

Global Immigration Trends and Highlights

October to December 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 EMEA (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](#)

Amid transformative geopolitical shifts, nations in late 2025 tightened immigration controls and deployed advanced digital technologies to enhance security. The US imposed full entry bans on nationals of 19 countries and partial restrictions on 20 others due to overstays, security and information-sharing concerns. Denmark, the Netherlands and Portugal implemented the EU Entry/Exit System, which uses biometrics and enhanced identity checks to detect overstays and security threats. In Finland, foreigners with prior criminal records now face stricter citizenship barriers, including possible revocation. The UK proposed stricter criminality thresholds for individuals applying for Indefinite Leave to Remain.

Governments worldwide are also embracing technology and innovation to streamline processes, improve transparency and enhance the applicant experience. Thailand and Malaysia introduced digital platforms to streamline work permit applications, reduce paperwork and improve efficiency. Gabon's new e-Visa system simplifies short-term visa applications and accelerates processing times. Ireland's AVATS platform facilitates visa fee payments by moving the process online. India and the Republic of Korea adopted e-Arrival Cards, replacing paper forms to simplify admission and improve travelers' experience.

Visa policies remain a barometer of diplomatic relations among countries, balancing efforts to attract talent with reciprocal measures to manage migration. The Chinese mainland extended visa-free entry for nationals of 45 jurisdictions, Brazil expanded the scope of permissible activities for business visitors and Barbados launched a free movement agreement with select CARICOM members. Meanwhile, Chad suspended visa issuance for US nationals in response to US travel restrictions on Chadian nationals. Malawi imposed reciprocity-based fees and ended visa-free entry for non-reciprocating countries.

Digital nomad and remote work categories continue to offer global organizations a strategic edge to retain top talent and build resilience amid cross-border challenges. Guatemala and Slovenia's new digital nomad residence permits highlight the growing importance of flexible work models amid travel delays and business disruptions resulting from tightening immigration rules, such as the recent US decision to delay H-1B and H-4 visa interviews until 2026 to strengthen online applicant vetting.

For more insights and analysis, read the latest edition of the [Global Immigration Index: Remote Work and Digital Nomads](#) for information about jurisdictions offering visas and permits for remote workers; check out the December 2025 [Geostrategic Analysis](#) for updates on global trade shifts, labor market dynamics, and AI governance trends; and explore the EY-Parthenon 2026 [Geostrategic Outlook](#) to learn about the top 10 geopolitical developments in 2026.



Americas

New immigration laws and policies

- [Barbados](#) introduced a free movement agreement with Belize, Dominica and St. Vincent and the Grenadines. Nationals of these countries may now reside and work in Barbados without a visa, CARICOM Single Market and Economy (CSME) skills certificate, or work permit.
- [Canada](#) amended its Citizenship Act through Bill C-3, an Act to Amend the Citizenship Act (2025). The changes have significant benefits for “Lost Canadians” who had no path to a citizenship grant under previous law.
- [Guatemala](#) introduced a new temporary residence permit for foreign nationals who seek to work remotely from within Guatemala for a company located outside the country.

Employer obligations and benefits

- [Canada](#) released the 2025 Federal Budget and the Immigration Levels Plan for 2026 to 2028. This plan builds on the strategy introduced in 2024 to reduce temporary resident admissions and maintain permanent resident targets at lower levels, citing pressures on housing, infrastructure and public services.
- The [US](#) Citizenship and Immigration Services (USCIS) released clarifying guidance on the \$100,000 payment requirement for certain H-1B petitions, following the presidential proclamation introducing the new payment issued on 19 September 2025.

Individual obligations and benefits

- [Argentina](#) implemented a procedural change that impacts the issuance of the Certificado de Residencia Precaria (i.e., provisional residence certificate).
- [Brazil](#) expanded the scope of activities permitted for business visitors to include technical assistance and technology transfer. These activities may be carried out for up to 90 days when supported by a formal agreement between a Brazilian and a foreign company.
- The [US](#) Department of Homeland Security (DHS) published a notice in the Federal Register advising that the agency would begin assessing and collecting a \$1,000 immigration parole fee. The fee applies to any foreign national with a filed or pending request for parole, as the fee will attach at the time such requests are granted, regardless of when the underlying application or request was submitted.
- The [US](#) Department of Homeland Security published an interim final rule ending the practice of automatically extending the validity of Employment Authorization Documents (EADs) for those filing renewal applications in certain categories. Applicants who file EAD renewals in these categories on or after 30 October 2025 will no longer receive an automatic extension. Instead, an applicant will only have work authorization pursuant to a valid, unexpired EAD.



- The [US](#) Citizenship and Immigration Services issued updated policy guidance reducing the maximum validity period for employment authorization documents (EADs) across several eligibility categories, including EADs issued to foreign nationals who have applied for lawful permanent resident status (Form I-485).
- The [US](#) Department of Homeland Security published a proposed rule to rescind the 2022 public charge regulations. Specifically, DHS notes that the current rules are too restrictive, limit officer discretion, and do not align with congressional intent. The proposed changes would remove narrow definitions and frameworks, allowing officers to consider a broader range of public benefits and a greater scope of information when determining if an applicant is likely to become a public charge.
- The [US](#) Citizenship and Immigration Services issued a Policy Memorandum (the 2 December memo) directing its personnel to place a hold on all Applications for Asylum and for Withholding of Removal (Form I-589) regardless of the applicant's country of nationality, place a hold "on pending benefit requests" for foreign nationals from countries listed in Presidential Proclamation 10949 and conduct a "comprehensive re-review of approved benefit requests" for nationals of 19 countries who entered the United States on or after 20 January 2021.
- Following the [US](#) Department of State's 3 December 2025 announcement that it will expand the requirement for conducting online presence reviews to H-1B and H-4 visa applicants, some foreign nationals with visa appointments scheduled in December began receiving cancellation and reschedule notices.
- The [US](#) Customs and Border Protection (CBP) published a notice of information collection relating to the Arrival and Departure Record (Form I-94) and the Electronic System for Travel Authorization (ESTA). The CBP is proposing to collect more information from foreign nationals to modernize and secure the process for travelers entering and exiting the US, with a particular focus on improving identity verification, automating data collection and enhancing national security.
- The [US](#) president issued a new proclamation that expands full entry restrictions on nationals of 19 countries and partial restrictions on nationals of 20 others.

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Immigration policies across the Americas saw significant shifts in late 2025, balancing stricter entry requirements with measures to enhance mobility. The US began collecting biometric data from foreign nationals entering and leaving the country, ended automatic EAD extensions for certain renewal categories, and introduced a \$1,000 immigration parole fee. Meanwhile, Brazil broadened business visitor eligibility, Barbados advanced regional mobility through a new free movement agreement with several CARICOM nations, and Guatemala launched a digital nomad residence permit.



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

Looking ahead

- In the [US](#), the Department of Homeland Security (DHS) published a final rule that amends DHS regulations to provide that it may "require all aliens to be photographed when entering or exiting the United States, and may require non-exempt aliens to provide other biometrics."
- The DHS also proposed a rule to amend its regulations governing the collection and use of biometrics in immigration processes. This would include a universal biometrics requirement in which any applicant, petitioner, sponsor, supporter, derivative, dependent, beneficiary, or individual associated with an immigration benefit request would be required to submit biometrics, unless DHS otherwise exempts them.

Asia-Pacific

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Malaysia's digitization of Employment Pass applications and Thailand's launch of the “e-WorkPermit” system reflect a sustained trend toward tech-enabled visa processing across Asia-Pacific. These initiatives build on earlier innovations in the region, including Hong Kong's move to mandate online-only submissions for multiple visa categories, the Chinese mainland's streamlined online visa portal, Macau's contactless entry via its e Channel app, and Indonesia's Autogate systems at major airports.

– Linda Rowe, EY Asia-Pacific Immigration Leader



New immigration laws and policies

- [Japan](#) implemented new, stricter requirements for foreign nationals applying for work and residence authorization under the Business Manager category.
- [Malaysia](#) implemented the Overstay Management Programme, which introduces fines for Employment Pass and Dependent's Pass holders who remain in Malaysia beyond their permitted period of stay.
- [Singapore](#) implemented updates to two scoring criteria under the COMPASS points-based framework for Employment Pass applicants.
- [Thailand](#) launched a new online platform called “e-WorkPermit.” All foreign employees and their sponsoring entities in Thailand are now required to submit applications for new work permits (including Urgent Work Permits), renewals and cancellations online via this platform.

Employer obligations and benefits

- In [Malaysia](#), employers are required to apply for Sarawak state Employment Pass applications via a new online platform.
- In [Malaysia](#), the immigration authorities issued a reminder to employers regarding their obligation

to shorten expatriates' passes prior to their permanent departure from the country. In addition, employers are now required to submit online Exit Clearances for Employment Passes (EP) and Professional Visit Passes (PVP) processed by the Expatriate Services Division (ESD), and for EPs processed by the Malaysia Digital Economy Corporation (MDEC), if the passes were not shortened or renewed before expiry.

- [Malaysia](#) announced that employers registered with the Expatriate Services Division (ESD) may submit Projection of Expatriates applications for Employment Passes and Professional Visit Passes for 2026. Similarly, submission of projections for Employment Passes for employers registered with the Malaysia Digital Economy Corporation (MDEC) is also open.

Individual obligations and benefits

- The [Chinese mainland](#) announced that nationals of Sweden are now eligible to enter for business, tourism or family visit purposes, or transit through the jurisdiction, without a visa. This policy will remain in effect until 31 December 2026. Additionally, the immigration authorities extended the visa-free policy for nationals of 45 countries until 31 December 2026.



- In the [Republic of Korea](#), foreign business visitors and workers, with limited exceptions, are required to apply for an electronic arrival card (e-Arrival Card) in the three days preceding their arrival.
- The [Republic of Korea](#) extended the temporary exemption period in connection with the Korea Electronic Travel Authorization (K-ETA) for nationals and residents of 22 jurisdictions until 31 December 2026.
- [Singapore](#) implemented changes impacting permanent residents who apply for Re-Entry Permits from outside the country effective 1 December 2025.

Looking ahead

- In [Australia](#), following the first anniversary of the Skills in Demand (SID) visa, it is expected that the employer-sponsored visa environment will remain relatively stable with the following developments over the coming year: 1) prolonged visa application processing time to continue; 2) a new Core Skills Occupation List (CSOL); 3) legislation to improve flexibility in Labour Market Testing (LMT) and implement a public register of sponsors to be reintroduced into Parliament; 4) a Parliamentary Inquiry into the value of skilled migration to Australia to report in 2026.

Europe

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Border security remains a top priority in Europe, with Denmark and Portugal rolling out the EU Entry/Exit System (EES) in the last quarter of 2025. The Netherlands also implemented the EES and deployed biometric kiosks at airports while tightening border checks in preparation for the upcoming European Travel Information and Authorization System (ETIAS) in 2026.

– Ben J Willis, EY Global Immigration Competency Lead, [EY People Profile](#)



New immigration laws and policies

- [Austria](#) introduced a new Frontier Worker Permit for third-country nationals who work in Austria, reside in a neighboring country and commute to work.
- [Italy](#) approved amendments to regulations governing the issuance of EU Blue Cards and work permits, which aim to streamline processing timelines and provide greater flexibility for third-country nationals entering the country for employment.
- [Slovenia](#) began accepting applications for the new temporary residence permit for digital nomads. This permit allows eligible third-country nationals to work remotely from Slovenia while remaining employed by a company located outside the country.
- The [UK](#) government published a Statement of Changes to the Immigration Rules, implementing further measures outlined in the May 2025 Immigration White Paper. The upcoming changes impact several visa routes, including for sponsored workers.
- The [UK](#) government announced major proposals to the legal migration system focusing on Settlement (Indefinite Leave to Remain). Building on the May 2025 Immigration White Paper, the new "Earned Settlement" model will require foreign nationals to demonstrate sustained contributions and meet integration and compliance requirements to become eligible for permanent settlement status.

Employer obligations and benefits

- In [Estonia](#), companies sponsoring foreign nationals for short-term employment registrations and temporary residence permits for employment are now required to register with the Estonian Business Register. Additionally, companies that sponsor temporary residence permit for employment applications are required to provide proof of their economic activity.
- [Germany](#) approved new thresholds for the annual contribution assessment ceiling in the general pension insurance for 2026. These thresholds generally determine the minimum salary requirements for EU Blue Card and Distinct Professional Experience applications.
- [Ireland](#) introduced several updates that impact registration and renewal processes for Irish Residence Permits, announced an increase to the national minimum wage, and clarified Ireland's position regarding the EU Entry/Exit System (EES).
- The [Netherlands](#) announced that companies that sponsor highly skilled foreign nationals and EU Blue Card holders are required to retain additional documents to demonstrate compliance with salary-related obligations. This requirement is part of the Dutch government's commitment to strengthen its knowledge migrant scheme.



- The [Netherlands](#) also revised salary requirements for knowledge migrants (i.e., highly skilled workers) who seek to work in the country. The revised thresholds went into effect on 1 January 2026.
- [Switzerland](#) announced that the annual quotas for nationals of the UK and European Economic Area (EEA) Member States and countries outside the EEA (“third-country nationals”), who seek to obtain short-term and long-term work permits (i.e., L and B permits) in 2026 will remain the same as those for 2025.
- [Switzerland](#) published the updated list of professions in connection with which employers must report a vacancy to the local unemployment office prior to publicly advertising the vacancy.

Individual obligations and benefits

- [Denmark](#) began its phased rollout of the Entry/Exit System (EES) on 12 October 2025. The system applies to all EU Member States except Cyprus and Ireland. The EES is expected to be fully operational at all external border crossing points of the European countries using the system by 10 April 2026.
- [Finland](#) implemented stricter requirements for foreign nationals pursuing citizenship.
- [Ireland](#) announced a series of legislative and policy changes to the Citizenship Act and implemented new family reunification requirements for third-country nationals under the Non-EEA Family Reunification Policy.
- [Ireland](#) introduced a temporary initiative to facilitate travel during the Christmas period for individuals who submitted Irish Residence Permit renewal applications before their IRP card expired.
- In [Ireland](#), individuals applying for Irish visas in certain jurisdictions are now required to pay their application fees online.
- The [Netherlands](#) implemented more rigorous procedures for third-country nationals traveling to and from the country, as part of ongoing enhancements to border systems.
- [Portugal](#) implemented the Entry/Exit System (EES) and introduced new, stricter rules for holders of residence permits for Community of Portuguese Language Countries (CPLP) and individuals applying for residence authorization in Portugal on the basis of family reunification.

Looking ahead

- [Ireland](#) announced a phased roadmap to increase the salary thresholds for employment permits, with the first increase effective from 1 March 2026.

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

New immigration laws and policies

- [Gabon](#) introduced a digital e-Visa system. All processes related to short-term visas, including application submission and payment, may now be completed online through the e-Visa system.

Employer obligations and benefits

- In [Cameroon](#), protests following the declaration of presidential election results led to security concerns and disrupted business operations. As a result, delays in immigration processing are expected until the situation stabilizes and regular operations resume.
- In [Kuwait](#), employers are required to electronically submit and update daily work schedules, rest periods and holidays for their employees, including foreign workers.

Individual obligations and benefits

- [Chad](#) suspended the issuance of visas to nationals of the United States in response to the US government's travel restrictions on Chadian nationals.
- In [India](#), foreign nationals [and OCI card holders](#) entering the country are required to apply for an e-Arrival Card within 72 hours prior to arrival.

- In [Malawi](#), travelers who were previously eligible to enter without a visa (using only their valid passport) are required to obtain a Malawian visa prior to travel. If their country of citizenship requires nationals of Malawi to obtain visas prior to entry. In addition, Malawian visa application fees are now determined on the basis of reciprocity with the applicant's country of citizenship.
- [South Africa](#) announced automatic extensions of all existing Zimbabwean Exemption Permits and Lesotho Exemption Permits until 28 May 2027.



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