



Shape the future
with confidence

Global Immigration alert

May 2026

The better the question. The better the answer.
The better the world works.

Saudi Arabia

Saudi Arabia introduces next phase of Developed Nitaqat framework

Executive summary

On 26 April 2026 Saudi Arabia's Ministry of Human Resources and Social Development (MHRSD) introduced the next phase of the [Developed Nitaqat framework](#), which applies to private sector establishments in the country. The new phase builds on the existing Nitaqat system for assessing and classifying establishments based on their Saudization levels, with minimum requirements determined by their economic activity.

The new phase is expected to contribute to the creation of approximately 340,000 jobs for Saudi nationals over a three-year period.

Key developments

Key changes include the following:

- The framework sets out Saudization threshold values for the years 2026, 2027 and 2028, which are detailed in the Nitaqat framework.
- Minimum Saudization requirements vary by economic activity, with specific thresholds defined for each year.
- Establishments continue to be classified under the existing five Nitaqat bands:
 - Platinum
 - High Green
 - Medium Green
 - Low Green
 - Red

Nitaqat classification determines an establishment's ability to access MHRSD services, with higher bands (Platinum and High Green) benefiting from broader flexibility, while lower bands particularly Red, subject to restrictions such as no access to visas, sponsorship transfers, and work permit renewals. Entities should therefore maintain a minimum Medium Green classification to retain access to core labor and immigration services.

In addition, an establishment's Nitaqat classification is determined by comparing its Saudization percentage against the minimum thresholds applicable to its economic activity and Nitaqat band.

Impact on employers

To prepare for the next phase of the Developed Nitaqat framework, employers should review their Saudization strategy against the sector-specific increases to Saudization thresholds during the current phase to maintain compliance. Failure to plan and maintain Saudization levels accordingly may result in a downgrade of Nitaqat classification, which can lead to restrictions and may affect business operations.

Key steps

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

EY | Building a better working world

EY is building a better working world by creating new value for clients, people, society and the planet, while building trust in capital markets.

Enabled by data, AI and advanced technology, EY teams help clients shape the future with confidence and develop answers for the most pressing issues of today and tomorrow.

EY teams work across a full spectrum of services in assurance, consulting, tax, strategy and transactions. Fueled by sector insights, a globally connected, multi-disciplinary network and diverse ecosystem partners, EY teams can provide services in more than 150 countries and territories.

All in to shape the future with confidence.

EY refers to the global organization, and may refer to one or more, of the member firms of Ernst & Young Global Limited, each of which is a separate legal entity. Ernst & Young Global Limited, a UK company limited by guarantee, does not provide services to clients. Information about how EY collects and uses personal data and a description of the rights individuals have under data protection legislation are available via ey.com/privacy. EY member firms do not practice law where prohibited by local laws. For more information about our organization, please visit ey.com.

© 2026 EYGM Limited.
All Rights Reserved.

EYG no. 003357-26Gbl

2101-3682263
ED None

This material has been prepared for general informational purposes only and is not intended to be relied upon as accounting, tax, legal or other professional advice. Please refer to your advisors for specific advice.

ey.com

Xavier Brun
Partner, People Advisory Services Tax, MENA Immigration
Tel: +973 3365 1121
Email: xavier.brun@bh.ey.com

Emma Barnett
Senior Manager, People Advisory Services Tax, Saudi Immigration
Tel: +971 565018751
Email: emma.barnett@ae.ey.com

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