

Global Immigration Trends and Highlights

January to March 2025



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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](#)

Local elections, global ramifications. In the first three months of the new US administration, a series of executive orders signaled the start of a new era defined by significantly more restrictive immigration policies. With elections this year in Canada, Germany, Japan, Poland and elsewhere, similar measures are expected globally as governments amend their immigration frameworks to adapt to the evolving geopolitical landscape. Rising anti-immigrant sentiment and stricter immigration policies will continue to impact organizations' talent strategy and their ability to attract highly skilled workers in 2025.

Protecting local labor markets and workforces. Governments worldwide remain focused on balancing the competing priorities of filling labor market gaps and safeguarding local workforces. Some jurisdictions opened their labor markets to additional categories of foreigners by relaxing conditions related to eligibility (Australia) and age (Singapore) or removing work authorization requirements altogether for certain individuals (Azerbaijan, the Czech Republic). Other countries restricted work authorization pathways by tightening requirements for sponsors (Philippines) and applicants (Canada). Increases in minimum salary requirements (Austria, Finland, Türkiye) will further influence costs associated with sponsoring foreign workers.

Increased compliance and regulatory oversight. 2024 was marked by a heightened focus on compliance checks, stricter application scrutiny and restrictions on the inflow of foreigners in a growing number of jurisdictions. This trend continued in early 2025, with governments introducing new sponsor requirements relating to registration and data sharing (Australia), and empowering official bodies to drive compliance (Portugal, the US). The UK recorded a 350% increase in the number of Skilled Worker Licences revoked in 2024, and the number for 2025 is expected to remain high.

Digitization and automation. Technology remains both an enabler and a tracking tool in the immigration space. On one hand, new digitization initiatives are being deployed to streamline processes for individuals and employers, from the application phase (Hong Kong) until document issuance (Malaysia). On the other, a growing number of jurisdictions (the EU, the UK) announced plans to adopt or enhance electronic entry authorization systems, which will increase administrative requirements and costs for both individuals and employers.

Business visitors and remote workers. A constant flux in policies governing these groups signals an ongoing strategic effort to balance workforce mobility with economic interests. Kosovo introduced, and Malaysia expanded, visa-free schemes for qualifying business visitors this quarter. Meanwhile, Taiwan joined a growing list of jurisdictions that offer exclusive pathways to remote workers. New Zealand implemented policy changes to enhance the benefits available to both these groups by allowing business visitors to work remotely from the country.

For more insights, check out the latest edition of the [Global Immigration Index](#): remote work and digital nomads, and what a [mature "digital nomad" ecosystem](#) tells us about workforce mobility's future. Watch [this EY webcast](#) on the impact of recent executive actions in the US and read this [US Travel Guide](#) for 2025. Also explore the [Colombia immigration chapter](#) of Invest in Bogota's 2025 Foreign Investment Guide (prepared by Ernst & Young S.A.S), and EY professionals' commentary on the immigration landscape in [Denmark](#) and [Poland](#).



Americas

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The first quarter of 2025 saw the introduction of increased immigration restrictions across the Americas, reflecting an ongoing shift toward protectionism and tighter migration controls. The US passed stricter border security and deportation measures, and Canada tightened work permit eligibility for certain applicants. These changes signal a more complex compliance landscape for companies, with more changes likely to come.

– George Reis, EY Americas Immigration Leader, [EY People Profile](#)



New immigration laws/policies

- [Canada](#) amended the rules governing the Express Entry system, the primary application management tool for Canada’s key economic permanent residence programs for skilled workers. The policy change impacts foreign nationals seeking permanent residence in Canada, as well as employers, foreign workers with active Express Entry profiles, and prospective applicants.
- In the [United States](#), Donald Trump was sworn in as President for a second term in January 2025. He issued a series of executive actions which laid out his policy and enforcement priorities for the new administration, many of which have an impact on immigration. These include a restrictive approach to immigration and refugee admissions, tightening of border security, increasing enforcement measures and challenging birthright citizenship.
- [US](#) President Donald Trump also signed an Executive Order (EO) to intensify measures to combat anti-Semitism. The EO mandates the use of “all available and appropriate legal tools, to prosecute, remove or otherwise” hold accountable individuals who have engaged in anti-Semitic harassment and violence. The text focuses on foreign national students and staff at institutions of higher education in the United States.
- [US](#) President Donald Trump signed another Executive Order (EO) to safeguard national security and public safety through stricter enforcement of immigration laws. Among other directives, the EO instructs the Department of Homeland Security to ensure that foreign nationals comply with their duty to register and provide fingerprints, and that the failure to do so be treated as a civil and criminal enforcement priority. To facilitate compliance, the US Citizenship and Immigration Services announced a new registration process.

Employer obligations/benefits

- [US](#) Citizenship and Immigration Services (USCIS) announced that the initial registration period for

the fiscal year (FY) 2026 H-1B Cap ran from 7 to 24 March 2025. During this period, prospective petitioners and representatives were able to complete and submit registrations using the agency's online H-1B registration system. USCIS intends to conduct the selection process and notify prospective petitioners and representatives by 31 March. If selected, a petitioner is eligible to file an H-1B cap-subject petition during the associated filing period, which will be reflected on the selection notice from USCIS.

Individual obligations/benefits

- The [Brazilian](#) authorities are considering reinstating the electronic visa (e-Visa) requirement for nationals of Australia, Canada and the United States who seek to travel to Brazil for business purposes. These individuals may be required to obtain an e-Visa as of 10 April 2025.
- [Canada](#) introduced new eligibility criteria for certain accompanying family members of temporary foreign workers who seek to apply for open work permits. These changes, which limit the availability of open work permits to a smaller number of dependents of foreign workers and international students, are part of the general tightening in restrictions in Canadian immigration introduced in the last year and designed to reduce immigration levels between 2025 and 2027.
- In the [United States](#), the settlement agreement reached in *Edakunni, et al. v. Mayorkas*, No. 21-cv-393-TL (W.D. Wash.) expired. This signifies that the US Citizenship and Immigration Services (USCIS) is no longer required to simultaneously adjudicate Form I-539, Application to Change or Extend Status, and Form I-765, Application for Employment Authorization, applications submitted by H-4 and L-2 visa holders with their spouse's H-1B and L-1 petitions. While the expiry of this agreement does not require that USCIS discontinue bundling adjudication of these case types, it is reasonable to expect that the agency will do so.
- [US](#) consular posts also introduced new criteria for nonimmigrant visa applicants seeking a waiver of the in-person interview requirement for visa renewals, informing applicants who had already secured a waiver that they are now required to schedule an in-person appointment.
- The [United States](#) Department of Homeland Security introduced a [new registration form](#) for certain foreign nationals to monitor compliance with statutory requirements for alien registration and fingerprinting provisions. Dual Canadian/US citizens will not be impacted by this new requirement as long as they have evidence of their US citizenship. Effective 11 April 2025, foreign nationals may register using the revised G-325R Biographic Information (Registration) form.

Looking ahead

- The [United States](#) the Department of Homeland Security (DHS) announced that the temporary period of parole previously granted to certain Cuban, Haitian, Nicaraguan, and Venezuelan (CHNV) nationals would be terminated on 24 April 2025 unless the Secretary of DHS makes an individual determination to the contrary. Parolees whose grant of parole expires on 24 April as a result of this announcement, or before, must depart the United States before their parole termination date if they are not able to apply for another lawful status.

Asia-Pacific

New immigration laws/policies

- [Australia](#) implemented significant changes to employer sponsored visas. Notably, the temporary Subclass 482 Skills in Demand (SID) visa replaced the Subclass 482 Temporary Skills Shortage (TSS) visa, and pathways to employer sponsored permanent residence were further expanded. While Australia continues to execute its new Migration Strategy, further significant changes in the immigration portfolio are not expected prior to the upcoming federal elections.
- [New Zealand](#) introduced new visa conditions that allow holders of all types of Visitor Visas to work remotely for an overseas employer or client while performing their intended lawful purpose in the jurisdiction. This policy change broadens the scope of activities permitted under the Visitor Visa guidelines, rather than creating a new visa category.

Employer obligations/benefits

- [Hong Kong](#) introduced a new application fee and increased the visa fees for most visa schemes and application types.
- [Japan](#) increased the processing fees for certain immigration applications, including for certificates of eligibility for employment. This change is expected to impact companies that employ foreign nationals in Japan or send impacted individuals to the country for business purposes.
- The [Philippines](#) implemented significant changes to its regulations governing the issuance of Alien Employment Permits (AEPs). These changes include reduced processing fees for new AEP applications,

as well as new employment vacancy advertisement requirements for employers.

Individual obligations/benefits

- [Hong Kong](#) announced that individuals who seek to obtain new entry visas or extend their existing visas under certain admission policies/schemes can no longer file their applications in person, by mail or via application submission boxes. Instead, they must do so through the Hong Kong Immigration Department's website or mobile app or the Hong Kong SAR government's website.
- [Malaysia](#) extended the visa exemption period for India and China nationals until 31 December 2026. With the new extension, nationals of these two jurisdictions can continue to enter Malaysia without an entry visa for up to 30 days for purposes other than work or study (including business visits). [Malaysia](#) also began issuing electronic passes (i.e., ePASS) instead of physical stickers for new applications filed under certain immigration categories. This change is expected to streamline the immigration process for eligible individuals.
- [Malaysia](#) introduced a new Investor Pass to streamline the entry process for foreign investors and facilitate long-term stays for these individuals. The new Pass allows holders to visit Malaysia multiple times for up to six months, with the possibility of extending their stay for an additional six months. Holders cannot bring in dependents.
- [Singapore](#)'s Ministry of Manpower announced several updates to the country's foreign workforce



policy. These changes include increased salary requirements for S Pass holders, simplification of the Work Permit regulations and expansion of the Manpower for Strategic Economic Priorities (M-SEP) Scheme.

- [Taiwan](#) began accepting applications for its new Digital Nomad Visa. This visa offers an entry and stay pathway for foreign professionals who are employed by companies located outside Taiwan or engaged in self-operated international businesses.

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Inter-regional migration is a continued focus across Asia-Pacific and governments have sought to strategically balance a growing demand for skilled workers, particularly in technology, with reinforced compliance and governance measures to ensure strict controls. Australia, New Zealand, and Taiwan continued to reform employer-sponsored visas and expand work pathways, while Malaysia extended visa exemptions to facilitate greater business travel. Hong Kong and Japan raised visa fees, increasing immigration-related expenses for companies, and further funding government initiatives on compliance.



– Linda Rowe, EY Asia-Pacific Immigration Leader

Looking ahead

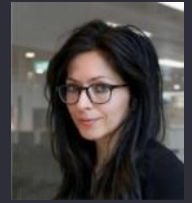
- [Malaysia's](#) Ministry of Human Resources expects to formally implement the 1:3 Internship Policy (which was recently launched on a pilot basis) on 1 January 2026. Under this policy, impacted Malaysian companies must recruit a certain number of students as interns for each foreign national they employ. The new policy aims to balance the employment of foreign nationals with local talent development.

Europe

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Recent changes in the EMEA region reflect a growing focus on economic resilience through skilled migration and regulatory modernization. Portugal sought to align its national policies with EU standards, Saudi Arabia passed reforms targeting its specific local labor needs, and Ireland introduced a new visa for workers in specific industries.

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



New immigration laws/policies

- [Cyprus](#)' Ministry of Labour provided clarifications regarding the salary requirements and list of eligible professions for third-country nationals who seek to apply for an EU Blue Card.
- [Hungary](#) announced changes to its regulations governing the issuance of Guest Worker Permits, including updates to eligibility and quota requirements and permit fees.
- [Ireland](#) published regulations governing the issuance of the new Seasonal Employment Permit (SEP) for non-EEA nationals who seek to undertake seasonally recurring work in the country. The authorities began accepting applications for this permit in February 2025.
- [Portugal](#) amended the Portuguese Immigration Law to modernize the country's immigration framework and align national practices with EU standards. Some of the amendments include a change to align the process for Community of Portuguese Language Countries (CPLP) nationals with the general immigration rules.
- The [Romanian](#) government approved a law that aims to reform the acquisition of Romanian citizenship. The amendments establish new requirements for applicants and modernize the application process, with the goal of improving accessibility and efficiency.
- The [Swedish](#) government tasked the Swedish Migration Agency with proposing a list of professions that should be exempt from an upcoming increase in salary requirements. The aim of this assignment is to streamline labor migration to fill critical skills gaps in the Swedish market. In addition, [Sweden's](#) parliament voted to suspend the Track Change Permit and amend the statutory limitation period for deported individuals.
- The [Swiss](#) National Council and Council of States rejected an initiative that would have made it easier for Swiss nationals to sponsor their foreign parents to obtain Swiss residence authorization. Additionally, Switzerland is considering relaxing the requirements for certain third-country nationals who seek to enter the local labor market and extending the integration measures for individuals impacted by the armed conflict in Ukraine.
- The [UK](#) published a policy paper on the introduction of a new process to automatically convert the pre-settled status for eligible individuals to settled status, without the need for them to file an application. This change aims to make the process of acquiring settled status more streamlined and straightforward for qualifying individuals.
- The [UK](#) government also published the Statement of Changes to the Immigration Rules HC 733, introducing a Visit Visa requirement for nationals of Trinidad and Tobago and updates to the EU Settlement Scheme (EUSS), Skilled Worker provisions and Appendix Electronic Travel Authorisation (ETA), among others.





Employer obligations/benefits

- [Austria](#), [Finland](#) and [Türkiye](#) increased the minimum salary requirements for various categories of foreign employees, including highly skilled workers.
- [Belgium](#) increased the government processing fees for certain immigration applications, including single permits, long-term residence (D Visa) and family reunification. The authorities generally review and adjust processing fees annually.
- [Switzerland](#) began processing all short-term work notifications exclusively via EasyGov.swiss, replacing the previous notification system. The transition aims to streamline the notification process for employers that sponsor foreign nationals for work activities in the country.
- The [UK](#) no longer permits sponsors to recoup additional sponsorship-related costs from Skilled Workers. These include administrative fees and costs related to applying for a Sponsor Licence or adding the Skilled Worker Licence tier to an existing Licence. Also, the [UK](#) Home Office published updated guidance on right to work (RTW) checks. The most significant changes in the updated guidance relate to the decommissioning of biometric cards and the list of acceptable documents for manual RTW checks.
- The [UK](#) Visas and Immigration (UKVI) confirmed that the number of actions taken against sponsors has significantly increased since 2023, in line with the UK government's stated focus on increasing organizational and individual compliance with local immigration laws and policies. The [UKVI](#) also increased the processing fees for certain immigration applications, impacting companies that employ foreign nationals or send impacted individuals to the UK for business purposes.

Individual obligations/benefits

- [Azerbaijan](#) amended its regulations to simplify work authorization requirements for highly qualified foreign nationals and reduce processing times for certain immigration applications filed by this category of applicants. These individuals are now exempt from the requirement to apply for a work permit if they are working in their field of expertise.
- The [Czech Republic](#) added Taiwan to the list of jurisdictions whose residents enjoy free access to its labor market. Taiwan residents can now undertake work in the Czech Republic without obtaining a work authorization document. They must still obtain a residence permit.
- [Ireland](#) announced that all individuals must complete their first-time immigration registration in person at the Immigration Service Delivery office in Dublin, instead of at a local office of the An Garda Síochána (Ireland's police force). [Ireland](#) also extended the temporary protection status for qualifying Ukrainian nationals and residents under the Temporary Protection Directive until 4 March 2026.
- [Ireland](#) further announced that all nationals of Eswatini, Lesotho and Nauru must obtain a visa prior to entering Ireland for business, work, study or family visit purposes or to transit through the country. This development is expected to increase the travel time for impacted individuals.
- [Kosovo](#) eliminated visa requirements for nationals of Bosnia and Herzegovina, enabling them to enter Kosovo using only a biometric ID card issued by Bosnia and Herzegovina. Qualifying individuals can now enter and stay in Kosovo without a visa for up to 90 days in a six-month period.
- [Spain](#) suspended its Golden Visa program for foreign investors with effect from 3 April 2025. Until then, eligible investors may continue to submit new Golden Visa applications based on qualifying investments.

- The [UK](#) announced an extension of the grace period for using expired physical immigration documents to travel to the UK until 1 June 2025. This extension benefits individuals whose physical documents have expired but who have not yet obtained eVisas. Effective 2 June 2025, expired documents will no longer be accepted as evidence of immigration status when traveling to the UK, and individuals will be required to have obtained an eVisa by then.
- The [UK](#) also announced that nationals of the member states of the EU and the European Economic Area are required to obtain an Electronic Travel Authorisation (ETA) prior to traveling to the country effective 2 April 2025.

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Policy shifts in the region reflected a growing focus on compliance, border security and controlled mobility. The European Council’s plan to implement the Entry/Exit System later this year underscores a broader shift toward enhanced border control and data management. Hungary tightened eligibility criteria and increased permit fees for guest workers. The UK introduced stricter sponsorship rules and updated its right to work guidelines for companies.



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

Looking ahead

- The [European Council](#) adopted a proposal for EU Member States to progressively launch the Entry/Exit System (EES) over a six-month transition period starting in October 2025. The European parliament will need to approve this timeline before it is officially confirmed.
- [Hungary](#) announced increased compensation requirements for EU Blue Card applicants effective 1 January 2026 and postponed planned compensation updates based on the Hungarian Standard Classification of Occupations (FEOR) codes of applicants’ occupations to 30 June 2025.



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

New immigration laws/policies

- [Saudi Arabia](#) announced the full expansion of the Professional Verification service under the Professional Accreditation program. The program now applies to over 1,000 professions across all industries and nationals of 160 countries.

Employer obligations/benefits

- [Israel](#) increased both the monthly wage threshold for foreign experts who seek to work in the country for more than three months and the government processing fees for B-1 Visa applications.

Individual obligations/benefits

- [Saudi Arabia](#)'s Ministry of Foreign Affairs implemented significant changes to the Saudi Business Visit Visa rules. These changes impact the visa application process for nationals of certain countries and also have a bearing on existing business visas held by these individuals.
- [South Africa](#) extended the temporary concession period for eligible foreign nationals whose Long-Term Visa, waiver or appeal applications were pending adjudication until 31 March 2025 and then [30 September 2025](#).
- The [UAE](#) expanded its visa on arrival service to additional categories of Indian nationals. Indian nationals who hold valid visas, residence permits or green cards issued by any of the following six countries are now eligible for the visa on arrival service: Australia, Canada, Japan, New Zealand, Singapore and South Korea.

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