Global Immigration

BELGIUM

Government approves changes for highly qualified workers

The Council of Ministers has approved a preliminary draft law amending the rules governing highly qualified workers.

The amendments, which are intended to align Belgian national laws with EU law, include:

- The partial transposition of Directive (EU) 2021/1883 on the European Blue Card for highly qualified workers, namely:
  - Processing time for applications will be reduced to a maximum of 90 days
  - The rules on family reunification for this group will be simplified; and
  - Mobility within the EU will also be facilitated
- Changes to the single permit, namely:
  - The grounds for refusal and end of stay will be extended; and
  - Better protection will be established for workers who are victims of certain social offences committed by the employer
- An administrative simplification of the application process for the job search year for students and researchers
- Other technical corrections.

The proposals are explained here by the Minister for Asylum and Migration.

CANADA

Reduced completeness checks for citizenship applications submitted from abroad

On 15 May 2026, Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship Canada (IRCC) updated its operational instructions for officers processing proof of citizenship applications from individuals outside of Canada and the United States.

According to the new instructions, effective 1 March 2026, Global Affairs Canada (GAC) has reduced its role in these applications and has ceased conducting completeness checks for citizenship applications submitted abroad.

At the minimum, applications must contain the required form (CIT 0001), photographs, signatures, and fee payment before they can be accepted into processing.

Applications that do not meet these completeness requirements must be rejected with a notification of the missing information or documentation. No further processing is to be undertaken.

CHILE

New expedited business visa for Indian nationals

On 13 May 2026, the Ministry of Foreign Relations announced a new, expedited business visa for Indian citizens, aimed at attracting more trade and investment from that country.

The business visa for Indian citizens has a duration of two years during which multiple entries to Chile are allowed for a period of up to 90 days. The Ministry asserts that application processing will be more efficient, thanks to more limited response times and fewer repetitive procedures. Further details are expected in the near future.

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EUROPEAN UNION

EU adopts more favourable Schengen visa rules for Thailand

On 18 May 2026, the Thailand delegation of the European External Action Service (EEAS) announced that, on 8 May 2026, the European Commission approved the application of the European Union's Visa Cascade regime to Thai nationals residing in Thailand who apply for short-stay Schengen visas at the embassies or consulates of Schengen States in Thailand.

This was confirmed by the Thai Ministry of Foreign Affairs.

This measure, which has now come into effect, will facilitate the issuance of longer-validity short-stay visas to Thai passport holders who have previously obtained Schengen visas and maintained a good travel record, thereby reducing the need for frequent visa applications and saving both time and costs.

Under the Visa Cascade scheme, applicants who have previously obtained and lawfully used a Schengen visa may be eligible for multiple-entry visas with progressively longer validity accordingly.

The Visa Cascade is not a Schengen visa exemption. Thai passport holders will continue to be required to apply for Schengen visas through the normal process, and the applicable requirements remain unchanged. To be eligible for longer-validity visas, applicants must maintain a good travel record, including full compliance with the laws and regulations of destination countries.

Thailand is currently one of seven countries to have been granted the Visa Cascade regime, following India, Saudi Arabia, Bahrain, and Oman in 2024, and Turkey and Indonesia in 2025.

IRELAND

Changes to acknowledgement of posted documents

Immigration Service Delivery (ISD) has announced that it will no longer issue acknowledgements for documents or letters sent to us by post. This includes additional documents and queries about the progress of your application.

All post ISD receives will still be added to the applicant's file and considered when the application is assessed.

Applicants who wish to confirm that their documents have reached ISD, or who are sending original documents, should use registered post and use the tracking number to confirm delivery.

ISD recommends that, where possible, applicants send copies of documents through the Customer Service Portal.

ISD states that it is currently receiving a high number of applications and postal items. Therefore, it is focusing on processing cases for decision and streamlining background processes to help it make decisions as quickly as possible.

NEW ZEALAND

Group and Tour Escort visitor visa applications moving to enhanced Immigration Online

Effective 20 July 2026, Group visitor visa and Tour Escort visitor visa (including ADS) applications are moving to Immigration New Zealand's enhanced Immigration Online system.

Approved Destination Status (ADS) is an arrangement between the Chinese

Government and another country, that lets Chinese holiday travellers visit a country in a tour group or as a Free and Independent Traveller (FIT).

Visa products are transitioning to enhanced Immigration Online in phases. INZ first introduced this platform in 2021 and has already moved several types of visa applications onto it, including family of temporary visa holder visas, international student visas, visitor visas, accredited employer work visas and permanent resident visas.

From 20 July 2026, new applications will be automatically directed through the new system. INZ will provide further information closer to the transition date.

> Visa products are transitioning to enhanced Immigration Online in phases

SINGAPORE

Ministry updates myMOM portal with new functions

The Ministry of Manpower (MOM) has moved the work permit issuance function from Work Permit Online to its new myMOM portal.

Since 2025, work permit applications and appeals can be submitted via the new myMOM portal.

Effective 4 May 2026, employers in Singapore no longer need to:

- Separately update their worker's address and mobile number in OFWAS before getting the Work Permit issued
- Upload hard copy medical examination (ME) reports or chest x-rays. Their medical service provider (MSP) will submit the medical results directly to MOM.

Employers will now receive an email notification after the MSP submits the foreign worker's ME results. They can view their workers' ME results, update the worker's address and mobile number and issue the work permit using the new issue function.

Work permit transactions for migrant workers will continue to be moved to the new myMOM portal through 2027.

> Employers will now receive an email notification after the MSP submits the foreign worker's ME results

THAILAND

Government approves revision of Thailand's visa exemption and visa on arrival schemes

On 19 May 2026, the government approved the revision of Thailand's visa exemption and visa on arrival schemes, according to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs.

These revised measures include:

- Granting only one visa exemption scheme per country
- Revoking the 60-day visa exemption scheme for all 93 countries
- Revising the 30-day visa exemption scheme for tourism purpose and reducing the list of eligible countries (from 57) to 54 countries
- Introducing the new 15-day visa exemption scheme for tourism purpose for three countries; and
- Revising visa on arrival and reducing the list of eligible countries (from 31) to four countries.

The 60-day visa exemption scheme was introduced in July 2024.

UNITED KINGDOM

Right to work check guidance clarified

On 20 May 2026, the government updated its guidance for sponsors of overseas workers to clarify right to work check requirements.

Previous amendments, published on 6 March 2026 and 8 April 2026, suggested that sponsors were required to undertake right to work checks on unsponsored workers '(directly) engaged' but not employed by them.

Following user feedback, this reference has now been deleted and any reference in those versions to unsponsored workers 'engaged' or 'directly engaged' by the sponsor should be disregarded.

The newly amended guidance states that sponsors are required to undertake right to work checks on:

"...any worker you wish to sponsor (including a worker who is not your direct employee), or any worker you otherwise wish to employ (whether sponsored or not)."

> ...any worker you wish to sponsor (including a worker who is not your direct employee), or any worker you otherwise wish to employ (whether sponsored or not)

UNITED STATES

Visa operations paused in several countries

The State Department has announced that, effective 18 May 2026, the US Embassies in Juba, South Sudan; Kinshasa, Democratic Republic of the Congo; and Kampala, Uganda have temporarily paused all visa services in light of an ongoing Ebola outbreak.

ENVOY GLOBAL
(Formerly SMITH STONE WALTERS)
If you have any questions about these changes or would like to discuss how they may affect your organisation, our team is here to help. Please get in touch with a member of the Envoy Global, team for support and advice - https://smithstonewalters.com/.