

A hiker in a red jacket and backpack is looking at a smartphone in a mountain valley at sunset. The sky is a mix of blue and orange, with a crescent moon visible in the upper right. The hiker is standing on a rocky path, and the valley below is filled with rugged mountains and a small town in the distance.

Global Immigration Trends and Highlights

January to March 2026



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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
Markets Leader
[EY People Profile](#)

The first quarter of 2026 reflects a more controlled and security-focused global mobility environment, shaped by geopolitical uncertainty and ongoing tensions in the Middle East. Governments are reassessing how cross-border movement aligns with national security, labor protection and economic resilience, creating a more complex landscape for workforce planning. Heightened oversight in major destination countries underscores the growing importance of compliance readiness, realistic timelines and early mobility decision-making.

At the same time, immigration policy is increasingly being used as a workforce strategy tool. While some jurisdictions are tightening employer obligations and raising eligibility thresholds, others are selectively facilitating entry for highly skilled professionals, senior leaders and short-term business travelers. This more differentiated approach favors roles aligned with national priorities and requires employers to be more deliberate in how they structure assignments, map roles to eligibility criteria and access global talent.

Geopolitical pressures are also accelerating localization measures, reciprocity-based travel restrictions and digitalized monitoring systems, adding volatility to cross-border mobility. These developments not only heighten operational risk but also create opportunities for organizations that embed immigration considerations into broader workforce planning. Employers that anticipate disruption, build flexibility into mobility models and align talent strategy with evolving policy priorities will be better positioned to navigate uncertainty and sustain access to critical skills.

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 March 2026 [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

- [Canada](#) introduced five new Express Entry categories (e.g., senior managers, physicians, researchers, transport occupations, skilled military recruits) to attract top global talent and align permanent residence selection with labor market needs.
- [Canada](#) introduced a temporary public policy allowing certain Quebec-selected workers with expiring permits to obtain a 12-month employer-specific work permit under the International Mobility Program while their permanent residence application is assessed. The measure supports Quebec employers by reducing workforce disruption and helping retain skilled talent during the transition to permanent status.

Employer obligations and benefits

- In [Canada](#), authorities introduced new requirements for publicly advertised job postings in Ontario, which directly affect advertising requirements for Ontario-based employers filing Labour Market Impact Assessment (LMIA) applications under the federal Temporary Foreign Worker Program.
- [Israel](#) increased the minimum salary requirements for B-1 Work Visa applicants who either seek to work in the country for more than three months or are sponsored by high-tech companies that are recognized by the Israeli Innovation Authority (irrespective of their intended stay). Additionally, the authorities increased the government processing fees for all B-1 Visa applications.
- In the [US](#), companies employing foreign nationals are reminded that they may be subject to US Citizenship and Immigration Services Fraud Detection and National Security Directorate (FDNS) and US Immigration and Customs

Enforcement (ICE) site visits and inspections, as well as the potential for investigations by the Department of Labor (DOL), Department of State (DOS) and other relevant agencies.

- The [US](#) Citizenship and Immigration Services (USCIS) announced that the initial registration period for the fiscal year (FY) 2027 H-1B cap ran from 4 March to 19 March 2026. During this period, prospective petitioners and representatives were required to complete and submit electronic registrations, using a USCIS online account, and pay the required USD 215 registration fee for each beneficiary.

Individual obligations and benefits

- [Argentina](#) announced that nationals of the Chinese Mainland, the Dominican Republic and Indian nationals who hold a US Permanent Resident Card (Green Card) may enter as business visitors or tourists.
- [Brazil](#) began accepting applications for Electronic Visas (e-Visas) from nationals of the Chinese Mainland for the purpose of attending events or exhibitions.
- [Colombia](#) announced that Belarusian nationals may enter without a visa for non-remunerated business activities. [Colombia](#) further extended the policy to nationals of Mongolia.
- [Mexico](#) issued temporary travel and shelter in place advisories for several states following cartel-related violence in February 2026.
- The [US](#) Citizenship and Immigration Services issued a Policy Memorandum directing its personnel to immediately place a hold on all pending benefit applications for foreign nationals from countries listed in Presidential Proclamation (PP) 10998 (Restricting and Limiting of Foreign Nationals to Protect the Security of the United States) regardless of their date of entry to the United States.



Individual obligations and benefits

- The [US](#) Department of State announced that it will pause all visa issuances to immigrant visa applicants who are nationals of 75 countries “at high risk of public benefits usage.”
- [US](#) consular posts and embassies across the Middle East announced closures and visa appointment cancellations due to the escalating conflict in the region.
- The [US](#) Department of State expanded its online presence review to additional nonimmigrant visa categories, beyond the existing H-1B, H-4, F, M and J visa applicants already subject to the review.

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Across the Americas, employers face tighter mobility rules as the United States increases scrutiny through weighted H-1B selection, expanded travel restrictions and shorter Employment Authorization Document validity. Canada’s reduced temporary resident admissions, shifting Express Entry priorities and Ontario’s new job-posting requirements further impact employers’ access to talent. For companies sending workers to the US and Canada, proactive planning is critical. Meanwhile, visa-free entry measures in Argentina and Colombia are easing short-term business travel for more international visitors.



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

Looking ahead

- US employment-based immigration is expected to continue tightening, with increased scrutiny, limited or no grace periods, greater documentation and compliance demands, longer processing times, and heightened enforcement. Early planning, strong compliance and alternative visa strategies will be essential to manage hiring and mobility risk.

Asia-Pacific

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Across the Asia-Pacific region, governments are advancing policies that will reshape mobility. Indonesia launched a Global Citizenship program for former citizens and their descendants, while Taiwan has eased immigration and work requirements for foreign professionals in a bid to attract global talent. The Chinese Mainland, Hong Kong and the Philippines have expanded visa-free entry or early-renewal options, providing flexibility to short-term business travelers and enabling faster workforce deployment. A number of policies will require additional planning by employers. For example, Malaysia has increased minimum salary thresholds for Employment Passes, removing lower-paid roles, increasing scrutiny on foreign workers and seeking to better align with local skill gaps. Digitization is also enabling stricter monitoring, including e-visa adoption and pre-arrival vetting in Singapore, together with increased visitor tracking.



These shifts highlight a region increasingly focused on competitiveness and retention, requiring companies to adapt mobility strategies to secure high-value talent.

– Linda Rowe, EY Asia-Pacific Immigration Leader

New immigration laws and policies

- Canada and UK nationals may now enter [the Chinese Mainland](#) visa free for business, tourism, family visits, exchanges or transit.
- [Indonesia](#) launched the Global Citizenship of Indonesia program. The program provides a pathway to permanent residence status for eligible foreign nationals with strong ties to the country and aligns with Indonesia's single-citizenship principle.
- [Singapore](#)'s MOM announced a new ONE Pass (AI & Tech) launching January 2027 to attract top global tech talent.
- [Taiwan](#) implemented measures to attract foreign talent, including relaxing work permit eligibility criteria, expanding access to permanent residence and increasing the permitted period of stay for digital nomads.

Employer obligations and benefits

- The [Chinese Mainland](#) announced that nationals of Canada and the United Kingdom may enter without a visa for business, tourism, family visits or participation in exchange programs, or transit through the jurisdiction. This policy will remain in effect until 31 December 2026.
- Effective 1 March 2026 [Hong Kong](#) visa renewals may be lodged up to three months prior to expiry for certain categories, up from four weeks, facilitating continued residence for these applicants and their dependents.
- [Malaysia](#) increased minimum salary requirements and extended validity periods for all Employment Pass (EP) categories. These changes will take effect on 1 June 2026 for all new and renewal applications submitted on or after that date.



- [Malaysia](#) extended the 1:3 Internship Policy pilot phase until 31 March 2026. The policy requires Malaysian companies to recruit a designated number of Malaysian students as interns for each foreign national they employ, with limited exemptions.
- [The Philippines](#) announced that nationals of the Chinese Mainland may enter without a visa as business visitors or tourists for stays up to 14 days.
- [The Republic of Korea](#) now requires certain employment-related changes to be reported under updated Alien Registration information update requirements.

Looking ahead

- Driven by entry-policy initiatives undertaken by partner countries, we anticipate continued reciprocal reopening of borders for business travelers between those jurisdictions and the Chinese Mainland.

Europe

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Across Europe, governments are tightening immigration frameworks, with the EU implementing its first visa strategy to enhance security and competitiveness. In particular, Armenia, Finland, Georgia, Greece and Spain introduced measures that increase scrutiny of foreign workers and modernize visa and residence systems. Workforce planning and assignment costs are impacted as Austria, Belgium, Germany and Türkiye raised salary thresholds or added new employer reporting duties. Meanwhile, Belgium, Finland, Ireland, the Netherlands and Norway implemented higher fees or administrative changes that may lengthen processing and impact mobility programs.



In the Africa, Middle East and SAARC region, Saudi Arabia accelerates localization through expanded Saudization requirements, and Oman mandates company registration on the Tawteen platform. Kuwait and Qatar are expanding residency pathways for skilled workers and entrepreneurs. Several countries in West Africa restricted access to US citizens in response to US travel bans: Burkina Faso, Mali and Niger. These developments signal a more regulated landscape that requires companies to anticipate compliance risks and adjust mobility planning to protect workforce continuity.

– Ben J Willis, EY Global Immigration Competency Leader, *EY People Profile*

New immigration laws and policies

- [Armenia](#) adopted amendments which will take effect 1 November 2026. Changes focus on digitalization and enhanced monitoring of foreign nationals and address existing legislative gaps.
- In the [EU](#), the European Commission adopted its first-ever EU visa strategy, introducing a comprehensive framework to make the EU's visa policy more strategic, secure, competitive and efficient.
- [Finland](#) implemented stricter eligibility requirements relating to permanent residence permit applications.
- [Finland](#) published a draft proposal to reform the provisions governing the removal of third-country nationals from the country and the issuance of entry bans. The proposal is expected to come into effect on 12 June 2026.
- [Georgia](#) introduced new immigration requirements for foreign nationals who are employed by local entities or engaged in self-employment, entrepreneurial activities or remote work. [Georgia](#) then introduced amendments and additions to the new immigration requirements.
- [Greece](#) published a law that introduces significant amendments to the Migration Code.
- [Spain](#) approved a Draft Royal Decree to temporarily grant residence permits to certain third-country nationals who already reside in Spain and who meet specific eligibility criteria.
- The [UK](#) Home Office submitted a substantial package of amendments to the Immigration Rules affecting employers, sponsors and HR compliance teams.



Employer obligations and benefits

- [Austria](#) increased the minimum salary requirements for various categories of foreign employees, including EU Blue Card applicants.
- In [Belgium](#), the Flemish authorities implemented significant changes to their immigration rules for foreign workers and employers.
- [Belgium](#) authorities also increased minimum salary thresholds for third-country nationals who work in the Walloon region and hold work permits or single permits.
- In [Germany](#), employers are required to inform nationals of countries outside the EU and European Economic Area, as well as nationals of Iceland, Liechtenstein and Norway, who come to Germany to work for a German employer, about free advisory services designed to protect workers from exploitation and discrimination.
- [Türkiye](#) implemented higher minimum salary requirements, impacting foreign nationals who seek to work in the country.

Individual obligations and benefits

- [Belgium](#) increased processing fees for certain immigration applications.
- [Finland](#) increased processing fees for certain immigration applications.
- In [Finland](#), Brexit permits granted under the Withdrawal Agreement remain valid until further notice. However, Brexit residence permit cards must be renewed every five years.
- [Ireland](#) extended the grace period for Irish Residence Permit (IRP) renewals from eight to 12 weeks. [Ireland](#) also extended the validity of the Travel Confirmation Notice to 28 February 2026 to support individuals who seek to depart from and re-enter Ireland while their IRP renewal application is still being processed.
- Travel disruption affecting [Irish](#) business travelers, linked to ongoing instability in the Middle East, is creating planning, mobility and duty-of-care considerations for employers.
- [Ireland](#) extended all immigration permissions for Beneficiaries of Temporary Protection (BoTPs) until 4 March 2027.
- The [Netherlands](#) reduced the number of Registration Desks for nonresidents (RNI desks) available to third-country nationals (i.e., non-EU, non-EEA and non-Swiss nationals).
- [Norway](#) implemented application fees for children under the age of 18 who apply for dependent permits (Family Immigration category).
- The [Slovenian](#) embassy in New Delhi, India, is experiencing processing delays, extending waiting times for all appointment-based steps, including fingerprint submission, interviews and permit collection.
- [Türkiye](#) announced that nationals of the Chinese Mainland may enter without a visa for non-remunerated business activities.
- The [UK](#) Electronic Travel Authorization (ETA) went fully live, and the phased implementation period ended. This means that visitors to the UK are unable to travel to the UK without a valid ETA.

Looking ahead

- [Sweden](#) presented a bill to parliament that proposed stricter conditions for issuing work permits and higher penalties for unlawful employment. If adopted, the changes will go into effect in June 2026.

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

New immigration laws and policies

- [Qatar](#) announced during the opening of Web Summit Qatar 2026 the launch of two new long-term residency visa categories aimed at attracting senior executives and high-growth entrepreneurs.
- [Saudi Arabia](#) announced an increase in Saudization (localization) rates for roles in the engineering and procurement sectors.
- [Saudi Arabia](#) announced two decisions regarding Saudization (localization) rates for roles in the sales and marketing sectors. The decisions introduce a 60% Saudization requirement for targeted professions, with specific salary criteria applicable to marketing roles.

Employer obligations and benefits

- [Kuwait](#) introduced a multiple-trip exit permit for residents working in the private sector. The new permit allows employers to authorize foreign workers to travel multiple times without submitting a new exit request for each departure.
- [Kuwait](#) increased the annual health insurance fees for certain categories of residence permits, and implemented new health insurance fees for entry, visit and transit visa categories, per press reports.
- [Oman](#) introduced a mandatory requirement for all companies operating in the country to register on the Tawteen electronic employment and recruitment platform.

Individual obligations and benefits

- [Bahrain](#) introduced temporary measures benefiting visit visa holders both inside and outside the country, in response to the travel disruption in the region.

- [Burkina Faso](#) suspended the issuance of visas to nationals of the United States in response to the US government's travel restrictions on nationals of Burkina Faso.
- [Kuwait](#) introduced an automatic one-month visit visa extension and a three-month absence permit for residents abroad, amid Middle East disruption.
- [Mali](#) suspended the issuance of visas to nationals of the United States in response to the US government's travel restrictions on nationals of Mali.
- [Niger](#) suspended the issuance of visas to nationals of the United States in response to the US government's travel restrictions on nationals of Niger.
- [Qatar](#) announced a one-month automatic extension for all categories of expired or near-expiry entry visas effective 28 February 2026, subject to payment of any outstanding fines.
- [Saudi Arabia](#), through the Qiwa portal, restricted the option for foreign employees to change their job title to "General Manager" through a standard profession change request. Foreign employees may still be appointed as general managers, provided they hold the same title in the company's commercial registration (CR).
- [Saudi Arabia](#) introduced temporary measures for holders of visit visas that expired as of 25 February 2026, in response to the regional travel disruption.
- The [United Arab Emirates](#) announced temporary immigration relief measures in response to flight cancellations and airspace disruptions.
- The [United Arab Emirates](#) highlighted the availability of expanded emergency and crisis response services for UAE citizens and Golden Visa holders abroad.

Looking ahead

- [South Africa](#) proposed changes to modernize country's immigration framework, enhance digital systems, attract foreign talent and investment, and streamline mobility.



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