

Ukraine green-lights relocation of Belarusian IT companies and IT specialists

Ukraine creates the most favorable conditions for leading IT companies and highly-qualified IT specialists from Belarus to stimulate their activities and employment in Ukraine.

The background for such close attention of the Ukrainian Cabinet of Ministers to the Belarusian IT sector was the political crisis in Belarus that erupted after the announcement of the presidential election results in August this year and has not yet come to an end. Since the beginning of the crisis, the Belarusian IT business has faced a vast number of critical problems that make the activities in the country unacceptable and risky.

During the political confrontation, for example, the Belarusian IT community faced heavy restrictions on Internet access, as well as significant and unexpected disruptions in the work of mobile operators and the banking system. Thus, Belarus becomes unpredictable and, as a result, an unsuitable country for running IT business, as IT companies in such conditions begin to violate contractual obligations and subsequently lose customers. Moving to other countries is, therefore, an urgent prospect for IT companies to preserve and develop their business. And Ukraine seeks to take advantage of this situation by offering Belarusian IT companies and IT professionals the most favorable conditions for relocation and immigration.

It is worth reminding that the biggest problems with the Internet took place in Belarus from August 10 to 12 this year. Just one day without the Internet is thought to cost the Belarusian economy USD 56.4 million, and in three days – about USD 170 million were lost.

It is important to remember that the IT sector is one of the flagships of the Belarusian economy and provides up to 10% of national GDP. Therefore, the relocation of leading Belarusian IT companies and IT specialists to Ukraine means a significant strengthening of its IT sector, the Ukrainian labor market, and the economy as a whole.

Among other things, three Ukrainian ministries – the Ministry of Digital Transformation, the Ministry of Economy, and the Ministry of Foreign Affairs – launched a separate information portal for Belarus. There step-by-step instructions, solutions, and links are available, as well as advice both for IT business, IT teams, and for individual IT professionals. The information is provided in Russian and English.

The portal contains explanations on living conditions in Ukraine; rental costs; public transport; as well as on essential legal aspects of employment of foreign citizens; tax conditions for foreigners registered as Individual Entrepreneurs in Ukraine; obtaining visas, insurance

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policies (particularly in the context of the COVID-19 pandemic) and obtaining other documents, such as a work permit, permanent residence permit, personal tax identification number, etc.

Moreover, the Cabinet of Ministers of Ukraine hopes that Belarusian companies and specialists will make the most of the immigration quota introduced by the government decree No. 431-p On Establishing an Immigration Quota for 2020, dated 11 March 2020. This quota is meant for highly qualified foreign IT professionals and officially came into force on 21 July 2020. With such and similar quotas the Ukrainian government plans to alleviate the critical labor shortage in the domestic IT market.

To recap, given the unstable situation in Belarus in August, Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Digital Transformation of Ukraine Mykhailo Fedorov declared the readiness to create all the necessary conditions for comfortable relocation of Belarusian IT companies and IT specialists to Ukraine. The Minister noted that today Ukrainian companies have the opportunity to invite foreign IT specialists to work regardless of their level of qualification. The employment procedure for IT specialists is exceptionally simplified: a foreigner provides the company only with a copy of passport with a certified translation and a 3.5 x 4.5 cm color photo. Afterwards, the company submits an application to the Employment Center along with copies of foreigner's passport, a photo, and an employment agreement draft. The Employment Center issues a work permit within 5-7 days, and that's it: a foreigner can legally live and work in Ukraine.

Besides, according to Mykhailo Fedorov, the Ukrainian government (involving the Ministry of Digital Transformation and other ministries and agencies) has opened massive opportunities for immigration of highly-qualified foreign IT specialists to Ukraine. This refers to the above immigration quota, which allows 5,000 such specialists to immigrate to the country. Employment within this quota allows them to obtain a permanent residence permit and work in Ukraine for ten years.