



# The Canadian Express Entry System

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SVR COMPACT

## 1. In Brief

In the current debate about an immigration law in Germany, the Canadian system of immigration management is often proposed as a model for reforms. As a result, the Expert Council of German Foundations on Integration and Migration (Sachverständigenrat deutscher Stiftungen für Integration und Migration – SVR) analysed the latest reform which can be seen as a further step in the convergence of German and Canadian labour migration policy: In Canada as well, the question of a candidate's direct integration into the labour market now plays a central role (for a comparison of the German and Canadian systems, see also the SVR's 2015 Annual Report "Immigration Countries: Germany in an International Comparison", chapter A.1.1.1)

A new management system, known as Express Entry (EE), was launched in Canada on 01.01.2015. This system isn't a new way to immigrate to Canada, but a new way to manage the applications of individuals who want to work and settle in Canada. As a management system, EE affects all of the central channels for permanent labour migration: the Federal Skilled Worker Program (FSWP), the Federal Skilled Trades Program (FSTP), the Canadian Experience Class (CEC) and parts of the Provincial Nominee Programs (PNP). The information below, however, is limited to the FSWP.

The EE system revolves around a pool of immigration applicants called the Express Entry Pool of Candidates. A special selection process (Comprehensive Ranking System – CRS) is used to identify people in this pool and invite them to immigrate to and settle in Canada. Anyone who wants to move to Canada as a labour immigrant first has to become part of this pool. The relevant requirements are described in section 2. Section 3 describes the criteria used to select the CRS pool members for immigration to and settlement in Canada.

EE can be seen as one of the initial outcomes of a several year reform process which resulted in considerable changes to Canada's labour migration policy: it was originally a traditional supply-oriented system designed to manage human capital, i.e. the government decided who would be allowed to immigrate primarily or even exclusively based on the applicants' characteristics while direct adaptability to the national labour market was seen as secondary. Following several reforms which ultimately led to the EE as an initial outcome, Canada now has a traditional hybrid system for labour migration policy. This system has by no means eliminated its roots in human capital management – clearly evidenced by the fact that it is still possible to immigrate under the new system without an employment contract. But the CRS distribution system in particular shows that the issue of direct labour market integration now takes a higher priority in Canadian labour migration policy. The continued basic orientation around human capital has been supplemented by a strong focus on employment contracts.



## 2. Requirements for EE participation

EE can generally be described as a two-level filtering process. The first step regulates access to the pool of applicants: this pool only accepts candidates with clearly defined profiles who satisfy certain prerequisites. These are, specifically:

- at least one year of professional experience at a specific skill level; in this case, level O, A or B of the National Occupational Classification is required<sup>1</sup>
- confirmation from a Canadian authority that any certificates or degrees acquired abroad meet Canadian education standards
- language proficiency in English or French that meets at least Level 7 of the Canadian Language Benchmarks<sup>2</sup>
- proof of adequate financial resources, called settlement funds<sup>3</sup>
- If these minimum requirements are met, the candidate's immigration profile is also ranked on the basis of a point system that gives points mainly for language proficiency (max. 28 points) and degrees (max. 25 points).<sup>4</sup> Candidates need 67 of 100 points to be accepted into the EE system.

Immigration candidates who satisfy these criteria are added to the pool. This first step in labour migration to Canada has now been successfully completed – but it's not the only step. An interim report published in July 2015 entitled Citizenship and Immigration Canada (CIC) very clearly shows how selective the new system is: Of the 112,701 applications received by the cut-off date, nearly 50,000 were rejected as "non-eligible" in this first selection phase. Membership in the pool is limited to 12 months. At the end of this period, the applicant's profile is automatically deleted. It is, however, possible to apply again.

## 3. The Comprehensive Ranking System (CRS)

The focus of the second step of labour migration to Canada is another point system, the Comprehensive Ranking System (CRS). Based on their CRS scores, pool members are ranked in order of who will be asked to submit documents which will allow them to immigrate to and settle in Canada after the documents are reviewed. One of the CRS' distinctive features is that scoring and points are distributed to three factors: a max. of 500 points are awarded for the traditional human capital factors of language proficiency and educational level but also for age and work experience in Canada.<sup>5</sup> 100 bonus points are awarded for applicants who have several specific qualifications at the same time. The lion's share of the maximum of 1,200 points, however, is awarded to pool

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<sup>1</sup> In concrete terms, the EE is therefore open to people with professional experience in management jobs, professional jobs and technical jobs and skilled trades.

<sup>2</sup> CLB 7 must be achieved in all areas (reading, writing, listening, speaking). The strict language prerequisites of the EE system is one way that this system varies considerably from the German system of labour migration policy which stipulates hardly any requirements.

<sup>3</sup> This amount varies depending on family size. Just under CAD 12,000 is required for single individuals with no family and right around CAD 30,000 for a family of six.

<sup>4</sup> A max. of only 15 points is also awarded under this system for an existing employment contract (arranged employment). Applicants who want to be part of the pool without arranged employment have to register with the state Job Bank (job placement database).

<sup>5</sup> The CRS points for the human capital factors are distributed as follows for single applicants: max. 110 points for age, max. 150 points for education level, max. 160 points for language proficiency (max. 136 points for the first language and 24 for the second) and max. 80 points for work experience in Canada.



members who can either demonstrate arranged employment, i.e. a job offer from a Canadian employer<sup>6</sup> or a provincial nomination, an invitation from a Canadian province under the Provincial Nominee Program (PNP).<sup>7</sup>

**Tab. 1 CRS minimum scores, number of invitations, percentage of nominations of individuals with 600 or more points, as of: 06 July 2015**

Date	Min. CRS score	No. of invitations	More than 600 points	Provincial Nominees	Federal Skilled Workers	Federal Skilled Trades	Canadian Experience Class
31 Jan.15	886	779	100%	13	432	163	171
7 Feb.15	818	779	100%	17	167	221	374
20 Feb.15	808	849	100%	0	0	0	849
27 Feb.15	735	1,187	100%	24	114	409	640
20 Mar.15	481	1,620	75%	43	500	336	741
27 Mar.15	453	1,637	20%	3	1,187	103	344
10 Apr.15	469	925	70%	24	329	159	413
17 Apr.15	453	715	41%	35	389	87	204
22 May 15	755	1,361	100%	278	240	253	590
12 Jun.15	482	1,501	68%	150	526	104	721
26 Jun.15	469	1,575	40%	111	925	52	487
<b>Total</b>		<b>12,928</b>	<b>70%</b>	<b>698</b>	<b>4,809</b>	<b>1,887</b>	<b>5,534</b>

Source: Express Entry Mid-Year Report, CIC 2015

On the basis of the individual CRS scores which change continuously over time,<sup>8</sup> the Canadian government invites pool members with a minimum CRS score to immigrate and settle at irregular intervals. The question of how this minimum CRS score is developed across the various 'rounds of invitations' is now important (Tab. 1). As the CIC interim report on EE clearly shows, 70% of all invitations to immigrate and settle issued in the four immigration areas under the EE system, were made to pool candidates with a CRS score of more than 600 points and thus to individuals with an employment contract or a provincial nomination. This percentage is particularly high in the rounds of invitations which mainly considered people from the Canadian Experience Class program. Of the 41,218 candidates in the pool in July 2015, more than 50 per cent had a CRS score of between 300 and 399 points.

<sup>6</sup> A positive Labour Market Impact Assessment (LMIA) is generally required, however, to receive a bonus of 600 points. It must be shown "that there is a need for a foreign worker to fill the job and that no Canadian worker is available to do the job" (<http://www.cic.gc.ca/english/helpcentre/answer.asp?q=163&t=17>, viewed on 18.08.2015).

<sup>7</sup> Unlike Germany with its centralised immigration policy, the provinces and territories in Canada have their own sub-national immigration programmes (known as Provincial Nominee Programs).

<sup>8</sup> The individual CRS score is subject to, on the one hand, a 'natural devaluation process' because the number of points awarded in this category falls after a certain age (30 years). On the other hand, scores can be increased with improved language skills, new degrees and, not least of all, a concrete job offer or a provincial nomination.



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