

Global Immigration Trends and Highlights

October to December 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](#)

Elections in over 60 jurisdictions representing half of the world's population, ongoing geopolitical conflicts, technological advancements and the lingering sequelae of COVID-19 drove an unprecedented pace of change in immigration policies in 2024, creating both opportunities and challenges for multinational organizations. Amidst such global disruptions, governments continued to leverage immigration policy to balance critical competing priorities. On one hand, countries adopted measures to stimulate economic growth by attracting highly skilled foreigners to address skills gaps in local labor markets. On the other, some sought to protect national security and respond to rising anti-immigrant sentiments by enhancing entry controls for foreigners and safeguards for local workers. New legislation and adoption of digitization underpinned policy changes in both directions.

Last quarter, governments worldwide created new work authorization categories (Australia, Türkiye) and streamlined existing processes (Hong Kong, Italy) to attract skilled talent, echoing measures from earlier in 2024 (Denmark, Malaysia, Malta). Multiple jurisdictions expanded or extended their visa-free policies for business visitors to promote investment and trade in the previous three months (the Chinese mainland, Republic of Korea) and throughout the year (Albania, Honduras, Singapore). Authorities continued to leverage digitization to streamline immigration processes (Colombia, Ireland, Qatar), replicating earlier initiatives (Ecuador, Macau, Sweden). South Africa unveiled a new immigration plan, aiming to make immigration a "digital first" department by 2029.

Other jurisdictions introduced stricter policies designed to control the inflow of foreigners (Canada, Poland), protect local workers (Switzerland) and prevent abuse of immigration schemes (the Netherlands). Similar measures introduced earlier in 2024 focused on heightened compliance checks (Indonesia, Finland, Poland), stricter application scrutiny (New Zealand) and more stringent criteria for employers and workers (Lithuania, Oman). Digitization also played a role in enhancing internal security, with Israel, Sri Lanka and the UK introducing electronic entry authorization systems.

Investors and remote workers remained an area of focus throughout 2024. During the last quarter, Greece (following Hong Kong and Japan) introduced a new residence route for investors, while Kenya and South Africa joined over a dozen jurisdictions that simplified the entry of remote workers over the year.

Looking ahead, upcoming elections, including in Canada, Germany, Japan and Poland, could profoundly affect the immigration landscape locally and globally. Anticipated policy shifts in the United States under a new administration may further influence approaches to immigration worldwide. In the EU, the long-awaited EES and ETIAS are slated for rollout later in 2025.

For more insights and analysis, watch our webinars on recent immigration changes and proposed initiatives in [Canada](#), the [EU](#) and [Sweden](#); read about the potential impacts of the [2024 US elections](#); and check out the latest edition of the [Global Immigration Index: remote work and digital nomads](#). Also explore the [EY 2024 Work Reimagined Survey](#) to learn about how work is increasingly disconnected from old ideas of career, reward and location, and read about the [top geopolitical developments for 2025](#).





Americas

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Immigration policy trends in the region were marked by continued signs of protectionism, with Canada announcing a strategic reduction in immigration targets – both for temporary residents and permanent residents. The formation of a new government in the US is also expected to lead to more restrictive measures for foreign nationals. Diplomatic rifts continue to impact immigration across the region, with Canada and India expelling the other country’s diplomats and Venezuela and Chile suspending flights between the two countries following the contested presidential election in Venezuela.

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



New immigration laws/policies

- ▶ [Canada](#) announced its Immigration Levels Plan 2025-2027. The Plan includes significant reductions in targets for new permanent resident admissions and a decrease in overall temporary resident new arrivals. The intention of the Plan is to alleviate pressures on housing, infrastructure and social services while continuing to preserve the integrity of Canada’s immigration programs. [Canada](#) also announced the suspension of two programs that led to the issuance of a Quebec Selection Certificate (CSQ). Obtaining a CSQ is the first step that a foreign national must undertake to qualify for Canadian permanent residence as a Quebec-selected skilled worker.
- ▶ The [United States](#) Citizenship and Immigration Services (USCIS) updated its Policy Manual to clarify what evidence may satisfy the eligibility criteria for EB-1 extraordinary ability classification. This update refines how evidence is evaluated for individuals seeking this classification.

Employer obligations/benefits

- ▶ In the [United States](#), significant changes can be expected in the legal and employment-based immigration spaces in President Donald Trump’s second administration. US employers and their foreign employees can expect changes to temporary work visa and immigrant (Green Card) visa processing.

Individual obligations/benefits

- ▶ [Canada](#) expelled six Indian diplomats in October 2024, amid renewed diplomatic tensions between the two countries. In response, India expelled six Canadian diplomats. This could have important consequences for individuals who are relying on

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immigration services to travel to Canada, including temporary foreign workers, international students and permanent residents.

- ▶ [Chile](#) indefinitely suspended flights to Venezuela after [Venezuela](#) suspended all flights to Chile. This came a few months after Chile began allowing Venezuelan nationals to leave the country using expired travel documents, regardless of their immigration status in the country. The current situation may create challenges for companies that employ impacted individuals.
- ▶ [Colombia](#) extended the deadline for holders of certain residence permits to obtain new permits until 31 October 2026. The extension will enable employers to reduce business disruptions by providing additional time to support impacted employees with complying with the new requirement. [Colombia](#) also began issuing new visas called "V - Visitante Especial" for qualifying Venezuelan nationals and their dependents who seek to regularize their immigration status in the country.
- ▶ [Costa Rica](#) announced an updated list of regions at risk of yellow fever transmission. Effective 11 January 2025, most individuals traveling between Costa Rica and any of these regions will be required to be vaccinated against yellow fever and present a certificate of vaccination issued by their home country's health ministry.
- ▶ The [United States](#) Department of Homeland Security announced new immigration protections for Lebanese nationals currently in the United States due to the ongoing armed conflict in Lebanon. The Temporary Protection Status (TPS), announced on 17 October 2024, will be in force for 18 months and will be available to individuals who have continuously resided in the United States since 16 October 2024. The [United States](#) Department of State (DOS) also announced the publication of an updated Exchange Visitors Skills List. The Skills List is used by the DOS and the Department of Homeland Security to determine whether a foreign national who has been admitted as a "J" non-immigrant exchange visitor, or who acquired "J" status subsequent to admission, is subject to the two-year foreign residence requirement.

Looking ahead

- ▶ The [United States](#) is introducing a permanent increase to the automatic extension period from 180 to 540 days for Employment Authorization Document renewals for certain applicants. The regulatory change will take effect 30 days after it was published in the Federal Register on 13 December 2024. The [United States](#) will also introduce a regulation that intends to enhance the integrity of the H-1B program and facilitate its intended purpose of allowing US employers to hire and retain foreign talent in specialty occupation positions without disadvantaging US workers. The new regulation will be effective on 17 January 2025.

Asia-Pacific

New immigration laws/policies

- ▶ [Australia](#) announced new updates, including tighter policy guidelines for Short Stay Specialist Subclass 400 Visas, replacing the Subclass 482 (Temporary Skill Shortage) visa with the Subclass 482 (Skills in Demand or SID) visa and renaming its national occupational classification.
- ▶ The [Chinese mainland](#) began issuing a single electronic document to foreign nationals that includes both work authorization and social security details.
- ▶ [Hong Kong](#) announced a series of updates to its immigration policies, with an aim to transform the region into an international wealth management center by 2028 and attract high-caliber talent.
- ▶ [Singapore](#)'s Ministry of Manpower announced updates to two scoring criteria under the COMPASS points-based framework and increased salary requirements for experienced tech professionals who apply for Employment Passes with a five-year validity period.

Employer obligations/benefits

- ▶ [Singapore](#) released details regarding the annual notification requirement for Overseas Networks & Expertise Pass holders. Certain Pass holders will need to complete the annual notification, which can be submitted by employers and other entities.

Individual obligations/benefits

- ▶ The [Chinese mainland](#) announced that nationals of Cyprus, Greece, Portugal and Slovenia will be able to enter the jurisdiction for business, tourism or family visit purposes, or transit through the jurisdiction, without a visa until 31 December 2025.
- ▶ The [Chinese mainland](#) also announced that nationals of Andorra, Denmark, Finland, Iceland, Liechtenstein, Monaco, Norway, Slovakia and the Republic of Korea can now enter the jurisdiction without a visa. The visa-free policy for these individuals will remain in effect until 31 December 2025.
- ▶ The [Chinese mainland](#) implemented several changes to streamline its visa-free policies for jurisdictions with which it has unilateral visa-free policies. These include removing the visa requirement for nationals of nine additional jurisdictions and increasing the period of visa-free stay for eligible individuals, among others. In addition, the [Chinese mainland](#) extended the visa-free transit policy to 240 hours and added 21 new entry-exit ports to facilitate the movement of foreign nationals to and from the Chinese mainland.
- ▶ The [Republic of Korea](#) announced that it has extended the temporary exemption period for nationals of 22 jurisdictions in connection with the Korean Electronic Travel Authorization (K-ETA). The exemption is now valid until 31 December 2025.

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Positivity and progress characterize the quarter rounding out 2024. Recent changes to eligibility requirements for foreign workers (Singapore) and occupational classifications (Australia) reflect evolving labor market needs within the region. The Australian government finally introduced the Skills in Demand Visa and National Innovation Visa, seeking to compete for global talent and enable economic growth. The Chinese mainland continues to expand the list of jurisdictions whose nationals can enter without a visa – the total is now nearly 60 – to stimulate its economy and strengthen diplomatic ties with trade partners.

– Linda Rowe, EY Asia-Pacific Immigration Leader



Europe

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Multiple countries increased salary requirements for foreign workers, with a focus on protecting local labor markets and attracting skilled talent. New thresholds went into effect in Belgium, Germany and the Netherlands on 1 January 2025, while Finland revised its salary requirements in November 2024. Meanwhile, Ireland launched a review of its salary thresholds and deferred any increases until further notice.

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



New immigration laws/policies

- ▶ [Austria](#)'s labor authorities stopped accepting new work permit applications from cross-border commuters until further notice. In addition, the government submitted a proposal to parliament to reduce instances of unlawful residence of cross-border commuters.
- ▶ [Bulgaria and Romania](#) became full members of the Schengen Area effective 1 January 2025 and lifted land border controls with other Schengen Member States. Air and sea border controls were eliminated earlier in 2024.
- ▶ [Denmark](#) adopted a proposal to implement stricter documentation requirements for foreign service providers and a requirement to demonstrate identification documents upon request. Specific provisions of the proposal went into effect on 1 January 2025, with others relating to the enhanced documentation requirements going into effect on 1 January 2026.
- ▶ The [EU](#) proposed two digitization initiatives, including a new EU Digital Travel app, to simplify and secure travel to and from the Schengen Area. The proposal is pending approval by the European Council and European Parliament. Once adopted, the Commission, in collaboration with other entities, will develop the necessary technical standards for the application's deployment. Separately, the [European Commission](#) proposed a gradual implementation of the EU's Entry and Exit System (EES). The EES is an information technology system designed to mitigate irregular migration to the Schengen Area and expedite the entry and exit of bona fide non-EU nationals traveling for short stays.
- ▶ [Greece](#) published a law that introduces a new residence route for third-country nationals who make qualifying investments in Greek startups.
- ▶ The [Netherlands](#) proposed restrictions on the assignment of highly skilled foreign nationals by Dutch companies. The authorities are also exploring measures to prevent abuse of the current knowledge migrant scheme and reduce risks to national security.
- ▶ [Poland](#)'s Council of Ministers adopted a resolution on the new Polish Migration Strategy for 2025–2030. The primary goal of the strategy, titled “Regain Control, Ensure Security,” is to enhance national security by regulating migration processes more effectively.
- ▶ [Slovakia](#) approved several amendments to its regulations governing residence authorization processes and Schengen Visa requirements. These changes are expected to streamline various immigration processes.
- ▶ [Türkiye](#) began accepting applications under a new Tech Visa program for qualifying eligible foreign nationals with expertise in technology who seek to undertake work (i.e., employees) or establish a startup (i.e., entrepreneurs) in the country. Successful applicants will receive several benefits, including income and corporate tax exemptions.





Employer obligations/benefits

- ▶ [Belgium](#) announced new minimum salary thresholds for third-country nationals working in the country effective 1 January 2025. Salary thresholds and policies differ across the three Belgian regions of Brussels, Flanders and Wallonia.
- ▶ [Finland](#) increased the salary requirements for third-country nationals who apply for certain categories of work-based residence permits, including for individuals with a degree or qualification completed in Finland and startup entrepreneurs.
- ▶ [Denmark](#) updated its immigration application processing fees, minimum salary requirements and Positive Lists (i.e., lists of professions experiencing a shortage of skilled or highly qualified professionals in Denmark). These changes will impact foreign nationals who seek to apply for work or residence permits.
- ▶ [Germany](#) increased the minimum gross salary thresholds for EU Blue Card and “Distinct Professional Experience” applicants.
- ▶ [Ireland](#) announced a deferral of the planned increase in the minimum annual remuneration thresholds for employment permit applicants that were set to come into effect in January 2025, pending the outcome of a review.
- ▶ The [Netherlands](#) published new salary requirements for highly skilled third-country nationals who seek to apply for Highly Skilled Migrant Permits, Intra-Corporate Transferee (ICT) Permits or EU Blue Cards.
- ▶ [Sweden](#) adopted a bill that amends its Blue Card regulations to align with the new EU Blue Card Directive. Changes include lower minimum salary requirements and greater flexibility for Blue Card holders who change jobs or employers within Sweden.
- ▶ [Switzerland](#) published an updated list of professions for which employers must file a report with their local unemployment office prior to advertising vacancies on non-government job portals.
- ▶ [Switzerland](#) fully opened its labor market to Croatian nationals, marking the end of the temporary safeguard clause period under the Free Movement of Persons Agreement (FZA). As of 2025, Croatian nationals are no longer subject to work permit quotas, and they have unrestricted access to the Swiss labor market. [Switzerland](#) also announced that the annual quotas for nationals of the UK, European Economic Area (EEA) Member States and countries outside the EEA, who seek to obtain short-term and long-term work permits (i.e., L and B Permits) in 2025, will be the same as those for 2024.
- ▶ [Türkiye](#) announced that certain companies that seek to hire foreign nationals or bring them in as partners are required to meet new heightened requirements in order to sponsor Turkish work permits for these individuals. In addition, the authorities reduced the minimum salary requirements for foreign nationals working in certain professions.

Individual obligations/benefits

- ▶ [Denmark](#) adopted a proposal to extend the Special Act on displaced persons from Ukraine (“Special Act”). Individuals who hold Danish temporary residence permits pursuant to the Special Act are now eligible for an extension of their permits until 17 March 2026.
- ▶ The [EU](#) introduced a new visa-free policy for holders of passports issued by the Serbian Coordination Directorate (Northern Kosovo) or the Directorate of the Ministry of Internal Affairs in Belgrade (Serbia) who seek to enter the Schengen Area.
- ▶ [Germany](#) renewed its national rules regarding temporary protection for Ukrainian citizens, Ukrainian permanent residents (holders of Ukrainian permanent residence permits) and individuals with international protection status or a similar national protection status in Ukraine as of 24 February 2022.

- ▶ [Ireland](#) announced that residence permit holders whose authorization expires on or after 4 November 2024 can file their renewal applications online through the Immigration Service Delivery's website, without having to visit their local Garda Immigration Office in person. [Ireland](#) also introduced a new online system that enables foreign nationals to schedule and modify their first-time registration appointments.
- ▶ [Ireland](#)'s Immigration Service Delivery announced that certain holders of Residence Permit cards may travel to and from Ireland during the Christmas period using their expired card and other relevant documents. This travel relaxation is valid from 2 December 2024 until 31 January 2025.
- ▶ [Italy](#) published several changes that impact work permit applicants (including EU Blue Card applicants) and their sponsoring companies. The new regulations will go into effect in phases starting January 2025 and are designed to streamline the application process for EU Blue Card and Italian work permit applicants.
- ▶ [Lithuania](#) announced stricter conditions for individuals who seek to apply for temporary residence permits or national visas through government-approved external service providers.
- ▶ The [Netherlands](#) imposed internal border controls on 9 December 2024, impacting its land checkpoints with Belgium and Germany and certain flights from any Schengen or non-Schengen country. Border controls will be carried out for a period of six months.
- ▶ [Slovenia](#) introduced language requirements for dependents of Single Permit holders who seek to extend their residence permits, and for permanent residence permit applicants.
- ▶ The [UK](#) updated its guidance regarding online immigration status (eVisas) to provide further clarifications to Biometric Residence Permit (BRP) holders. The [UK](#) then announced that carriers have begun to accept BRPs expiring on or after 31 December 2024 as valid evidence of permission to travel until at least 31 March 2025.
- ▶ The [UK](#) also published a Statement of Changes to its immigration rules, impacting Colombian nationals and individuals staying in the country pursuant to the Ukraine Extension scheme, among others. In addition, the Electronic Travel Authorisation (ETA) became mandatory for eligible non-European nationals on 8 January 2025 and will become mandatory for eligible European nationals in April 2025.

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I am encouraged that digitization remains a priority for governments across Europe, and I believe that this is the future “global direction.” Ireland now allows applicants to file certain renewal applications and book registration appointments online, and Italy began accepting electronic signatures for certain applications. EU policymakers are deliberating new digitization initiatives to simplify and secure travel to and from the Schengen Area. Every change seems to incorporate a technology-focused approach.

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



Looking ahead

- ▶ [Finland](#) is expected to introduce a proposal that would heighten immigration-related requirements for employers and certain third-country nationals. If approved by parliament, the amendments will go into effect on 1 April 2025.
- ▶ [Switzerland](#) is set to digitize Schengen Visa applications by 2028, aligning with the EU's new regulation requiring electronic application submissions for short-term stays of up to 90 days.



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

New immigration laws/policies

- ▶ [Israel](#) launched its Electronic Travel Authorization (ETA) system for all visa-free foreign nationals who seek to undertake short-term visits to the country for business or tourism purposes, as of 1 January 2025.
- ▶ [Saudi Arabia](#) published a new Regulation on Temporary Work Visas and Temporary Work Visas for Hajj and Umrah Services.
- ▶ [South Africa](#) announced a five-year plan to further digitize its immigration services. As part of the plan, South Africa will launch a new Electronic Travel Authorization (ETA) system for foreign nationals and enable individuals to apply for various documents online.

Employer obligations/benefits

- ▶ [South Africa](#) implemented a new points-based system for Critical Skills and General Work Visas. South Africa also amended the minimum salary and tax compliance requirements for qualifying remote workers. [South Africa](#) then issued additional clarifications regarding the points-based system.

Individual obligations/benefits

- ▶ [Kenya](#) announced the introduction of a new Class N: Digital Nomad Visa for foreign nationals who seek to work remotely from within Kenya. At the time of publication, the authorities have not yet begun accepting applications for this visa.
- ▶ [Qatar](#) announced that individuals can now submit certain documents for attestation online via the Ministry of Foreign Affairs' (MoFA) website. The authorities plan to add new online services to the MoFA's website in the upcoming months.
- ▶ [Saudi Arabia](#) announced an additional 60-day buffer period for foreign nationals whose employment contract with a private Saudi company has ended to obtain sponsorship from another employer or leave the country. This measure is effective until 29 January 2025.
- ▶ [South Africa](#) provided additional clarifications regarding the current provisions for individuals holding Zimbabwe Exemption Permits (ZEPs) and Lesotho Exemption Permits. [South Africa](#) also announced automatic extensions of all existing ZEPs until 28 November 2025.
- ▶ [Sri Lanka](#) reinstated its Electronic Travel Authorization (ETA) system for all short-term visitors, two months after suspending its new e-Visa system.

Looking ahead

- ▶ [Saudi Arabia](#) will introduce higher mandatory Saudization rates in four health professions in the private sector. In the first phase, effective 17 April 2025, the new Saudization rates will apply to all hospitals and health facilities in certain major cities. In the second phase, effective 17 October 2025, the revised rates will apply to all other health facilities in the country.

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