

NATIONAL ASSEMBLY

**QUESTION FOR WRITTEN REPLY**

# QUESTION NO. 728

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## INTERNAL QUESTION PAPER 11 OF 2017

**728. Mr A M Figlan (DA) to ask the Minister of Home Affairs:**

With the range of increased security measures being introduced with regard to the immigration and refugee legislation, (a) how and (b) when will the country ensure the implementation of the objectives of the National Development Plan in the migration policy of attracting and rapidly processing skilled migrants? NW787E

**REPLY:**

1. The National Development Plan (NDP) identifies various conditions that are necessary for its successful implementation. An enabling condition is to ensure that the Department of Home Affairs can efficiently facilitate the entry and stay of migrants with skills that are scarce and critical for economic growth.

 In the chapter under Research and Development (R&D), the NDP places a responsibility on the Department to retain students from abroad who graduate from South African universities with a seven-year work permit to encourage them to stay and work here. While the Immigration Act 13 of 2002 in its current form does not allow for a work visa that exceeds 5 years, the Minister of Home Affairs issued a Directive in 2016 which allowed students who graduate in any of the fields listed in the Critical Skills List to apply for Permanent Residence.

 Students who graduate and obtain their PHD at South African universities are also eligible for permanent residence on condition that there is no obligation attached to their studies which requires them to return to their country of origin.

1. Chapter 3 of the NDP on “Economy and Employment” lists a number of actions that should be taken in order to achieve the objectives of the NDP. Action 10 requires the country to “Adopt a more open immigration approach to expand supply of high-level skills” and Chapter 9, Action 67 requires that the country should “Relax immigration requirements for highly skilled science and mathematics teachers, technicians and researchers”.

Concerning implementation, it should be noted that the Department is already in the process of reviewing its Immigration Policy. To this end the Department has submitted its Draft White Paper on International Migration to Cabinet for approval before 31 March 2017. This revised policy framework makes provision for attraction of skilled migrants.

Applications for critical skills work visas are being processed within an accelerated turnaround of 4 weeks from date of application to issuance. In the 2015/16 financial year, 84.7% of critical skills applications were finalised within 4 days to 4 weeks. This represents half the time required for all other categories of temporary residence visas (8 weeks).

Critically skilled migrants are also allowed to sojourn in South Africa for a period of 12 months prior to securing employment in order to determine whether they will be interested in working and staying in the Republic on a longer term.