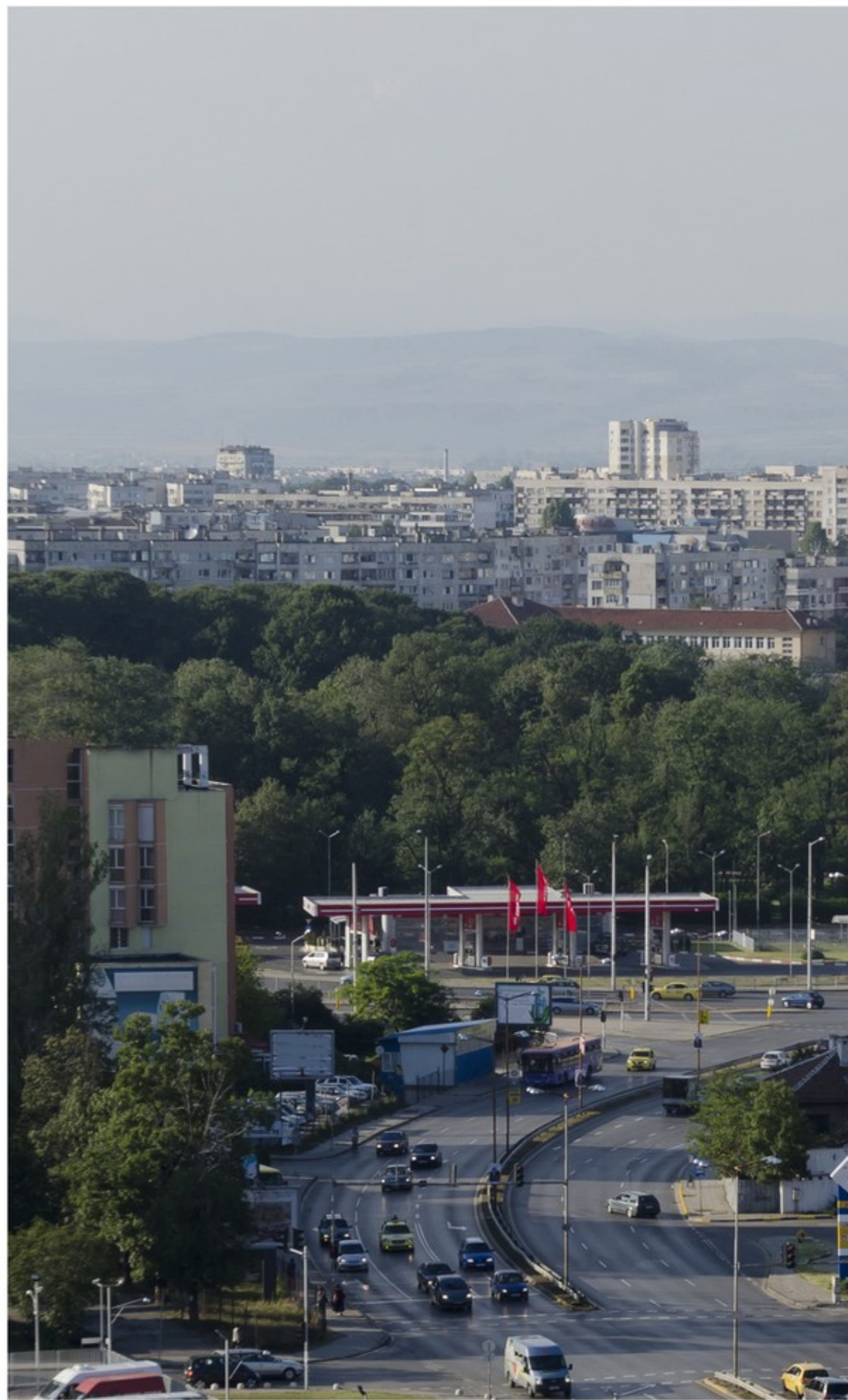


# Bulgaria relaxes rules for highly- skilled non- EU workers

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Responding to an increased demand for highly-skilled labour in some sectors – particularly the software development industry - Bulgaria has simplified rules and procedures around the hiring of non-EU citizens



The first step towards simplification took place at the end of last year when Bulgarian Minister of Labour and Social Policy, Ivaylo Kalfin (the Minister), introduced a list of professions for which a relaxed **EU Blue Card** issuance procedure would apply. The list was approved and published in January 2016 and covers several professions/positions from the IT sector:

- Sales specialists in the field of information and telecommunication technologies
- Systems analysts



- Software developers
- Developers of web content and multimedia
- Developers and database administrators
- Systems administrators
- Computer networks specialists
- Database specialists

EU Blue Cards are issued to highly-qualified professionals from non-EU countries where they qualify for fewer issuance conditions than personnel who must meet Bulgaria's strict work

permit requirements. As a result:

- The terms for review of applications and final decisions are shorter
- Work permit and residence certificate procedures are combined.

Since the introduction of the Minister's professions list, the three-to-four month Blue Card issuance procedure has sped up by as much as two months for such professionals, and no market test is required for them to join the Bulgarian workforce. ►

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## Recent developments

Along with the aforementioned alterations, which are now in force, the Bulgarian parliament made a general legislative change concerning labour force mobility and migration. The Bill was promulgated at the beginning of April and came into force on 21 May, 2016.

The rules in the new Bill are intended to:

- Implement EU directives on labour force migration and mobility
- Codify the scattered legislation that currently applies to these matters in Bulgaria
- Clarify certain vague aspects of current legislation
- Make some procedures faster.

The biggest changes to be introduced are as follows:

- A new general rule combining most work permits with a residence certificate. Previously these were separate procedures, but combining them reduces completion time and the subsequent time required to ensure compliance.
- Important relief related to temporary secondments to Bulgaria. This means that a foreign employee entering the country for up to three months (within a given 12-month period) in order to complete a task no longer needs a work permit. Registration of the foreigner with the Employment Agency suffices instead.

- The Blue Card issuance procedure is developed further and, to a certain extent, relaxed. Issuance terms are expected to decrease and the list of professions for which relief was introduced at the start of the year will be maintained (ie. there is no market test for these positions). The list of professions will be subject to annual updates.
- Employees transferred to Bulgaria as part of an inter-company project are allowed to work and stay in the country under the terms of a document that incorporates a work permit and a residence certificate. The hosting entity is exempt from some of the requirements necessary under a local labour agreement. Previously inter-company transfers were very limited in Bulgaria and the change creates better conditions for temporary personnel transfers within a group of companies.

At the time of writing, a regulation relating to the Bill’s implementation is also set to be adopted and shared with the public. ■

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