New Opportunities for Immigration of Foreign IT Specialists to Ukraine

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In 2021, Ukrainian companies are allowed to employ an additional 5706 highly qualified foreign professionals, including IT specialists. The relevant immigration quota was approved by the Cabinet of Ministers of Ukraine in Decree No. 148-p On establishing an immigration quota for 2021 on 24 February. This quota officially came into force on 24 February 2021.

The introduction of a new immigration quota is due to a significant shortage of IT staff in the domestic market of Ukraine. Annually, the country opens about 40,000 vacancies in the IT sector, while Ukrainian universities can qualify no more than 15,000-17,000 IT professionals in various fields. Besides, many graduates are employed abroad or prefer to be freelancers. It is expected that immigration quotas will partially reduce the existing shortage of highly qualified personnel in the IT sector.

From the regional perspective, this immigration quota is distributed as follows: Kyiv gets 2,611 employees, Kharkiv region – 1,293, Dnipropetrovsk, Odesa, and Lviv regions – 600 each.

Advantages of employment within the quota

The major advantage of employment within the established immigration quota is the opportunity to obtain a permanent residence permit in Ukraine. That makes employment almost permanent and means that foreign IT professionals will enjoy the privilege to live and work freely in Ukraine for 10 years. The conditions of their employment are no different from those of Ukrainian citizens. Moreover, foreign IT professionals get the priority right to obtain Ukrainian citizenship and can immigrate to Ukraine with their families.

The permanent residence permit in Ukraine is issued in the form of an ID card for a 10-year period that can be subsequently exchanged for another permit valid for the next 10 years.

The employment procedure

Foreign IT professionals seeking employment under the new immigration quota are subject to high qualification requirements. Compliance with these will be verified by the Ministry of Economy with the advisory support of the Ministry of Digital Transformation.

The employment procedure of foreign IT specialists under the new immigration quota consists of six stages.

The 1st stage involves collecting all the necessary documents. Advisory and practical support on this issue can be obtained at any territorial office of the State Migration Service (SMS), as well as the Ministry of Digital Transformation.

At the 2nd stage, the potential candidate shall submit documents along with an application for an immigration permit. If a foreigner stays within the territory of Ukraine legally, he / she can personally apply to the territorial branch / department of the SMS at the place of residence. In case a foreigner is outside Ukraine, he / she can apply to the consulate of Ukraine in the country of citizenship or legal residence.

The 3rd stage is the longest and involves verification of the candidate's file. This procedure is performed by the SMS and can last for 3-4 months (and in some 'complicated' cases – up to 1 year). If the results are positive, the foreign IT specialist is granted an immigration permit for 1 year.

Stages 4 and 5 involve obtaining a permanent residence permit. First, the foreigner applies for a permit to the relevant territorial branch or department of the SMS. It can be done only if such a foreigner legally stays within the territory of Ukraine and already has an immigration permit. The SMS bodies review the submitted application and make a decision on it within 15 working days.

If a foreigner is in another country and requires an entry visa to Ukraine, he / she must apply to the consulate of Ukraine in the country of residence.

After the territorial branch / department of the SMS has reviewed and satisfied the foreigner's application, the foreigner shall visit this branch / department and receive a permanent residence permit personally. The permit is issued according to the established procedure within no more than 1 working day.

And the final 6th stage is the registration of a place of residence. Upon receipt of a permanent residence permit, a foreigner is obliged to register a place of residence within 30 days.

Why go through the 6-stage procedure?

Successful completion of this 6-step procedure minimizes permissive restrictions for foreign IT specialists and provides them with many other benefits. For one thing, they no longer need to obtain annual work permits for foreigners and stateless persons. For another, they have the opportunity to cross the border of Ukraine both ways without any restrictions – no visa will be required any longer. And finally, employment under this year's government quota is done without binding a foreign IT-specialist to a particular position or designation, which gives more flexibility to his / her career and professional growth opportunities