

News from the world  
of global mobility



SWITZERLAND:  
REFERENDUM END TO FREE  
MOVEMENT WITH EU REJECTED

On September 27, 2020, the Swiss people voted, among other things, on the referendum "For moderate immigration" (the so-called limitation initiative). 59.5% of the voters rejected the initiative. The text of the initiative provided that Switzerland would terminate the existing agreement on the free movement of persons with the EU within 12 months; would not conclude any new international treaties and would not enter into any other new obligations under international law granting foreign nationals the free movement of persons.

Among other EU-related initiatives, this is the third time that the Swiss people have voted to terminate the bilateral agreements with the EU and the initiative has been unsuccessful again. The State Secretariat for Economic Affairs (SECO) and the Federal Council welcome the result with the financial background of the economic cooperation between Switzerland and the EU. However, a basic consensus for future relations is still lacking. The framework agreement is still pending in this sense. The right-wing circles are already working on this matter.



Due to COVID-19, the volume of work in renewing permits in Ireland could not be handled. The government has, therefore, extended all permits that expire between September 20, 2020 and January 19, 2021 until January 20, 2021.

Three categories of foreigners will benefit from the extension period - those who currently have a valid permit and reside in Ireland; those who came to Ireland in the past three months and are waiting for their first registration deadline; and those who have been granted a three-month permit to remain in Ireland but are unable to leave the country due to the pandemic.

The government wants to ensure that foreigners do not suffer a loss of status. For the moment Irish Residence Permit Cards (IRP cards) can be renewed online for Dublin residents only. All foreign residents living outside Dublin would still have to go to the relevant authority.

On the contrary, employers must follow the regular, previous procedure for general work permits, critical skills permits and work permits for expatriates.



IRELAND:  
BLANKET RENEWAL OF  
PERMITS DUE TO COVID-19



UNITED KINGDOM:  
SPECIAL SOCIAL SECURITY  
ARRANGEMENTS UNDER  
COVID-19 FOR POSTED WORKERS

For posted employees, who return temporarily to the UK due to COVID-19, special social security regulations apply. The British government already issued regulations for (temporary) returnees from EU and EFTA countries in April 2020. This was followed recently by regulations for employees who were sent to non-treaty countries.

However, the regulations for (temporary) returnees from countries that have not signed an agreement are not always easy to interpret. In principle, there is a risk that British social security contributions will have to be paid retroactively for these assignees and that the payroll will have to be adjusted. It is also not always clear which rules will apply when employees will be re-assigned to their original country of assignment or to another country. It is, therefore, advisable to examine the social security situation for these international assignees on a case-by-case basis.



GERMANY:  
HESITANT START OF THE NEW GERMAN  
SKILLED WORKER IMMIGRATION ACT

With the introduction of the new Skilled Worker Immigration Act in March 2020, qualified applicants from non-EU countries are given better access to the German labour market, in particular by facilitating the recognition of professional qualifications and by accelerating the visa approval process. In the last months however, border closures, national lockdowns and restricted opening hours of the German consulates abroad led to the result that the desired immigration of skilled workers took off rather hesitantly.

According to statistics from the German Foreign Office only 30'117 visas were issued for employment in the first half of 2020. The last time the number of visas issued was at a similar level was in 2015.

Germany has an increasing demand for skilled workers, especially with regard to nursing staff, doctors, civil engineering specialists and IT experts. However, due to the various restrictions this year, this demand has not yet been reflected in a significant increase in the number of applications.