

Global Immigration alert

July 2025

Bulgaria

New remote work permit and stricter requirements for highly skilled workers

Executive summary

On 30 June 2025, a new law went into effect which creates a one-year residence permit for digital nomads and implements other changes that impact third country nationals who seek to work in Bulgaria, including holders of EU Blue Cards.

Key developments

The following changes went into effect on 30 June 2025:

- **Digital Nomad Permit.** Third country nationals who seek to work remotely from within Bulgaria may now apply to obtain a residence permit for remote work that is valid for an initial period of one year and may be extended once for an additional one-year period. The application process consists of two steps: applying for, and obtaining, a Type D visa from a Bulgarian embassy or consulate abroad, and then applying for, and obtaining, the residence permit from the Bulgarian immigration authorities (the Migration Directorate) after entering the country. In order to qualify, applicants must: (1) seek to work remotely from within Bulgaria using exclusively information technology (e.g., laptop, smartphone), (2) demonstrate that they received an annual income of no less than 50 times the average Bulgarian statutory minimum monthly salary in the calendar year preceding the filing of the application (for 2024 the statutory minimum monthly salary was 1077 BGN); and (3) meet one of the following conditions:
 - They are employed by a company established outside the EU, EEA or Switzerland pursuant to a valid employment contract;
 - They represent, own, manage, or hold significant shares (over 25%) in a non-EU/EEA/Swiss company that provides services outside of Bulgaria and not to - or on behalf of - any entities in the country; or
 - They provide freelance services to clients located exclusively outside of Bulgaria and have done so for no less than one year prior to applying for the residence permit.
- **Stricter educational requirements for Blue Card and Single Work and Residence Permit applicants.** Third-country nationals who seek to apply for EU Blue Cards or Single Work and Residence Permits are now required to provide the immigration authorities a certificate from the National Center for Information and Documentation recognizing their higher education degree obtained from a foreign university after entering Bulgaria with their Type D Visa. Previously, recognition of foreign nationals' diplomas by the National Center for Information and Documentation was not required, except in cases where foreign nationals sought to work in regulated professions.
- **Access to health insurance for Single Work and Residence Permit holders and seasonal workers.** Single Work and Residence Permit holders are now eligible to receive services under the state health insurance system (similar to EU Blue card holders). They are no longer required to obtain, or present proof that they have, private health insurance coverage for the entire duration of their intended stay in Bulgaria. Similarly, seasonal workers are now also eligible to receive care under the state health insurance system.
- **Proof of accommodation.** Applicants for EU Blue Cards are now only required to provide proof of their accommodations in Bulgaria at the second stage of the application process (i.e., when applying for a Type D Visa). Previously, applicants were required to provide this proof while their work permit application was still being reviewed, and prior to its approval.



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- **Change of employer.** EU Blue Card holders who have resided in Bulgaria for at least 12 months and seek to change employers within the country are now required to have their potential new employer apply for the change at the offices of the Bulgarian immigration authorities, which will then approve or deny the request. Previously, new employers of such EU Blue Card holders were merely required to notify the immigration authorities of the change, without needing any further confirmation or authorization.
- **Freelance work** for EU Blue Card holders. EU Blue Card holders may now engage in freelance work in parallel to their highly qualified employment, but only within the sector for which the permit was granted. Previously, Blue Card holders were restricted to the activities for which they were issued their Blue Cards, and they were not permitted to engage in freelance work on the side.
- **Amended definition of “highly qualified employment” in the context of EU Blue Card holders.** The new law amends the definition of highly qualified employment as it pertains to EU Blue Card applicants and now explicitly includes certain managers and specialists that are included in the National Classification of Professions and Job Positions in the field of information and communication technology for whom three years of relevant professional experience is considered sufficient to demonstrate their high qualification.

Impact on employers

On one hand, the new law seeks to modernize Bulgaria’s immigration framework, enhance its appeal as a destination for remote workers and bring economic benefits to the country without displacing local workers. On the other, it may end up limiting opportunities for highly skilled third-country nationals seeking to work in Bulgaria and thereby decrease the pool of available candidates for local employers. Employers may review their internal policies and processes, and evaluate their current talent pipelines, to ensure compliance with the new requirements, plan for future needs and mitigate delays and business disruptions.

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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