

Appointment of central processing agent for the Employment Support Scheme

The Government announced today (May 17) that PricewaterhouseCoopers Advisory Services Limited (PwC) has been appointed as the central processing agent for implementation of the Employment Support Scheme (ESS).

"The central processing agent will assist the Government in the end-to-end implementation of the ESS to enable its timely and efficient execution with the aim of disbursing the first tranche of subsidy to employers and self-employed persons three to four weeks after applications have been received," a Government spokesman said.

The central processing agent is responsible for, among other things, assisting the Government in designing the workflow of the ESS; developing an online portal for receiving applications; processing and vetting applications; calculating the subsidy, claw back and penalty amount; responding to applicants' enquiries through hotline, emails and helpdesks; and conducting pre- and post-application verification work. It will also work closely with the MPF trustees and other stakeholders to ensure the speedy and prudent processing of ESS applications.

The Policy Innovation and Co-ordination Office has invited the major professional accounting firms in Hong Kong last month to submit proposals to provide central processing agent services for the ESS. The selection exercise has been completed and PwC is appointed as the central processing agent of ESS.

The ESS is one of the major initiatives under the second round of the Anti-epidemic Fund announced by the Chief Executive, Mrs Carrie Lam, on April 8, 2020 to provide time-limited financial support to employers to retain their employees who will otherwise be made redundant due to the COVID-19 epidemic. Eligible employers will receive wage subsidies for six months and the first tranche of subsidies will cover June to August 2020. Eligible self-employed persons may apply for a one-off lump sum subsidy of \$7,500 under the ESS.

Eligible employers and self-employed persons can submit applications for the first tranche of ESS between May 25 to June 14, 2020 via the dedicated online portal. Further details will be announced shortly.