

(2) of the average time taken by the Immigration Department (ImmD) to process the applications mentioned in (1); the measures put in place by ImmD to expedite the vetting and approval procedure;

(3) of the measures currently put in place by ImmD to facilitate non-local people's visa applications for coming to Hong Kong to participate in CAS activities; whether it will, by making reference to the practices adopted by other places, issue electronic visas in place of paper visas, so as to facilitate visa application by such people; if so, of the details; if not, the reasons for that; and

(4) whether it has examined the contents of the aforesaid study report and, in the light of the practices adopted by other places, considered relaxing the entry requirements for non-local people coming to Hong Kong for participating in CAS activities, such as granting them, subject to their meeting specified conditions, visa-free access or entry permission under visitor visas, so as to obviate the need for them to apply for employment visas; if so, of the details; if not, the reasons for that?

Reply:

President,

The reply to the Hon Ma's question regarding the immigration arrangement for non-local individuals of the cultural, arts and sports sectors is as follows:

(1) According to the prevailing policy, the General Employment Policy (GEP) is applicable to overseas, Taiwan and Macao residents whereas the Admission Scheme for Mainland Talents and Professionals (ASMP) is applicable to Mainland residents only.

The statistics on applications approved under GEP and ASMP with breakdown on applicants' industry/sector being "Arts/Culture" or "Recreation and Sports" in the past three years are as follows:

GEP

Industry / Sector	Arts/Culture			Recreation and Sports		
	Less than 1 year	1 year or above	Total	Less than 1 year	1 year or above	Total
2016	4 385	51	4 436	5 317	288	5 605
2017	3 115	56	3 171	4 962	330	5 292
2018	3 390	49	3 439	4 857	323	5 180

ASMTP

Industry / Sector	Arts/Culture			Recreation and Sports		
Employment period	Less than 1 year	1 year or above	Total	Less than 1 year	1 year or above	Total
2016	2 819	52	2 871	289	28	317
2017	3 892	26	3 918	435	33	468
2018	4 560	47	4 607	371	41	412

As the system in the Immigration Department (ImmD) maintains statistics using one year as a parameter, ImmD does not maintain other breakdown statistics mentioned in the question.

(2) and (3) At present, ImmD pledges that 90 per cent of GEP and ASMTP applications will be finalised within four weeks upon receipt of all necessary documents. In 2018, over 99 per cent of GEP and ASMTP applications were finalised within four weeks upon receipt of all necessary documents, exceeding the standard of performance pledge notably.

In processing visa/entry permit applications for participation in local cultural, arts or sports events or competitions, ImmD maintains close communication and coordination with the event or competition organisers. ImmD, having regard to the dates and circumstances of the events or competitions, takes appropriate facilitating measures, including streamlining the visa/entry permit application procedures (such as waiving the submission of supporting documents on academic qualifications and relevant work experience) and according priority to urgent applications, in order to meet the actual needs of the participants and organisers.

Besides, ImmD plans to develop the "Next Generation Application and Investigation Easy Systems" (the new system) in 2019 for implementation in phases from 2021. Regarding the application for visas/entry permits, the new system will enhance service delivery through various improvement initiatives such as providing electronic means for application submission, providing web-based application forms for online data input and electronic notification of application results, extending services from web-based platform to mobile platforms (e.g. mobile phones, tablets), as well as introducing self-service kiosks for submission of applications and supplementary documents and collection of application results. ImmD will also make reference to the international trends and practices of electronic visa issuance and enhance the design of the new system so as to provide greater convenience for visa/entry permit applicants.

(4) The HKSAR Government has noted the study conducted by the Research Office of the Legislative Council Secretariat in respect of overseas visa policies on non-local persons participating in local cultural, recreational and sports activities. Relevant policy bureaux, including the Home Affairs Bureau, will

look into the proposal, and review relevant immigration policies in due course to ensure that the policies meet Hong Kong's actual circumstances and needs.