

Mobility: Immigration alert

September 2021



United Kingdom

The UK publishes the roadmap for reforming its immigration sponsorship program

Executive summary

The Home Office has re-confirmed its commitment to restructuring its immigration sponsorship program by publishing a [roadmap](#) that details changes implemented to date and future program enhancements. Additionally, starting on 1 October 2021, citizens of European Union (EU) and European Economic Area (EEA) member states will require valid passports to enter the UK unless they qualify for an exemption.

Background

In May 2021, the Home Secretary shared details of the Government's plan to restructure and digitize the UK immigration sponsorship program. A reform of the program was required to streamline the processing of immigration applications, reduce processing times, improve customer experiences, and alleviate the administrative burden for employers and applicants. For more information, click [here](#).

Some of the changes to date include the elimination of the Resident Labour Market Test (which reduces processing times by at least four weeks), a decrease in the entry level salary requirements for applicants and a suspension of the annual cap under the Skilled Worker category, greater flexibility to switch between immigration routes from within the UK, the introduction of a new Graduate route for foreign nationals who successfully obtain a UK degree, and a fully digitized system for EU, EEA and Swiss nationals applying under the new scheme.

Future upgrades to the UK's immigration and IT systems

The UK Government is planning to transform its IT system over the coming two years and launch a pilot program with a limited number of UK employers/sponsors, with a view to transitioning all UK sponsors to the new IT system by 2024.

Additional improvements to the immigration sponsorship program include an enhanced Skilled Worker eligibility checking tool, a new salary-checking feature that is linked to Her Majesty's Revenue and Customs records, and a new unsponsored, points-based route to attract top talent.

These future enhancements, along with the current reform of the sponsorship program, will continue to drive stakeholder engagement with the immigration authorities and lead to a more streamlined, efficient and accessible program.

New passport requirements for EU/EEA/Swiss nationals

Effective 1 October 2021, EU, EEA, and Swiss nationals will only be permitted to enter the UK with a valid passport issued by Switzerland or an EU or EEA member state.

National identification cards will no longer be accepted as travel documents in instances of travel to the UK from Switzerland, the EU and the EEA. EU, EEA and Swiss nationals holding pre or settled status under the EU Settlement Scheme (EUSS), and those who have a pending application under the EUSS, will continue to be able to use

their national ID cards to enter the UK until at least 31 December 2025. Additional exemptions are also available. For more information, click [here](#).

Key steps

EY will continue to monitor these developments. Should you have any questions, we encourage you to contact one of our immigration professionals.

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EYG no. 007705-21Gbl

2101-3682263
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