

BUSINESS

Nearly 13,000 Mexicans facing the threat of losing their jobs if the US withdraws from NAFTA

US companies have chosen to stop hiring Mexican workers because of the uncertainty that Trump has generated around NAFTA.

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NICOLAS NADJAR VIA GETTY IMAGES

Mexicans living and working in the United States are not all illegal or criminal, as President Donald Trump has said, on the other hand, there are almost 13,000 professionals trained, with good jobs and who pay the same taxes as a US citizen : they are Workers with a TN visa product of the North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA).

If Donald Trump complies with his threat to get the United States out of NAFTA, those 13,000 professionals could be out of work and forced to return to Mexico. But finding a job similar to what they left in the US will not be easy in our country.

Trump diplomacy: how Trump uses social networks to incite a crisis with Mexico

For 7 years, the engineer René Castañeda, originally from Veracruz, works for a company that produces power generators in the northern United States. He got there as a trainee while he studied the Masters in Mechanics and Electronics, then for his performance he was hired as a full-time employee with a TN visa scheme.

For René, the benefits of being a legal worker in the United States are several: quality of life is better than in Mexico and salaries and work experience make him a more competitive engineer.

"What has kept me here most (in the United States) is the quality of life, the working conditions, the employer respects them. If you carry

out your work efficiently, you can have a relatively flexible schedule. For delivery and work load are different than in Mexico," said Rene.

The city that you tell me in Mexico will always find robberies, assaults, kidnappings, corruption, abuse of authority, that is, the social situation compared to both countries, I would say, it is night and day. It's the fact that we can get to your house at a reasonable time, knowing that your home does not need window protection, knowing there have been no incidents in the area in many years," he said.

Three opportunities for Mexico with Trump coming to power, according to Joseph Stiglitz

TN visas are by themselves a quality filter. In order to apply, you must have a minimum degree in one of the 60 professions included in NAFTA, the majority of physical-mathematical sciences and engineering, and a letter of employment, issued by the company that hires you, specifying the duration, salary, and other legal requirements of the US Department of Homeland Security. The visa lasts 3 years and can be renewed.

But President Trump has made clear that NAFTA must be renegotiated and although it has not formally said anything about withdrawing TN visas, it has threatened to get the United States out of the treaty.

And the workers under this scheme are not few. In 2015, the Visas Office of the United States Consular Affairs Bureau issued 12,996 TN visas, slightly less than double visas in 2012 and triple visas in 2010. In addition, 99% of all TN visas in 2015 they were given to professionals in Mexico and only 0.7%, 97 visas, to workers from Canada.

Meanwhile, US companies have chosen to stop hiring Mexican workers because of the uncertainty that Trump has generated about

whether to modify or cancel the agreement, said Rosana Berardi, a lawyer with Berardi Immigration Law in New York.

"Since Donald Trump became President of the United States a couple of weeks ago, our phones keep ringing. People call asking what will happen, how they will impact executive orders, we have talked to businesses and companies about whether they should Or not hire people. Everyone is worried, "he said.

And **companies** , says the lawyer, choose to " **stop the hiring of Mexicans and Canadians or someone foreign** until they are sure what the president wants to do."

This says Carlos Salinas on the renegotiation of NAFTA

Trump has not talked about ousting legal workers when he mentioned changes in the NAFTA renegotiation, but making the options to stay in the United States is very few.

"No matter what happens, if you are in the United States with a work permit and you lose your job or if something else happens, you would have to reapply to be able to stay ... if someone loses their job, they would apply for a visa To stay as a visitor to gain time either to find another job or to pack and return home. In either case, you would have to do something, you can not just sit and wait, "said the lawyer.

And for Mexico to receive almost 13 thousand professionals from the United States would not be easy.

"One would think that they are people with skilled labor and can be inserted in the labor market, but it depends on the demand of those workers in Mexico ... In the short term, definitely the people who return will not find work fast and It may be that in the long run if they find work and are joining, but with lower wages than the ones they earned in the United States, "said Luis Munguía, an expert in Labor Economics and a PhD candidate at the University of California Irvine.

And the United States will also be affected, because the costs of dismissing Mexican professionals and hiring new employees generates costs, Munguía says, that in the end will be reflected in the prices of products and, with it, an increase in inflation.

"A lot of companies have Mexican workers because some, because they can pay less, and some because they are just qualified people. So it creates a mess in the American economy because companies have to find ways to replace those workers. Very expensive for US companies," Munguía said.

As Trump and his team decide how NAFTA will be renegotiated, employers have stopped hiring migrants, and Mexican workers expect TN visas to not disappear to retain their jobs in the US.

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