



Mr Akira Tamura,
Director
Entry and Status Division
Immigration Bureau
Ministry of Justice

Dear Mr. Tamura,

The European Business Council in Japan (EBC) appreciates the close dialogue on visa and re-entry permit policies over past years with the Ministry of Justice and with this letter, would like to draw your attention to the concern of our members relating to the revised Immigration Control and Refugee Recognition Act due to be implemented on November 20, 2007. We believe that the introduction of mandatory fingerprinting and photographing of foreigners entering and re-entering Japan must be conducted in such a way that it does not adversely affect foreign residents, businessmen and companies in Japan.

The EBC has also recently been working closely with the Australian and New Zealand Chamber of Commerce in Japan (ANZCCJ) in relation to this matter. The ANZCCJ concur with the views and suggestions of the EBC in relation to the upcoming changes.

Both the EBC and ANZCCJ fully supports the introduction of a new electronic system through which pre-registration of biological data into the system will allow Japanese citizens and foreign residents alike to use a semi-automatic re-entry process when returning to Japan. We regret, however, that this system will be available only at Narita Airport initially and urge the Ministry to introduce semi-automatic gates at all international airports in Japan without delay.

The EBC and ANZCCJ appreciates the oral commitment by the Ministry that special lines at the immigration counter will be established for foreign residents (re-entry permit holders) who cannot use the semi-automatic gates, separate from the general lines for foreign tourists and other irregular visitors to Japan. Since the semi-automatic gates are not yet established at all international airports and oral instructions from the Ministry can be easily overlooked, the EBC and ANZCCJ urges the Ministry to circulate a notification clarifying to all immigration bureaus in Japan about the need to establish a separate line for foreign residents (re-entry permit holders).

As you certainly are aware, foreign residents (re-entry permit holders) are currently allowed to line up together with Japanese citizens when re-entering Japan, an appreciated and effective system which is granting smooth entry. Suddenly, grouping long-term residents and taxpayers in Japan with occasional visitors risks creating excessive delays for frequent business travelers and imposing unacceptable costs on businesses that are heavily reliant on the efficient and rapid mobility of executives.

The EBC greatly values discussions with the Ministry of Justice and trusts that you will make public clear information on how the regulatory changes affect foreign residents, as our members are becoming increasingly concerned and the time for implementation is rapidly approaching. The ANZCCJ concurs with and strongly supports this request to the Ministry of Justice.

Yours sincerely,

Richard Collasse
Chairman
European Business Council in Japan

Tim Lester
Chairman
Australian and New Zealand
Chamber of Commerce in Japan

CC:
Mr Kazuyoshi Matsunaga,
Director,
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Ministry of Foreign Affairs