

Development of the Passport Renewal eService

Nationality, Passports and Residence Affairs in collaboration with the eGovernment Authority

The Directorate of Nationality, Passports and Residence is considered one of the oldest government entities in the Kingdom of Bahrain, with a history of nearly 100 years. It offers travel and residence assistance for citizens and residents. In addition, they provide passport issuance services for citizens. In 1928, the first Directorate of Immigration and Passports was established in the Kingdom of Bahrain and the first travel document (passport) was issued in 1929. Their achievements since then have been remarkable in enacting laws and developing a system for travel procedures intended for citizens and expatriates alike.

Source: Nationality, Passports and Residence Affairs.

The passport is an important document that certifies the identity and nationality of the passport holder as well as other personal information such as name, date of birth, sex and place of birth. The validity of the passport information allows the holder to take advantage of the privileges provided by Bahrain for its citizens, both within and outside the country. That includes but not limited to traveling, freedom of movement, and consular services provided by Bahrain for its citizens inside and outside the country. Therefore, it is necessary that the passport issuance and renewal service is processed in a way that ensures the validity of data. In addition, the process should be flexible in order to complete the service in an appropriate time.

With regard to the responsibilities of the eGovernment Authority, as the body authorized to coordinate and implement the eGovernment programs according to the strategies, plans, and programs approved by the Supreme Committee for Information and Communication Technology (SCICT) -Decree No. (69) of the year 2007, where eGovernment Authority has many responsibilities, for example but not limited to:

- Proposing the general policy as well as the appropriate strategy for the eGovernment programs and presenting them to the SCICT for approval.
- Proposing the necessary Information Technology programs in order to provide eServices and facilitate communication between all government entities. The programs approved by the SCICT will be implemented in order to activate the eGovernment.
- Proposing the enactment of legislations and resolutions necessary implementing eGovernment programs.
- Establishing electronic channels to provide the eGovernment services.
- Providing the technical and scientific support to ministries and other government entities in order to activate the eGovernment programs.

Information Technology (IT) has become one of the core elements in the development of government services and the development of the Directorate of Nationality, Passports and Residence affairs services in particular. The Directorate of Nationality, Passports and Residence affairs has pursued a strategy that takes advantage of Information Technology to facilitate a variety of services for citizens and residents. This strategy has contributed to changing and developing the traditional processes in a way that benefits service users and develops the skills of the staff providing the service.

In collaboration with the eGovernment Authority who is responsible for providing e-Services in Bahrain, The Directorate of Nationality, Passport and Residence Affairs has provided a variety of services related to nationality, passports and residency matters. These services contributed to the economic development of the country in conjunction with the strategic economic initiative of the 2030 vision.

The Passport Renewal eService is a key service provided by the Directorate of Nationality, Passport and Residence in cooperation with the eGovernment Authority. The benefits of this service to the country and its citizens will be discussed as follows:

Case Study: The Passport Renewal eService

The Directorate of Nationality, Passports and Residence Affairs carries out multiple tasks related to citizens and residents affairs. As a result, it has been necessary to develop the services it provides using Information Technology in order to simplify the procedures. Passport renewal is considered one of the most important services that is provided for citizens. The following is a brief overview of how the service was developed in collaboration between the Nationality, Passports and Residence Affairs and the eGovernment:

- Before launching the electronic service, the passport renewal process required the applicants to visit the headquarters of The Directorate of Nationality, Passports and Residence Affairs or any of their branches to submit the application during the official working hours only.

- When meeting the application requirements, the applicant pays the fees and receives a receipt of the amount that has been paid. Then, the application is reviewed by the printing department staff to ensure that the passport photo meets the required standards.
- After that, the application is scanned and the new passport is printed, followed by a reviewing process to ensure validity of information. Finally, the passport is handed out to the applicant.
- As a result of all these reviewing processes to ensure validity of information, the passport renewal application requires a long time to process (around 11 days). That included application submission, initial review, payment, printing process and internal checking of the new passport.
- In December 2014, the passport renewal eService was launched through the eGovernment's Portal announcing a new stage of development of eServices in general and the Nationality, Passports and Residence Affairs in particular.
- Through the round the clock eService; citizens have been able to apply for passport renewal online, and pay the fees via secured payment channels to ensure the highest standards of data security. In addition, citizens can enquire about the status of the application through the eService without the need to visit the branches or making phone inquiries.
- In line with the international standards to maintain confidentiality of the data, the eGovernment Authority ensures maximum data security and protection with the use of "eKey", which is considered an electronic identity card for the applicant.

- Reducing the direct and indirect costs associated with the process of renewing a passport (papers - printing - maintenance of equipment - fuel subsidy - facilities consumption) is one of the benefits of the eService. In addition, human resources (staff and employees) have become more productive.
- The following Table shows the added value and benefits that have been achieved through the development of the service (estimated by the government in Bahraini dinar per annum):

Value-added Element	Per one Transaction Level			Amount of Saving
	Cost of traditional procedure	Cost of e-procedure	Amount of Financial Saving	
Direct cost (Papers- Printing- equipments maintenance)	0.350	0.050	0.300	85%
Indirect cost (productivity of human resources - fuel subsidy - citizen productivity)	14.880	1.770	13.120	88%

(**Note:** The cost does not include expenses of printing the passport, as the passport will have to be printed in the end of the process even with the availability of the eService).

The tremendous development in the field of Information & Communications Technology (ICT) along with the great development of smart phones and telecommunication networks have imposed a big challenge on the ministries and government entities to develop the quality of the services they provide.

The government entities have to be more dynamic and able to provide various services by taking advantage of the developments in Information Technologies such as mobile applications.

The cooperation between the eGovernment Authority and all government entities in general and the Nationality, Passports and Residence Affairs in particular has led to many successes in the field of eServices. Which has resulted in making the Directorate Nationality, Passports and Residence Affairs stand in the ranks of the most advanced entities in the provision of the government system services in the Kingdom of Bahrain and the region.