

Global Immigration Trends and Highlights

July to September 2024



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Overview

This document provides a snapshot of corporate immigration developments worldwide. It is designed to support conversations regarding policies that have been proposed or implemented in key jurisdictions in the Americas, Asia-Pacific and EMEIA (Europe, Middle East, India, Africa) regions.

Policy changes across the globe are being proposed and implemented daily. This document is updated on a quarterly basis. Not all jurisdictions are reflected in this document. The contents of the articles linked herein are true and accurate as of their publication dates and have not been updated from the time of publication.

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For the latest immigration updates, see [here](#). For further guidance or information regarding immigration policies and/or requirements in specific jurisdictions, contact the EY professional with whom you work.

At a glance



Shawn Orme

EY Global Immigration Leader

[EY People Profile](#)

Comprehensive changes in immigration legislation: Australia continues to implement some of the most significant updates to its immigration laws in decades, while Ireland introduced a new Act which is expected to modernize its Employment Permits system and reduce administrative obligations for employers. New Zealand has initiated an overhaul of its immigration system following a change in government in late 2023 and a report released earlier in 2024 regarding its accredited employer framework. In Germany, recent reforms will make it easier for third-country nationals to obtain citizenship.

New policies to fill skills gaps with highly skilled workers: Multiple jurisdictions launched, or plan to launch, new visas and permits for highly skilled talent (Australia, Mauritius). In Europe, additional countries (Luxembourg, Netherlands, Slovakia) simplified the requirements for Blue Card applicants, in line with the revised EU Blue Card Directive.

Reduced reliance on foreign labor and enhanced compliance measures: Several governments took steps to reduce their reliance on foreign workers (Oman, the UK) and conduct stricter compliance checks (Finland, Poland). Others introduced new requirements for employers, including more rigorous inspections for labor market impact assessments (Canada) and greater scrutiny of applications (New Zealand).

Digital transformation of immigration processes: The trend toward adopting digital solutions to simplify processes and improve efficiency continues to grow. Authorities in multiple locations launched online systems to streamline application processing (Malaysia, Singapore), apostille services (Ecuador) and the admission of specific travelers (Hong Kong, Macau). The EU expects to launch its Entry/Exit System (EES) in November 2024, while Thailand, Israel and the UK plan to introduce (or expand the use of) Electronic Travel Authorization (ETA) systems in late 2024 or 2025.

Looking ahead, voters in over 20 jurisdictions are set to go to polls in the last quarter of 2024, with immigration at the forefront of the political discourse. In the EU, recent elections and rising anti-immigrant sentiment have shifted immigration policy and resulted in stronger controls for foreign workers in several countries. In the US, the November 2024 presidential and congressional races may lead to changes that could significantly impact the workforce and operations of organizations that rely on foreign workers, regardless of the election outcome.

The demand for globally agile working remains high, and an increasing number of jurisdictions are creating processes for hyper-mobile workers known as digital nomads. Check out the [EY Global Immigration Index: remote work and digital nomads](#) which provides employers and employees practical information to weigh the opportunities and risks of remote work.





Americas

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Geopolitical events continue to impact immigration policy, with contested election results in Venezuela leading to diplomatic tensions, travel suspensions and disruptions in application processing across the region. Elections were also recently completed in Mexico and Panama, and soon expected in Canada, Uruguay and the US. The rapidly changing political landscape in the Americas region will likely result in further changes in immigration policy.

– George Reis, EY Americas Immigration Leader, *EY People Profile*



New immigration laws/policies

- ▶ [Canada](#) announced that it will tighten certain eligibility requirements of the Temporary Foreign Worker, International Student and Post-Graduation Work Permit (PGWP) Programs. These additional measures are being implemented in an effort by the government to reduce the number of temporary residents in Canada, reinforce the integrity of the PGWP and protect foreign nationals working temporarily in Canada. These measures are expected to come into effect in the upcoming months.
- ▶ [Venezuela](#) ordered diplomatic representatives from Argentina, Chile, Costa Rica, the Dominican Republic, Panama, Peru and Uruguay to leave Venezuela and recalled Venezuelan diplomatic personnel posted in these countries. The decision has led to disruptions in immigration procedures at the Venezuelan consulates located in these countries, as well as the consulates of these countries located in Venezuela.

Employer obligations/benefits

- ▶ [Canada](#) announced changes to the Temporary Foreign Worker Program (TFWP) to reduce fraud by strengthening integrity measures and ultimately safeguarding the Canadian labor market. The changes include increased scrutiny and more rigorous inspections for Labour Market Impact Assessments (LMIAs), particularly in so-called “high-risk” sectors, as well as consideration of higher LMIA application fees to fund enhanced integrity measures and processing. In addition, [Canada](#) announced it will not process applications in the low wage stream for certain regions and sectors.

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Individual obligations/benefits

- ▶ [Argentina](#) implemented a new temporary regulation that aims to support Venezuelan nationals with regularizing their residence status in the country. The regulation impacts Venezuelan nationals who are currently outside Argentina and seek to enter and reside in the country, those who are currently in Argentina unlawfully (i.e., without valid Argentinian documents), as well as those who are in Argentina lawfully and need to extend their authorization but hold expired Venezuelan identification documents (e.g., passports, identity cards).
- ▶ [Brazil](#) announced that individuals who require a visa to enter Brazil based on their nationality (i.e., visa nationals) must obtain an entry visa prior to transiting through the country, irrespective of the duration of their transit. [Brazil](#) also announced that as of September 2024, several categories of foreign nationals who have applied for visas or permits are facing delays in completing immigration processes due to delays in obtaining appointment slots with the authorities in São Paulo.
- ▶ [Brazil](#) simplified the document requirements for qualifying foreign investors and employees of certain companies who apply for residence authorization. In addition, foreign students who complete qualifying undergraduate or postgraduate studies in [Brazil](#) can now apply for residence authorization for work purposes.
- ▶ [Canada](#) announced the introduction of a new Francophone Minority Communities Student Pilot program (FMCSP) for French-speaking foreign nationals from certain countries. The FMCSP aims to facilitate the obtaining of a Study Permit by integrating into Francophone minority communities outside Quebec. The pilot program will provide individuals access to settlement services during their studies, as well as open options for permanent residence eligibility after graduation.
- ▶ [Ecuador](#) launched a platform that enables individuals to access visa and apostille services electronically. The new platform is available to individuals located in any region. They can complete the entire visa application and apostille processes online and do not need to visit an Ecuadorian consulate or embassy to do so.
- ▶ [Panama](#) implemented changes to the “Sedes de Empresas Multinacionales” (SEM) Visa application process for primary applicants and their dependents. These changes require certain individuals to submit applications directly to the Secretariat of Multinational Company Headquarters, without applying for prior review and entry authorization from the Security Council.
- ▶ The [United States](#) introduced a parole in place program called “Keeping Families Together” to allow certain noncitizen spouses and children of US citizens to apply for lawful permanent residence without first being required to leave the country and risk separation. The US Citizenship and Immigration Services (USCIS) released Form I-131F, Application for Parole in Place for Certain Noncitizen Spouses and Stepchildren of US Citizens, and an accompanying guide to assist applicants in preparing a request for parole in place through the online system.

Looking ahead

- ▶ [Costa Rica](#) will introduce changes to its consular registration and fingerprinting requirements for individuals who apply for temporary residence or Special Category Visas effective 1 July 2025.
- ▶ [Israel](#) will implement the Electronic Travel Authorization (ETA) system for all visa-exempt foreign nationals who seek to undertake short-term visits to the country for business or tourism purposes in January 2025. The ETA system was initially expected to go into effect in August 2024.

Asia-Pacific

New immigration laws/policies

- ▶ [Australia](#) continues with its rollout of the Migration Strategy and implemented additional changes to its immigration policies, including amendments to further protect migrant workers from exploitation and a new statewide Designated Area Migration Agreement for Western Australia to facilitate the entry of up to 5,000 employer-sponsored skilled migrants per year. A bill was also introduced into Australia's parliament containing details about the new employer-sponsored Skills in Demand visa, which will replace the Temporary Skill Shortage Visa. This bill is yet to be passed by the Australian parliament.
 - ▶ [Malaysia](#) introduced several immigration changes, including increasing fees and reducing processing timelines for various work authorization applications (e.g., Employment Pass, Professional Visit Pass), and launching a Pass collection facility at the Kuala Lumpur International Airport (KLIA) Terminal 2.
 - ▶ [Thailand](#) implemented amendments to its immigration policies, including new visa regulations impacting business visitors (e.g., visa exemptions for nationals of 90 jurisdictions and extension of the authorized stay period for eligible visa-free nationals) and the introduction of a new visa for remote workers called the "Destination Thailand Visa."
- must ensure that their employees' tax ID number on both the MoM system and the MOLINA portal match and, if necessary, make necessary updates.
- ▶ [Malaysia](#)'s Expatriate Services Division (ESD) launched a new online system for submitting Sub Product applications (i.e., Transfer of Endorsement, Take-up Balance, Amendment of an Approved Application, Shortening of Pass, Cancellation of a Submitted Application, Permission to Study, Permission to Work at Second Location). The system was temporarily suspended three days after its launch in June 2024. The ESD is gradually redeploying services on the platform in phases.
 - ▶ The [Philippines](#) announced that holders of valid 9(g) Commercial Visas who are promoted within their current companies are no longer required to downgrade their 9(g) Visa to a 9(a) Temporary Visitor's Visa or convert to another 9(g) Commercial Visa. Instead, employers must apply to extend the validity period of these individuals' current 9(g) Visas.
 - ▶ [Vietnam](#)'s Ho Chi Minh City People's Committee began processing several types of work authorization applications filed by eligible companies, which were previously being processed by the Ministry of Labor, Invalids and Social Affairs (MOLISA) located in Hanoi City. To be eligible, companies must be registered in Ho Chi Minh City and have valid company licenses issued by relevant authorities (e.g., appropriate ministries, government or ministerial-level agencies).

Employer obligations/benefits

- ▶ [Indonesia](#) announced that foreign nationals who are issued a work permit from the Ministry of Manpower (MoM) must apply for a work visa through the website of the Modul Lalu Lintas Orang Asing (MOLINA) using an appropriate index, instead of applying through the MoM system. To do this, employers



Individual obligations/benefits

- ▶ [China Mainland](#) announced that non-Chinese nationals with permanent residency in Hong Kong or Macau can now apply for China Mainland travel permits, which will facilitate business travel. These permits are valid for up to five years and allow holders to stay in the jurisdiction for up to 90 days per entry for various purposes, including business, investment or visiting family. [China Mainland](#) also introduced simplified visa application processes, including a new online portal and suspension of fingerprint requirements for qualifying individuals.
- ▶ [Hong Kong](#) introduced a new “Mutual Use of QR Code between HK SAR and Macau SAR Clearance Service,” which aims to streamline the immigration clearance process for eligible permanent residents of Macau. These individuals may now use the “Macao One Account” mobile application to generate an encrypted QR code when entering Hong Kong, instead of presenting physical documents at border checkpoints.
- ▶ [Indonesia](#) introduced a visa-free policy for nationals of Colombia and Suriname, Hong Kong residents and holders of Singaporean permanent residence permits. These individuals may now enter without a visa for certain business activities, as well as family visits or tourism, and transit through the country without a visa. [Indonesia](#) also reintroduced a Health Pass requirement for foreign nationals entering the country, in response to growing concerns about Mpox.
- ▶ [Japan](#) expanded the list of Ukrainian nationals who are eligible to obtain multiple-entry short-term visas to enter the country for business and other purposes. The updated list includes family members of Ukrainian nationals who arrived in Japan following the outbreak of the conflict in Ukraine and are now residing in Japan, as well as full-time employees of Ukrainian companies involved in cooperation projects between Japan and Ukraine.
- ▶ [Macau](#) introduced a new online entry system for certain Hong Kong permanent residents traveling to Macau. These individuals can generate an encrypted QR code through the “Contactless e-Channel” mobile app and present the code to border officials when entering Macau, instead of presenting physical documents.
- ▶ [Singapore](#) implemented changes to its regulations governing Student’s Pass holders, including making it possible for these individuals to apply for Singapore Permanent Residence (SPR) earlier than previously. Singapore also simplified the use of its online application portal for several categories of immigration applicants, including SPR applicants.
- ▶ [South Korea](#) announced that qualifying family members of D-8 Corporate Investment Visa applicants who submit their applications at the Korea Trade-Investment Promotion Agency office must now file their F-3 Dependent Visa applications along with the primary applicant’s D-8 Visa application.

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With emerging technologies and generative AI opening up new possibilities, governments across the Asia-Pacific region are on the brink of their own transformative evolution. This quarter has seen the launch of online portals (Malaysia), QR code system entry (Hong Kong and Macau) and enhanced digitization in visa applications (Singapore) to build capability toward data-based governance and controls. The possibilities and value include automated actions (with human oversight), better outcomes in managing risk, clear business rules aligned to regulations and a shift from reacting to scaling. The transformation will enable targeted enforcement, and companies should begin preparing use cases to address the impact.

– Linda Rowe, EY Asia-Pacific Immigration Leader



Looking ahead

- ▶ [Australia](#)’s National Innovation Visa (NIV) is scheduled for implementation by December 2024 and may include an investment visa pathway.
- ▶ [New Zealand](#) is expected to implement additional recommendations of the review of the Accredited Employer Work Visa (AEWV) framework, potentially including a revised Employer Accreditation model that rewards low risk and good employer practices and removal of the need to complete a Job Check when a foreign national changes employers.
- ▶ [Singapore](#)’s updated salary benchmarks under the points-based Complementarity Assessment (COMPASS) framework will apply to new Employment Pass (EP) applications effective 1 January 2025, and to renewal applications for EPs expiring on or after 1 July 2025.

Europe

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Multiple countries stepped up enforcement efforts to ensure that foreign nationals engage only in authorized activities. Finland began conducting automated immigration compliance checks of foreign specialists. Poland announced an increase in immigration compliance controls for business visitors and workers, with fines, bans and other penalties in cases of non-compliance.

– Seema Farazi, EY EMEA Immigration Leader, *EY People Profile*



New immigration laws/policies

- ▶ [Finland](#) began conducting automated immigration compliance checks of eligible foreign specialists who hold residence permits. [Finland](#) also introduced stricter application requirements for most residence permit applicants, including the requirement to submit applications in their home country.
- ▶ In [Ireland](#), the Employment Permits Act 2024 introduces new measures and simplified processes for non-EEA employment permit applicants and holders. The Act is a consolidation of previous Irish employment permit legislations and aims to modernize the system.
- ▶ [Luxembourg](#) and the [Netherlands](#) simplified their laws governing EU Blue Cards, including reducing the minimum salary requirement for applicants and relaxing educational requirements.
- ▶ [Poland](#) announced that it will increase the number of immigration compliance controls, as well as controls in connection with the EU Posted Worker Directive, relating to foreign business visitors and workers in the country.
- ▶ [Sweden](#) announced plans to appoint an investigator to propose stricter regulations governing the issuance of residence permits to family members of residence permit holders. A [bill](#) was also presented to parliament proposing simplified application requirements for EU Blue Card applicants.
- ▶ The [UK](#)'s Home Secretary wrote to the Migration Advisory Committee, requesting that it look at reliance on global talent in the Information Technology and Telecommunications sector and the Engineering sector, to understand the reasons behind high reliance on global talent in these sectors.

Employer obligations/benefits

- ▶ The [Czech Republic](#) updated certain regulations impacting employers of third-country nationals, including automatically removing vacancies from the national database after a period (instead of keeping them active indefinitely) and mandating a digital process for the information obligation requirement.
- ▶ [Poland](#) introduced significant changes to its regulations concerning Ukrainian citizens residing in the country and their employers. These changes are expected to streamline the employment process for local companies by providing them access to a wider pool of foreign talent.

Individual obligations/benefits

- ▶ [Denmark](#) proposed extending the Special Act on displaced persons from Ukraine until March 2026. [Denmark](#) also announced that employment contracts submitted as part of the residence and work permit application process must state the applicant's salary in Danish kroner.





- ▶ The [EU](#) extended the Temporary Protection Directive for the protection of individuals impacted by the crisis in Ukraine until 4 March 2026. The [EU](#) also introduced a visa-free policy for certain Serbian nationals who enter the Schengen Area.
- ▶ [Germany](#) introduced a reform to its citizenship law that makes it easier for third-country nationals to obtain German citizenship. Among other changes, the new law reduces the lead time required for applicants to become German citizens and allows these individuals (as well as German nationals) to hold multiple citizenships. [Germany](#) also reintroduced border controls at its land checkpoints with additional countries for a period of six months. Border officials will conduct checks on a random basis at the discretion of the authorities.
- ▶ [Hungary](#) expanded the list of countries whose citizens can apply for National Cards and released the list of countries whose nationals are eligible to apply for Guest Worker Permits.
- ▶ [Ireland](#) announced that nationals of Botswana and South Africa must now obtain a visa prior to entering the country for business and other purposes or transiting through the country.
- ▶ The [Netherlands](#)' labor and immigration authorities announced that they will take longer to process applications for work and residence authorization filed during the summer period (i.e., July 2024 to September 2024). In addition, the immigration authorities relaxed the requirements for Intra-Corporate Transferee (ICT) Permit holders who seek to obtain new ICT Permits.
- ▶ [Portugal](#) extended the validity of documents (e.g., visas and permits) that grant permission to reside and work within the country until 30 June 2025.
- ▶ [Slovakia](#) introduced several immigration changes, simplifying the application requirements for EU Blue Card and long-term residence permit applicants.
- ▶ [Slovenia](#)'s administrative units, including immigration department personnel, resumed normal operations in early July 2024 after an almost eight-week strike.
- ▶ [Spain](#) introduced a new visa requirement for most Mauritian passport holders transiting through Spain, irrespective of the duration of their transit.
- ▶ [Türkiye](#) announced that eligible individuals who apply for a Turkish residence permit via a notary public office are no longer required to attend an appointment as part of the application process. [Türkiye](#) also introduced a new visa-free policy for Iraqi business visitors over the age of 50.

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With the conflict in Ukraine approaching its third year, the EU extended its Temporary Protection Directive for impacted individuals for the third time. At a national level, Poland extended the period of temporary protection and introduced other benefits for impacted individuals, while Denmark is considering extending its Special Act on displaced persons from Ukraine.

– Ben J Willis, EY EMEA Immigration Leader, [EY People Profile](#)



Looking ahead

- ▶ The [EU](#) announced it is expecting to introduce the Entry/Exit System (EES) on 10 November 2024. However, several countries have notified that they may need more time to prepare for its launch. The EES was initially set to be introduced in October 2022, but its launch was delayed due to IT issues and concerns about border controls.
- ▶ The [UK](#) will extend the Electronic Travel Authorization Scheme to non-European nationals who travel to the UK on or after 8 January 2025, and to certain other individuals who travel to the UK on or after 2 April 2025.



Africa, Middle East and SAARC (South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation)

New immigration laws/policies

- ▶ [Qatar](#) issued a law that aims to boost the participation of the national workforce in private sector institutions and companies by creating new employment and career opportunities for Qatari nationals. The Law is expected to go into effect six months after its publication in the Official Gazette.
- ▶ [South Africa](#) announced that Zimbabwe Exemption Permit holders seeking to apply for General Work Visas are no longer required to obtain a recommendation letter from the Department of Employment and Labour prior to applying, or submit proof of educational qualifications assessed by the South African Qualifications Authority as part of their application.
- ▶ [Pakistan](#) introduced significant visa reforms, including visa fee waivers for eligible business visitors from 126 countries and a visa waiver for nationals of the Gulf Cooperation Council Member States who seek to visit Pakistan for business or tourism purposes.
- ▶ [Qatar](#) announced that the Visa Support Services Department of the General Directorate of Passports now offers new services, including medical examinations, to temporary work visa and multiple-entry work visa applicants at Qatar Visa Centers (QVC) abroad.
- ▶ [South Africa](#) extended the temporary blanket concession period until 31 December 2024 for eligible individuals whose Long-Term Visa, waiver or appeal applications were pending adjudication as of 30 June 2024. The extension applies to individuals who submitted Long-Term Visa, waiver or appeal applications on or before 30 June 2024 and did not receive a decision as of that date.

Employer obligations/benefits

- ▶ [Oman](#) restricted additional categories of professions for foreign nationals. The new restrictions will be applied in phases. Oman also suspended for six months the issuance of permits to individuals working in specific professions, with some exceptions subject to the discretion of the authorities.
- ▶ [Sri Lanka](#) indefinitely suspended its new e-Visa system in early August 2024 based on an order by the Supreme Court. In late September 2024, Sri Lanka reinstated its Electronic Travel Authorization (ETA) system for all short-term visitors.

Individual obligations/benefits

- ▶ [Mauritius](#) recently introduced the new Expert Occupation Permit for highly qualified professionals and reduced the salary threshold for foreign professionals who seek to apply for Occupation Permits.

Looking ahead

- ▶ [Pakistan](#) will introduce a new visa-free policy for qualifying residents of China Mainland. This policy will go into effect once the Pakistan government issues a formal notification confirming this change.

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