronic Record of Documents allows recording all received documents in a database and tracking the document stream in real time until the requests are answered.

Moreover, an emergency telephone line is made available to be able to notify authorities of special situations, and depending on the specific case, the call will be forwarded to the consul at the jurisdictional diplomatic mission/consular office in the respective geographical area. These kinds of cases are regarded with maximum earnestness both by the staff of the diplomatic mission/consular office and by the Contact and Support Center operators.

In order to receive full consular services, Romanian nationals may send their requests either through the support center’s webpage, or directly to the center’s e-mail address: contact@informaticiconsulare.ro. All filed requests will be answered in good time.

Thus, the CSCRNA is ready to answer quickly and professionally to all consular requests made by Romanian nationals abroad.

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As a consequence, the existence of such an electronic management system for internal documents and external correspondence, aiming to monitor the processing status of each request in real time, has become a must for the Consular Relations Department.
In developing all the above-mentioned systems, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, through its Consular Department, aims to fulfill several goals, in order both to efficiently handle an ever increasing workload of consular services, and to use the available electronic means for communication and processing, adequate to the priority of enhancing consular service quality for Romanian nationals abroad.

The Ministry of Foreign Affairs, through its Consular Department, intends to substantially modernize all instruments that make up the consular activity’s procedural and logistic support. These components are made part of a proactive approach to consular work, against a dynamic background with rapidly unfolding developments and globalization trends.

Implementing these wide-scope projects will lead to a major change in the Romanian consular service, placing it among the most technically and procedurally modern consular services in the European Union.