Information for migrants on measures related to prevention of COVID-19

On 12 March 2020, a state of emergency was declared for a period of 30 days, during which many restrictions on everyday life in the Czech Republic may occur. It is therefore imperative to pay attention to the latest information. This is often not available in other language than Czech, so when in doubt, do not hesitate to contact us or our colleagues from other organizations. Below you can find a brief overview of the measures in force as of 26 March 2020 (5:00 PM) concerning migration and residency matters.

ATTENTION - not all of the measures valid as of this date are included in this overview. For a complete overview, please, refer to the website of the Government of the Czech Republic at https://www.vlada.cz/en/.

In all public spaces (including public transport) IT IS MANDATORY TO WEAR a protective face covering (covering the mouth and nose) such as respirators, face masks, scarves, shawls, or other equipment that can block the spread of droplets. If you are out in public, it is also prohibited to gather in a group of more than two (2) people, with the exception of family members and people sharing the same household. The exception also applies to work and business activities or funerals.

With regards to this measure, those who were regularly staying within the territory at the time of the declaration of the state of emergency (visa-free travel, short-stay visa, long-stay visa, long-term residency permit, permanent residency permit, fiction of stay while in the procedure, departure order, identification card of an international protection applicant), may remain within the territory legally until the state of emergency is over or revoked. If you wish to go back to the country of your origin, contact your embassy. Some countries organise special transfers for their citizens.

From 12 March 2020 until further notice, it is not possible to file residency permit applications at Czech embassies abroad. Applications submitted before that date will be processed as follows: Short-stay visa procedures (up to 90 days, e.g. tourist visa) are suspended, i.e. the proceedings have been terminated without a decision being made and you will have to file your application again once the situation allows. With regard to applications for long-stay visas (over 90 days), long-term residency permits, and permanent residency permits, the proceedings have been interrupted, which means the procedure is not ongoing as long as the restrictions last, but will continue without need to re-apply when the restrictions are revoked. However, this means the deadlines to issue a decision are interrupted as well – if the decision is to be issued within 60 days, the days from 12 March 2020 until the end of the restrictions shall not be counted.

From March 13 2020 until further notice, a general border restriction applies to both directions, from and to the Czech Republic. Migrants residing in the Czech Republic are allowed to leave the country, but if they leave, they cannot return (even those with a valid residency permit). The migrants who were abroad before the announcement of the measures may return to the Czech Republic if they have a valid residency permit - in which case they must contact their general practitioners (if they do not have one, they must contact the regional hygiene station or call the special emergency line 1212), and remain in quarantine (at home) for at least 14 days.
From 20 March 2020, employee card holders have the opportunity to change employer earlier than 6 months after the day they received their employee cards. The change must be reported to the Ministry of the Interior on a completed application form and the legal requisites must be documented. If your employer takes action in or assists with implementing emergency measures, you can start to work immediately after the announcement of a change of employer. In such case you will also need to document your employer’s statement on how they are involved in the implementation of emergency measures (e.g. health care activities, production of protective equipment, etc.).

If the employer terminates the employment of a migrant employee during the state of emergency, he should help the employee to fill in the forms for the Labour Office of the Czech Republic and provide assistance in dealing with the situation (e.g. help the migrant to return to the country of origin). Generally, the employer must treat the migrant worker the same way he treats a Czech one.

From 20 March 2020, blue card holders have the opportunity to change employer without the consent of the Ministry of the Interior earlier than 2 years from the day they received their blue cards, provided that the new employer takes action in or assists with implementing emergency measures. You can start to work immediately after the change of employer is announced. In such case you will also need to document your employer’s statement on how they are involved in the implementation of emergency measures (e.g. health care activities, production of protective equipment, etc.).

On 15 March 2020, an extraordinary extension of work permits and short-term visas for employment by 60 days from the end of the state of emergency was decided on. If your work permit and visa were issued before 15 March 2020 and the employer extends the contract with you for the given period (i.e. within 60 days of the end of the state of emergency), then both the work permit and visa are considered valid.

On 16 March 2020, the Government adopted a resolution that restrictions on accommodation services do not apply to accommodation of foreigners until they leave the Czech Republic and foreigners with a valid work permit. That means that if you are regularly staying in the Czech Republic and have remained in the Czech Republic because of travel restrictions, you can continue using the accommodation services of hotels, guest houses, hostels, etc. The same applies to employees with valid work permits who are staying at dormitories.
As of 18 March 2020, cross-border workers who are not subject to border restrictions are obliged to go through border control, including temperature checks. From 19 March 2020, they must carry a cross-border worker’s certificate. From 21 March 2020 00:00 they must also carry a so-called cross-border worker's book. From 26 March 2020 00:00, a special regime applies to cross-border workers working in Germany and Austria (they can leave the Czech Republic but only if they are leaving for more than 21 days, and they have to remain in quarantine for 14 days after their return), with the exception of healthcare, social service, and integrated rescue system workers.

In general, the implemented emergency measures also include: suspension of teaching at elementary schools, high schools, and universities; restrictions on free movement of people (with exceptions such as travel to work, visiting family, seeing a doctor, purchase of necessary supplies, or staying in parks); sale ban with exceptions (e.g. food stores, drugstores, electronics stores, haberdasheries, tobacconists, newsagents, locksmiths, machine repairs); between 8:00 and 10:00 in the morning the shops are open only for customers over 65 years of age.

For more information and up-to-date developments, please, refer also to the Asylum and Migration Policy Department website at https://www.mvcr.cz/clanek/nove-povinnosti-a-informace-pro-cizince-prevence-rozsireni-covid-19.aspx