

Press Release

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Czech immigration policy struggles to keep up with market demands

Prague, 3 November 2016 – According to Deloitte’s latest [Global Immigration Study](#), the Czech immigration process, taking on average 12 weeks, is one of the slowest in the European Union. Only Italy has longer processing times, whereas half of the countries participating in the survey, including the UK, Belgium, Australia and China, have a processing time of less than one month. Every two years, the study compares the migration formalities for highly qualified third-country nationals in the European Union. For the first time, the European survey now also compares the immigration regimes for highly skilled foreigners with the regimes of some major countries around the globe. 38 countries participated in the survey this year.

Speed, cost and conditions - deciding factors

"The Czech Republic, unfortunately, can be considered an "anti-hero" of the survey in terms of the applications turnaround time. Only Italy has longer processing times, whereas half of the countries participating in the survey, including the UK, Belgium, Australia and China, have a processing time of less than one month," says LaDana Edwards, Deloitte’s partner and CE leader of the Global Employer Services.

"In the Czech Republic, work application processing time, sadly, takes approximately three months. Current practice in the Czech Republic is towards even longer processing times, sometimes going beyond the statutory deadlines, which are 30 days for obtaining a work permit (or announcement of a vacant position) plus 60-90 days for processing the employee card," added Anastasia Verkhovubova, manager in the Global Employer Services group of Deloitte.

As for other conditions for knowledge workers, such as minimum salary and level of education, the Czech Republic is cited as being accessible in comparison with other Western European countries. Most challenging for the Czech Republic as well as for other countries can be the need to obtain a duly legalised and translated degree which also has an influence on the overall processing time for obtaining the required work permit or work visa.

The Czech Republic is among the 63% of countries where immigration applications must be filed on paper. *"The Czech Republic strives to be a technologically advanced country and significant investment is made into technology e.g. in the tax area. Efficiencies resulting from implementation of technology and on-line solutions could be an answer to the long processing time issue"* says Ms Verkhovubova.

Qualification for highly skilled workers

Attracting knowledge workers is important because they mean significant added value to economic development over the long term. International knowledge workers are a promising answer to the future demographic challenges which are confronting most of the countries of the EU, including the Czech Republic. The presence of knowledge workers is also vital for keeping Europe competitive. Clear and unambiguous systems, allowing international knowledge workers to have easy access to the Czech and European labour market, are therefore of the utmost importance. In addition, the employment of international workers has become an obvious necessity for international companies in a globalised world.

Most countries involved in Deloitte's comparative study have immigration legislation that offers individual immigration processes for different categories of immigrants, such as trainees, highly skilled workers, seasonal workers, specialised technicians, etc.

When looking at the immigration process for highly skilled workers, they are mainly distinguished from other workers by the salary they must earn and qualifications they need to possess. Most countries require foreign nationals to possess at least a bachelor's or master's degree in order to qualify as a highly skilled worker.

Impact of EU harmonisation policy on national legislation

For the second time, the comparative study includes information on the impact of Europe on national legislation in the area of knowledge migration. The impact of some European initiatives, such as the Blue Card, the Single Permit and the Intra-Corporate Transferee Directive, are measured. The impact of these measures has proven to be limited.

"After the introduction of the Employee Card institute, the European Blue Card, launched as an answer to the American Green Card, has not had any success with international companies in the Czech Republic because of even longer processing times and stricter salary level and education requirements" comments Ms Verkhorubova and adds that "on the other hand, the introduction of the Employee Card as a single permit proved to be a success. The EU Directive on the intra-corporate transferees is yet to be implemented and practice will show how successful it shall be".

Large countries outside of the EU also struggle

So far, the measures taken on a European level have not made a dramatic impact. Europe will not be able to attract highly qualified job seekers partly because each country has its own migration laws. A third country national who is allowed to work in one country of the European Union cannot simply start working in another country of the EU. On the other hand, contrary to the common belief, we now see that countries such as the USA and Canada, who claimed to have flexible, fast immigration systems, are also struggling to attract international knowledge workers from abroad.

"The Czech Republic is in great need of highly qualified workers in the IT sector and of qualified workers in manufacturing. We welcome the effort of the government to address these particular needs by introducing special programs such as Fast Track, the "Ukraine" project and others. We, believe, however, that the immigration policy could be approached in a more comprehensive manner in order to ensure that the country stays competitive towards the growing economies of Central Europe and other countries" adds Ms Verkhorubova.



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