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# Global Immigration alert

April 2026

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## United Arab Emirates

### UAE extends the Nafis Programme until 2040

#### Executive summary

On 6 April 2026, the United Arab Emirates announced the extension of the Nafis programme until 2040, according to the [Emirates News Agency](#).

The extension is accompanied by new and expanded financial support measures for Emirati nationals and their families working in the private sector, reinforcing the UAE's long-term commitment to Emiratization and private-sector participation.

#### Key developments

The Nafis programme, originally launched in September 2021 as part of the UAE's "Projects of the 50", has been extended until 2040, transforming it into a long-term national framework for Emirati talent development and private-sector employment.

The Emirati Talent Competitiveness Council approved a package of updates aligned with "the Year of Family 2026" (i.e., an initiative promoting growth of Emirati families), including:

- Expansion of the Children's Allowance, removing the previous cap on the number of eligible children for Emirati benefits
- Introduction of salary support programmes for:
  - Children of Emirati mothers employed in the private sector
  - Wives of Emirati citizens working in the private sector

As of the end of March 2026, the Nafis programme has supported the employment of more than 176,000 Emirati nationals, with 152,000 active beneficiaries working across approximately 32,000 private-sector establishments.

The programme continues to focus on women's participation, family stability and skills development through multiple training and leadership initiatives.

#### Impact on employers

The extension of the Nafis programme until 2040 signals that Emiratization obligations are a permanent structural element of the UAE labor market rather than a transitional policy. Private-sector employers should expect continued regulatory focus on Emirati hiring, retention and compliance.

Expanded salary- and family-linked support measures may:

- Increase the attractiveness and sustainability of Emirati employment in the private sector.
- Influence compensation structures, workforce planning and localization strategies.

Employers that are subject to Emiratization targets should review their long-term hiring and compliance.

Employers subject to Emiratization requirements should be aware that non-compliance can trigger fines and heightened regulatory scrutiny. Importantly, failure to meet Emiratization targets may also restrict an employer's ability to obtain, renew, or retain work permits and related approvals for expatriate employees on the UAE Mainland, making compliance a key consideration in workforce planning.

#### Key steps

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

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EYG no. 002735-26Gbl

2101-3682263  
ED None

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**Roman Gusev**  
Partner, People Advisory Services Tax, MENA Immigration  
Tel: +971 56 2430749  
Email: [roman.gusev@ae.ey.com](mailto:roman.gusev@ae.ey.com)

**Sana Sheikh**  
Director, People Advisory Services Tax, MENA Immigration  
Tel: +971 56 3575664  
Email: [sana.sheikh@ae.ey.com](mailto:sana.sheikh@ae.ey.com)

**Ben Willis**  
Partner, EY Global Immigration Competency Leader  
Tel: +44 20 7951 9589  
Email: [ben.willis@uk.ey.com](mailto:ben.willis@uk.ey.com)