

Working Holiday Scheme Bilateral Agreement between Italy and Hong Kong

We are pleased to announce that Italy signed a bilateral Working Holiday Scheme agreement with Hong Kong on 5th July 2019 (“**WHS**”) to benefit young Italians and Hong Kongers.

The agreement was signed by the Under Secretary of State, Ministry of Foreign Affairs and International Co-operation of the Government of the Italian Republic, Dr. Manlio Di Stefano and the Secretary for Labour and Welfare of the Government of the Hong Kong Special Administrative Region (“**Hong Kong**”), Dr. Law Chi-kwong, at the Central Government Offices in Hong Kong.

The following is the information currently available subject to publication of specific requirements by the two jurisdictions in question:

- the WHS will permit young people from Italy to obtain a visa to visit Hong Kong primarily with the intention of having a holiday but enabling them work *temporarily*/undertake short term courses while in Hong Kong as an incidental aspect of their holiday (subject to specified requirements and restrictions, such as possible restrictions on the number of months that can be worked for the same employer). Similar reciprocal arrangements will apply to Hong Kong youth wishing to travel to Italy under the WHS;
- applications will be subject to a maximum quota of 500 visas per year in each jurisdiction. This is quite a generous quota and is equal to the quota accorded by Hong Kong to Sweden. (Australia has the highest annual quota of all the countries which currently have agreements with Hong Kong, namely 5000). Italy is the 14th country to enter into a WHS with Hong Kong since the scheme started in 2001;
- the WHS visa will have a maximum duration of 12 months and extensions of stay will not normally be considered by the Hong Kong Immigration Department (“**HKID**”);
- among other requirements (according to the current HKID information available for other working holiday schemes), applicants for the WHS visa for Hong Kong, aged between 18 and 30, would have to prove they have the required financial means to support themselves during the holiday period, including airline ticket/sufficient funds to pay for a return ticket, they would also be required to obtain medical (and probably also other types of insurance – details to follow), to cover the period of the holiday and they would only be permitted to obtain a WHS visa once.

We will update you with further information as soon as the details of the bilateral procedures are published by the two contracting jurisdictions.

Please note that the above is simply an overview of the subject matter and it is not, nor is it intended to be, a legal opinion or legal advice. Should you have any questions concerning the new law's requirements set out above or should you wish to receive information on our annual package, please do not hesitate to contact us:

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