

# Helping businesses make the right move

An interview with Till Neumann, Managing Partner at Citizen Lane

**C**itizen Lane specialises in helping businesses, SME entrepreneurs and individual investors expand their operations to Switzerland, Germany, Austria, Malta, Slovenia, St. Kitts & Nevis, Antigua & Barbuda, and Vanuatu. Their legal team takes care of the application process from start to finish, and leverages a broad network of advisors to advise CEOs and families on what will work best and where. *The European* caught up with Managing Partner Till Neumann to find out more about how the process works.

**Can you outline the difficulties businesses face when looking to expand to the countries in which you specialise?**

**Till Neumann:** Many people in Europe will have heard about the Golden Visas of Portugal and Malta, or even about the United Kingdom's Tier 1 (Investor) visa. The advantage with these programmes is that you have very clear guidelines and conditions on the investment in the country, so that the investor can successfully apply for a residence permit. Moreover, these are rather passive investments, mostly in real



estate, which have their benefits as well. In Germany we have immigration legislation which is rather broad and general. For example you do not have a legally required minimum investment amount, every case is unique, and the German authorities will determine every case individually. Our team essentially “sells” the business idea of our clients to the relevant authorities, who then evaluate the prospects of the business in Germany. This means that this investment route to immigration in Germany is not only open to big business. SMEs also have realistic chances to invest successfully in Germany and to receive a residence permit there. Businesses with a good business plan have realistic chances of investing at as low as €100,000, but most of our clients invest at least €200,000.

#### **How does Citizen Lane help to streamline this process?**

The process can be quite complex. Not only is it difficult to reach the officers responsible, but it is also a challenge because the immigration law in Germany is organised on a municipal or regional level. On one hand, these challenges make it hard for an entrepreneur to manoeuvre through all the steps successfully. However, on the other hand, over the years we at Citizen Lane have worked with multiple immigration authorities in Germany and know the ins and outs of the process. As we go through the negotiation phase with the authorities, we can in most cases even reach a pre-approval from them before we lodge the effective application for the residence permit.

We have over five years’ experience helping businesses expand to Germany and know where the main sticking points are. We also know which parts of the expansion need to be done and in which order, to not only successfully apply for a residence permit, but to also mitigate business and financial risks.

#### **Has Brexit had a negative impact on your business?**

On the contrary, once the UK’s transitional period ends on 31 December 2020, its citizens will need a residence and/or work permit if they want to live or work in any EU member state – and we are prepared to assist our new British clients accordingly.

#### **In your opinion, what advantages do the countries you cover offer potential businesses looking to migrate or expand?**

As we are bringing companies to several jurisdictions there are some differences, but what these jurisdictions all have in common are excellent business opportunities, well-educated staff, and a reliable legal framework. We offer expert immigration advice for the much sought-after jurisdictions of Germany and Austria. They do not have a passive investment route to residency and citizenship, where a minimum investment of €500,000 in property is required like for example in Portugal – instead they welcome entrepreneurs who want to realise

**‘We have over 5 years’ experience helping businesses expand to Germany’**

**Till Neumann, Managing Partner, Citizen Lane**



their dreams of life and of self-employment in Europe, while contributing to their economy.

With our offering in Slovenia, we can offer a low-investment EU residence permit from as low as €50,000 plus VAT and fees. From our office in Malta, we also cater to our (mostly) wealthy clients who want to benefit from the very attractive income tax conditions for individuals and businesses. In Malta, corporate profit tax can be as low as 5% with the right structure, personal income tax can be, if planned correctly, as low as €15,000 per annum, irrespective of the individual’s total worldwide income.

#### **What is your message to businesses who might be considering expanding or relocating?**

Firstly, any business who wants to do business in the EU should have an office to service the market of the European Union; this applies even more so to businesses dealing with consumer goods and e-commerce. As the German-speaking market is the biggest in the EU, it makes sense for many companies to strategically establish their hub in Germany or Austria.

Secondly, as the preparation of a case can take up to several months, we suggest that all our new clients involve us earlier rather than later in the process.

Lastly and most importantly, I assure all our clients that Citizen Lane will guide and support them throughout the whole process. We take pride in what we do, in the experience and in the connections we have gathered over the years. We aim to provide our clients with the best chance of success in their citizenship or residency by investment programme applications across Europe and the rest of the world. ■

**Further information**  
[www.citizen-lane.com](http://www.citizen-lane.com)

**PRIME POSITION**  
(Opposite) The beautiful Brandenburg Gate in Berlin, one of the many European cities in which Citizen Lane specialise