As the coronavirus disease (COVID-19) spreads worldwide, businesses in the Czech Republic face practical and legal employment challenges as they take measures to further the immediate goal of preventing the spread of physical infection to and within their workforces.

This insight includes questions and answers on how to handle the most frequent issues faced by employers in Czech Republic.

Employers are obliged to create a safe working environment and follow the requirements of the Occupational Safety and Health Association (OSHA) by implementing appropriate measures of risk prevention. Suitable measures may include steps taken in an effort to control the spread of coronavirus in the workplace. From a practical standpoint, we recommend that employers:

- Where practicable, arrange a “work-from-home” regime.
- If the nature of the work does not allow employees to
What are an employer’s obligations from a health and safety perspective in relation to their staff?

- Ensure employees have been informed of the symptoms, as well as of the newest recommendations for minimising the risk of infection, issued by the government and public administrative authorities.

- Implement a system for reporting those who have shown symptoms of infection.

- Implement a mechanism for reporting and prevention in the case of individuals who have visited a high-risk area (i.e. PRC, Iran, Italy, South Korea, France, Spain, Germany, Switzerland, Norway, Denmark, the Netherlands, Sweden, the UK, Belgium and Austria). This mechanism may also include a system of mandatory or voluntary quarantine for employees who have returned from one of these high-risk areas (see below).

- Ensure that all control measures taken for the purposes of evaluating and mitigating risk were in accordance with the instructions or recommendations of the public administrative authorities.

The Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Czech Republic is continually updating the information on its website regarding the current situation and measures taken by other individual states to combat the coronavirus. Effective from 16 March 2020, the following restrictions are placed on international travel:

- Czech citizens may not exit the Czech Republic (unless they have permanent residence in the destination country).

- Foreigners (with or without residence permits in the Czech Republic) may exit the Czech Republic but will not be able to return during the state of emergency.

- Czech citizens and foreigners with residence permits in the Czech Republic coming back from risk countries (i.e. PRC, Iran, Italy, South Korea, France, Spain, Germany, Switzerland, Norway, Denmark, the Netherlands, Sweden, the UK, Belgium and Austria) are allowed entry to the Czech Republic, but are obliged to remain in compulsory quarantine for two weeks.

Should employers place restrictions on their staff in terms of work-related international travel?
the Czech Republic coming back from safe countries are allowed entry to the Czech Republic, but are obliged to remain in compulsory quarantine if they show any symptoms.

- Foreigners without residence permits in the Czech Republic are not allowed entry to the Czech Republic for so long as the crisis continues.

It follows that for practical purposes, employees are currently prevented from work-related international travel.

Czech citizens and foreigners with residence permits in the Czech Republic coming back from risk countries (i.e. PRC, Iran, Italy, South Korea, France, Spain, Germany, Switzerland, Norway, Denmark, the Netherlands, Sweden, the UK, Belgium and Austria) are obliged to remain in compulsory quarantine. Czech citizens and foreigners with residence permits in the Czech Republic coming back from safe countries are obliged to remain in compulsory quarantine if they show disease symptoms, including:

- Fever over 38°C
- Shortness of breath
- Persistent cough
- Muscle pain
- Fatigue

Employees who have not recently been abroad, but do have such symptoms, should immediately contact their GP, the regional hygiene station or use the emergency line 1212. Until they receive the result of a COVID-19 medical examination, they should remain self-isolated.

In terms of Labour Law, where a quarantine order is imposed, the employee is entitled to receive 60% of average earnings during the first 14 calendar days. If the employer arranges with the employee for them to work from home over that period, the employee is entitled to receive the standard wage or payment.

If the employer orders the employee to adhere to home quarantine, the employee is entitled to full pay over that period.
How should employers deal with a member of staff who refuses to come to work because they are concerned about the risk of infection?

Although the risk of being infected by coronavirus in the Czech Republic remains quite low, due to the constant media coverage of this issue, many people are needlessly concerned about the potential risks, especially if they fall in a group that is more susceptible to infection, meaning the elderly and those with weakened immunity. Employers should promote communication with their employees about coronavirus, inform them of what steps they can take to avoid infection and what steps the employer itself can take. Employers should pay attention to how their messages are being perceived in order to prevent needless panic or concern.

If staff say they want to wear facemasks at work, are employers entitled to say no?

The employer is not permitted to forbid employees from wearing surgical masks.

What should employers do if a member of staff is confirmed as having the virus and has recently been in the workplace?

The current recommendations from the government are that the employer should contact the relevant regional hygiene station or use the emergency line 1212 and discuss with them the situation as it happened, identify the people, who have come in contact with the person in question, and discuss next-steps preventative measures.

If the situation worsens and employers are considering closing one of their sites, do they have a right to lay off staff in these circumstances? Are they obliged to continue to pay them?

Where the employer has defined in a written agreement with the trade union that it is unable to provide the employees with work within normal working hours due to a temporary drop in sales or in demand for its services, the employee shall be entitled to pay in the amount determined in the agreement, which shall be no less than 60% of their average earnings.

Where no trade union organisation operates at the employer’s undertaking, such agreement may be substituted by internal regulations.

Further information is available at the following sites:

- Ministry of Foreign Affairs
- Ministry of Health
- National Institute of Public Health

Key websites/sources of guidance