

For information on  
18 March 2014

## **Legislative Council Panel on Manpower**

### **Working Holiday Scheme**

#### **Purpose**

This paper briefs members on the latest development of the Working Holiday Scheme (WHS).

#### **Background**

2. The Government first launched WHS in 2001 with the objective of enhancing bilateral social and cultural ties between Hong Kong and other economies. WHS offers our young people aged between 18 and 30 the opportunity to live and work in other economies so as to acquire understanding of these places' developments, thereby broadening their horizons and enriching their exposure. Apart from strengthening exchanges between Hong Kong and our partner economies, WHS also enhances bilateral cooperation and promotes tourism development between the two places.

3. WHS has been popular among our young people since it was launched in 2001, and the number of partner economies has also increased from one at the beginning to nine at present, including New Zealand, Australia, Ireland, Germany, Japan, Canada, South Korea, France and the United Kingdom (UK). Young people from these economies may also apply to come to Hong Kong through WHS via respective Chinese Embassies or Consulates-General and the Immigration Department (ImmD) of Hong Kong. As at the end of 2013, more than 34 000 Hong Kong youths had participated in WHS and about 3 200 youths from the aforementioned economies had come to Hong Kong through relevant reciprocal arrangements.

## **The Scheme**

4. Compared with the general travel visa arrangements, Hong Kong youths participating in WHS are allowed to stay in the host economy for a longer period of time<sup>1</sup> to gain a deeper understanding of the economy's social development and take up short-term employment to supplement their living expenses. Young people can acquire precious life experience, strengthen their self-confidence, resilience and inter-personal skills through holidaying and working abroad. Those who choose to travel to New Zealand, Australia, Germany, Japan, Canada, South Korea, France and the UK may also study in short-term courses.

5. Under WHS, each economy may, according to the related bilateral arrangement, provide a fixed annual quota for eligible applicants aged between 18 and 30 to apply (the latest annual quota of various economies is given in the Appendix). Participants' main purpose of travel should be holidaying and they should bear their own transportation cost for the return or onward journey. They should be able to produce financial proof of available funds to meet their living costs while staying in the host economy. WHS does not have any academic requirements for the participants. In choosing their work, participants should comply with the laws of respective host economies and meet the relevant requirements of specific industries.

6. Although individual partner economies of WHS do not require Hong Kong participants to take out insurance for their stay in the host economies, the Labour Department (LD) has all along encouraged participants to take out suitable medical, hospitalisation and liability insurance prior to their departure so as to share the burden of relevant expenses that they may incur during their stay in the host economies while participating in WHS. Where necessary, participants may also seek help through the "Assistance to Hong Kong Residents 24-Hour Hotline" (+852 1868) provided by ImmD or respective Chinese Embassies or Consulates-General.

7. LD will continue to promote WHS through various channels including organising talks, providing relevant websites to facilitate access to information, producing publicity materials such as posters, booklets and postcards for distribution in relevant government organisations, public places and tertiary institutions, etc.

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<sup>1</sup> Except for participants of the UK's Youth Mobility Scheme who may stay in the UK for no more than 24 months, holders of working holiday visas or related documents issued by other economies may only stay for up to 12 months.

## **Way Forward**

8. WHS brings about many benefits to our young people and is widely supported by them. In view of this, the Chief Executive has indicated in the 2014 Policy Address that the Government would explore the signing of such arrangements with more economies. We will also continue to actively promote WHS and negotiate with our partner economies about increasing the quota when necessary to encourage more young people to step out of Hong Kong to reach out to the world. On the other hand, more overseas youths can enhance their understanding about Hong Kong.

Labour Department  
March 2014

**WHS Effective Date and Annual Quota**

	<b>Partner Economies</b>	<b>WHS Effective Date</b>	<b>Annual Quota</b>
1.	New Zealand	April 2001	400
2.	Australia	September 2001	No quota limit
3.	Ireland	March 2005	100
4.	Germany	July 2009	150
5.	Japan	January 2010	250
6.	Canada	March 2010	200
7.	South Korea	January 2011	500
8.	France	July 2013	200
9.	UK	January 2014	1 000 for HKSAR passport holders; holders of British National (Overseas) passport are not subject to the annual quota