New More Accessible Fast-Track Work Permit in Malta

A new Fast-track work permit has been introduced in Malta called the Specialist Employee Initiative (SEI). This route is applicable to specialised employees that are not eligible for the Key Employee Initiative (KEI), but still hold the relevant academic, vocational or technical skills in line with their employment offer in Malta. Applications for SEIs are filed in accordance with the Single Permit Regulations.

By **Jonathan Vassallo**, 14th February 2024

The Specialist Employee Initiative

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The introduction of the SEI demonstrates Malta's commitment to attracting global talent, recognising the importance of simplifying application procedures for qualified foreign workers.

Third-Country Nationals

Third-Country Nationals (TCNs) require a single work permit to obtain residence and to be employed in Malta. This is because TCNs are not members of the EU or EFTA, and are therefore not able to move across borders, in the EU, without the proper documentation.

However, highly skilled TCNs benefit from a fast-track work permit service under this Specialist Employee Initiative.

Application Process

The processing time for this type of application typically takes around **15 days,** after submission of the complete list of required documents**.**

The employer is required to email a completed application along with all necessary attachments in accordance with the relevant checklist. 'Identitá', the Government Agency overseeing this programme, will ask the applicant's permission before submitting the application and supporting materials.

Upon receiving approval, the application will be processed in accordance with set protocols. Both the company and the candidate will receive an informational email and an acknowledgement, along with additional instructions on how to pay the application fee during the biometrics stage.

Any missing documents can result in delays or application rejection. It is important to ensure that all mandatory documents are submitted as per the checklist.

Once a decision is made on the application, both the applicant and the employer are informed of the outcome via e-mail.

Eligibility and Requirements

In order to be eligible to apply for the SEI application an individual must:

- Have a signed contract with a Maltese company;
- Have an annual gross salary of at least €25,000;
- Be in possession of either
  - (i) an MQF level 6 or higher in an area directly related to the job offer or
    - (ii) skill qualifications together with a minimum of 3 years' experience in a position which is directly related to the job offer.

- Present previous employment contracts (signed by both employer and employee).

- Provide their employment history, issued and officially certified (stamped or legalised) by the official employment authority in the country where the employment took place.

- Reference letters by former employer/s. Reference letters must show the start and end dates and details of the work carried out. The letters should contain clear contact details of the referee including a valid email address, postal address and contact number.

Typical documents needed with the application are:

- Full copy of passport

- CV

- Declaration of Suitability

- Lease Agreement & Housing Approval

- Health Screening

- Health Insurance

Visa duration and conditions

A residence permit will be granted to successful applicants for a period of one year. If the employee remains in compliance with the eligibility criteria and his/her employment contract applies to all periods of validity, this authorisation may be renewed for an additional period of up to three years.

Tax Treatment

- Tax is charged at progressive rates (capped at a maximum of 35%), on Malta sourced income and capital gains, and on foreign source income (excluding foreign source capital gains), that is remitted to Malta.

- No tax is chargeable on foreign sourced income that is not remitted to Malta.

- Capital gains are tax-exempt in Malta, even if they are remitted to Malta.

- Bank interest earned in Malta can be liable to withholding tax at 15%.

- Long-term residence permit holders are not eligible for the remittance basis of taxation and will be taxed on their worldwide income in Malta.

Conclusion

The introduction of this programme introduces an option for highly skilled third country nationals to obtain a work and residence permit in Malta, 15 days after the submission of the application and relevant documentation. Identitá have recognised the increased demand for such a work permit and this initiative will help improve processing time and efficiency.

Additional Information

For further information on the Specialist Employee Initiative, please do not hesitate to contact Jonathan Vassallo: advice.malta@dixcart.com at the Dixcart office, in Malta or your usual Dixcart contact.

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