

Recent changes in the EU Blue Card regime in Bulgaria

October 2015

In brief

New rules have been adopted in Bulgaria in relation to the issuance of an EU Blue Card for certain types of highly – skilled non-EU professionals. The changes came into force as of 16 October 2015.

What is the EU Blue Card?

The EU blue card offers highly educated skilled workers of non-EU countries the opportunity and the right and the faster track to work and stay in the European Union. Its validity in Bulgaria is up to three years initially but can be further renewed under certain conditions. The applicant should have a diploma/certificate proving at least 3-year educational course in the respective professional area at a university/college.

Previous regime

So far, the requirements for issuance of an EU Blue Card in Bulgaria included:

- The Bulgarian employer had to perform the so called “market test” (i.e. publish official job advertisements in the Employment Office and in the media for the job opening to check whether there are suitable Bulgarian/EU professionals for the position);
- The local gross salary of the professional had to be at least 1.5 times higher than the average salary in Bulgaria as per the statistical data for the previous 12 months;
- The Bulgarian employer had to obtain and file to the immigration authorities a special statement issued by the Bulgarian National Revenue

Agency (NRA) confirming the registered active employment contracts of the company.

New amendments

The main amendments to the EU Blue Card include:

- The mandatory market test was abolished for **specific types of professions**, for which there is shortage on the Bulgarian labour market. These professions will be published in a list approved by the Bulgarian Minister of Labor and Social Policy and will be updated annually by 31 January of the respective year, depending on the demand for professionals. The first such official list will be published by 31 January 2016. Amongst the **expected professions** to be included are IT specialists, software developers and medical professionals.
- The Bulgarian gross salary of employees included in the annual list of the most demanded professions will have to be at least 3 times higher than the average salary in Bulgaria as per the official statistical data for the previous 12 months. (*The average salary in Bulgaria for the first half of 2015 was around EUR 450*).

Note: For employees applying for an EU Blue card for professional categories, not included in the special

list, the market test will still be valid and the requirement for the salary remains 1.5 times higher than the average salary in the country.

- The statement issued by the Bulgarian NRA for active employment contracts is no longer required upon filing the application for obtaining an EU Blue Card.

The purpose of those changes is to attract specialists in certain areas by facilitating and shortening their immigration procedures.

Note: *The 10:1 rule is not applicable for Blue Card applications (under both the old and new regime), i.e. the Bulgarian employer is not obliged to have at least 10 Bulgarian/EU employees for each non-EU employees it wants to hire.*

How we can help

PwC Bulgaria can help with:

- Advice on all steps of the procedure for application for an EU Blue Card;
- Drafting and/or review of the necessary set of application documents;
- Assistance in the communication with the relevant Bulgarian authorities;
- Assistance in the residence permit application procedures for the family members of the EU Blue Card holders.

Let's talk

For a deeper discussion of how these issues might affect your business, please contact:

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