

# LCQ6: Enhanced Supplementary Labour Scheme

Following is a question by the Hon Shiu Ka-fai and a reply by the Secretary for Labour and Welfare, Mr Chris Sun, in the Legislative Council today (April 10):

Question:

The Enhanced Supplementary Labour Scheme (ESLS), which has accepted applications since September 4 last year, covers 26 job categories normally excluded from the Supplementary Labour Scheme, and such coverage arrangement will last for two years. Under the ESLS, if imported workers are Mainland residents, employers may opt to provide them with accommodation in Hong Kong or on the Mainland, or arrange them to reside in their residential premises on the Mainland. In this connection, will the Government inform this Council:

(1) of the following information on the ESLS to date: the number of applications received and the number of workers involved, the number of applications approved and the number of workers involved, as well as the respective numbers of Mainland workers who are provided with accommodation on the Mainland by their employers and are arranged to return to reside in their residential premises on the Mainland on the same day after work, with a tabulated breakdown by the aforesaid 26 job categories;

(2) in respect of jobs other than the aforesaid 26 job categories, how the numbers of applications made and approved for importation of workers as well as the number of workers involved compare before and after the launch of the ESLS; and

(3) whether it has considered further improving the mechanisms and procedures involved in making applications under the ESLS as well as vetting and approving the ESLS applications; if so, of the details; if not, the reasons for that?

Reply:

President,

To cope with the challenges brought by manpower shortage, the Government has enhanced the mechanism for importation of workers on the premise of safeguarding the employment priority for local workers. Apart from launching sector-specific labour importation schemes for the construction sector, transport sector, and residential care homes for the elderly and residential care homes for persons with disabilities, the Labour Department (LD) has also enhanced the coverage and operation of the Supplementary Labour Scheme (SLS) in the past, including suspending the general exclusion of the 26 job categories (set out at Annex 1) as well as unskilled/low-skilled posts from

labour importation for two years.

The reply to the Member's question is as follows:

(1) Since the launch of the Enhanced Supplementary Labour Scheme (ESLS) on September 4, 2023 and as at March 31, 2024, 3 701 applications seeking to import 37 377 workers were received under the ESLS. Of these applications, 29 190 imported workers intended to take up posts which were generally excluded from labour importation before.

During the same period, 964 applications seeking to import 5 134 workers were approved under the ESLS, including 2 318 were approved to take up posts which were generally excluded from labour importation in the past. A breakdown of the numbers of imported workers applied for and approved, by the above 26 job categories, is at Annex 2. In addition, apart from the approved applications, as at March 31, 2024, 993 applications in respect of those received after the launch of the ESLS had started or completed the local recruitment exercise, seeking to import 11 886 workers. The LD expects that the vetting of most of these applications will be completed in the second quarter of this year, where the exact number approved will depend on the results of local recruitment and the application details of the cases.

If the imported workers are Mainland residents, employers may opt to provide accommodation in Hong Kong or on the Mainland for the imported workers, or allow the imported workers to reside in their residential premises on the Mainland. The LD does not maintain a breakdown of the accommodation arrangement for imported workers.

(2) From January 1, 2023 to September 3, 2023, the numbers of imported workers applied for and approved under the SLS were 8 072 and 2 139 respectively. Since the launch of the ESLS on September 4, 2023 and as at March 31, 2024, applications for importing 8 187 workers taking up posts covered by the SLS in the past were received under the ESLS and 2 816 imported workers were approved. As the ESLS does not accept applications for importation of workers from employers covered by sector-specific labour importation schemes, the above-mentioned figures are not directly comparable with those of the SLS.

(3) The LD has been closely monitoring the operation of the ESLS and striving for continuous improvements on the execution. The LD has launched a dedicated website to introduce the features of the ESLS, and uploaded the "List of Common Posts" covering the median monthly wage, working hours, entry requirements and duties of 156 common posts in different industries for employers' reference. As at March 31, 2024, the LD had organised 44 briefings for employers on the ESLS and the points-to-note about submission of applications.

To further improve the workflow of processing applications, the LD will shortly introduce the following new measures:

(i) an application form for common posts will be introduced next month. If an employer uses the new application form and fills in the information specified

in the "List of Common Posts", the processing time will be shortened;

(ii) apart from briefings for employers, the LD will also organise briefings for employment agencies involved in labour importation matters and explain the application arrangements of the ESLS to facilitate employment agencies to assist employers on the handling of applications;

(iii) the LD will exercise flexibility in the handling of recruitment advertisements placed by employers during local recruitment, and will also remind employers to report to the LD the interview results as soon as possible; and

(iv) through internal deployment of staff, the LD will vet applications submitted by employers as soon as possible and provide advice on information of relevant applications.

The LD will continue to closely monitor the ESLS, safeguard the employment priority for local workers and improve the processing of applications.