

GMS Flash Alert

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Finland - Changes to Immigration Process, New Appointments System

New legislation in Finland, which will come into force on 1 January 2017, aims to streamline the immigration processes for foreign nationals coming to Finland.¹ The following changes are to be introduced:

- The Finnish Immigration Service will begin to handle all residence permit applications and European Union (EU) citizen registrations.²
- A new appointments system has been instituted by the Finnish Immigration Service for permit and registration initiation, with new customer service points to be open in 2017.³
- Residence permit applications on the basis of “family ties” can be submitted online.⁴

WHY THIS MATTERS

With residence permit applications (initiated in Finland), permit extensions, and EU citizen registrations being transferred to the Finnish Immigration Service from the Police, this means there will be a change in attendant contacts and procedures. Global mobility advisers and globally mobile employees coming to Finland need to be aware of the changes as the transition of the permit process from the Police to the Finnish Immigration service means a change of approach and an adjustment of procedures.

Online services are being expanded with the new appointments system and for permit applications on the basis of family ties (the latter is now possible online). This should make arranging for appointments and completing and submitting applications easier, quicker, and more convenient for applicants and service providers.

Booking an appointment for the individual’s application initiation is always needed to submit residence permit applications and EU citizen registrations in Finland. Scarce availability for appointments is anticipated for December 2016. It is possible that individuals risk not being able to initiate their residence permit applications and EU citizen registrations that are submitted after arrival in Finland at the end of 2016.

Changes to Immigration Process

From the beginning of 2017, all application initiations in Finland require a visit to a Finnish Immigration Service customer service point. Booking an appointment online in advance will be required.⁵ Initiating the applications online is always recommended, if possible.⁶

Until the end of 2016, all applications initiated in Finland are still to be submitted at a police station. All pending applications will be transferred to the Police as 2016 transitions to 2017.

Nine new service points in different parts of the country have been announced and they will open in the beginning of 2017. In practice, the service points will likely only open on 4 January. Initiating applications will not be possible during the first two working days of the year.⁷

KPMG NOTE

Difficulties in getting appointments for application initiations are anticipated until the end of 2016 at the Police. The Finnish Immigration Service advises customers to be prepared for long queues in the beginning of 2017 and that they may not necessarily be able to handle matters during the same day if the customer arrives late to the appointment.

EU Nationals

Until 2017, EU nationals have typically completed the required immigration registration for EU nationals at the Police in Finland. In the new system, EU nationals will be required to complete their registration at a service point of the Finnish Immigration Service.

Non-EU Nationals

In 2017, individuals applying for a residence permit for expert status after arrival in Finland as well as individuals applying for permit extensions will need to visit a Finnish Immigration Service customer service point to initiate applications. Finnish residence permit applications can still be submitted at Finnish diplomatic missions abroad by applicants that have not yet arrived in Finland and/or are required to submit the applications abroad.

Family Members Holding a Non-EU Citizenship

It has been possible to initiate residence permit applications based on family ties online since 11 November 2016. Individuals applying for a residence permit based on family ties after arrival in Finland as well as individuals applying for family permit extensions will need to visit a Finnish Immigration Service customer service point to initiate applications. Residence permit applications based on family ties can still be submitted at Finnish diplomatic missions abroad as well.

In 2017, family members of EU citizens holding a non-EU citizenship will be able to submit applications for the required family members' residence cards at a Finnish Immigration Service customer service point.

KPMG NOTE

Delays and inconsistencies may be features of the system and processes during the transition period. It is anticipated that there may be delays in getting appointments for residence permit applications, residence permit extensions, and EU

citizen registrations especially during the transition period. As such, we would advise that employers review their immigration processes in respect of any new on-boarding foreign nationals as early as possible, where practicable. Special attention should be paid to initiating the permit extensions of foreign experts already working in Finland well in advance.

Once the transition is complete, the new regime and procedures should help reduce processing times and ease the administrative burdens on employers and inbound employees. The outcome of the transition is however dependent on the public resources directed to immigration affairs and can be subject to political scrutiny.

The changes introduced by the new legislation aim to standardize the immigration process for Finland. While currently the process has varied in different regions in Finland, the new system aims to enforce a more uniform approach.

FOOTNOTES:

1 See the Finnish Ministry of the Interior [information page](#) on the preparation for changes in the Finnish aliens act (in Finnish and Swedish only).

2 See the [information page](#) of the Finnish Immigration Service on how the Finnish Immigration Service is to be in charge of the handling of all permits for foreign nationals (in English).

3 See the 16 November 2016 release by the [Finnish Immigration Service on the new appointments system \(in English\)](#).

4 See the 9 November 2016 release by the [Finnish Immigration Service on electronic residence permit applications on the basis of family ties \(in English\)](#).

5 See the [Finnish Immigration Service online appointments system \(in Finnish\)](#).

6 4 October 2016 Briefing for Stakeholders by the Finnish Immigration Service. KPMG Finland attended the briefing upon invitation.

7 See the [Finnish Immigration Service online application system "EnterFinland"](#).

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