



# GLOBAL IMMIGRATION TRENDS – March 2026

## Introduction

As the year 2026 progresses, governments across various jurisdictions continue to evolve their immigration policies at a rapid pace. Recent measures such as regulatory refinements, changes to eligibility frameworks, and updates to levy structures affecting various visa categories have become a central focus of policy makers worldwide. Additionally, the conflict in the Middle East which has caused air travel disruptions has warranted concessions and assistance to travellers by the countries affected. It is therefore important to monitor policy changes to understand their potential impact on global mobility planning, workforce deployment and compliance.

## Africa

### Uganda

#### UGANDA SECURES VISA-FREE TRAVEL WITH EGYPT AND THE UAE

Effective February 10, 2026, the Republic of Uganda and the United Arab Emirates commenced implementation of a bilateral visa waiver agreement following ratification by both governments. Under the agreement, reciprocal visa-free travel is granted to holders of diplomatic and service passports for stays of up to ninety (90) days.

Ugandan holders of diplomatic and service passports may enter the United Arab Emirates without a visa for up to ninety (90) days within any 180-day period.

**It is important to note that Ugandan nationals holding ordinary passports are not covered by this visa waiver and must continue to obtain the appropriate visa prior to travel to the United Arab Emirates.**

Conversely, nationals of the United Arab Emirates holding diplomatic, special, ordinary, or service passports are exempt from visa requirements for entry into Uganda for stays of up to ninety (90) days.

Notwithstanding the exemption, standard entry requirements remain applicable, including possession of a valid passport and, where required, proof of onward or return travel.

### Nigeria

#### FEDERAL GOVERNMENT SET TO BEGIN REAL TIME MONITORING OF VISA DEFAULTERS IN NIGERIA

At the Ministry of Interior 2026 Sectoral Retreat held in Abuja, Nigeria, the Minister of Interior, Olubunmi Tuni-Ojo (the **"Minister"**) announced that the Federal Government now has the capacity to track visa overstayers in Nigeria through a new technology-driven monitoring system.

The new system, known as the Integrated Operation Center (the **"IOC"**) allows authorities to monitor the movement of travellers entering the country and identify individuals who remain beyond the validity of their visas.

The Minister stated that the IOC is designed to strengthen Nigeria's migration control system by harmonising data on travellers entering the country while also improving expatriate administration. He also stated the ministry has begun consolidating immigration data and equipping personnel with digital tools and training to improve border monitoring.

This is a welcomed development as the IOC enables the government to take stronger control of Nigeria's border space by keeping real-time records of travelers and monitoring visa compliance.

## Middle East

In response to the recent escalation of hostilities in parts of the Middle East, which continues to disrupt international air travel, several countries in the region are offering concessions and support to affected travellers.

### Israel

Amid the ongoing crises in the Middle East, Israel is allowing for automatic visa extensions for visas with validity expiring between February 22, 2026, and March 31, 2026. The extension applies to holders of B-1 (General Work Visa), B-2 (Tourist Visa), B-4 (Volunteer Visa), A-1 (Temporary Resident Visa), A-2 (Student Visa – excluding agricultural trainees), A-3 (Clergy Visa), A-4 (Companion Visa), A-5 (Temporary Resident Visa) and DCL permits (for family reunification and humanitarian). It is not clear whether employer-sponsored B-1 work visas (such as Experts) are being automatically extended.

The visas will be automatically extended by three (3) months. It should be noted that this extension is processed automatically, and no physical visit is required.

### Kuwait

Kuwait announced that effective February 28, 2026, all types of visit entry visas that have expired or are due to expire will be automatically extended for one (1) month. Additionally, all related fines and applicable fees will be waived during this period.

Residents that are currently outside Kuwait and have exceeded the permitted absence period and are unable to return to the Kuwait will automatically be granted a three (3) month absence permit, exempt from fines and fees. It has been stated that these measures may be extended further depending on regional developments.

### Qatar

Effective from February 28, 2026, the Qatar Ministry of Interior has announced the extension of all categories of entry visas that have expired or are nearing expiration for a period of one (1) month. The Ministry confirmed that the extension will be processed automatically through the approved electronic systems, with exemptions from fees, and without need to visit the relevant departments or submit additional applications.

The Ministry however clarified that individuals holding visas of all types that incurred violations prior to February 28, 2026, must first settle the prescribed reconciliation fine for the period of overstay. Thereafter, the extension and fee exemption shall apply to them.

### United Arab Emirates

The UAE has announced that individuals unable to leave the country due to flight disruptions will be exempt from fines for delayed departures. This applies to holders of visit or tourist visas, exit permits, and residents who have cancelled their UAE residency in preparation for departure. The exemption is effective from February 28, 2026, and any related penalties will be waived.

Additionally, Foreign residents whose UAE residence permits expired while they were outside the country can return to the United Arab Emirates without obtaining a new entry permit. This concession is effective until March 31, 2026. Once in the United Arab Emirates, affected residents will be permitted to regularize their immigration status without incurring any related penalties, where the permit expiry resulted from the current travel disruptions.





**NOTE:** Some tourist destinations have implemented traveller assistance measures for foreign tourists currently in their country who are unable to leave due to air travel disruptions. They include:

- a. **Sri Lanka:** the Sri Lankan government has granted a free fourteen (14) day extension of visa validity for tourists currently in the country.
- b. **Indonesia:** Indonesia has initiated the issuance of an emergency stay permit valid for up to thirty (30) days and renewable if necessary. Additionally, there is a waiver of fines for travellers who overstay due to flight disruptions, provided they present documentation from the airline or airport authority.
- c. **Maldives:** the Maldivian Immigration Services issued a statement specifying that tourist visas will be extended for visitors currently in the country who are unable to depart before their authorised stay expires due to flight cancellations.
- d. **Thailand:** foreign nationals in Thailand whose permitted stay has expired and who are unable to depart due to the Middle East airspace closure may either leave the country once travel resumes without overstay penalties or apply for a Temporary Stay Extension of up to thirty (30) days, subject to the immigration department's discretion. Applicants must submit a copy of their passport, the required application forms and a letter explaining the necessity for the extension to support their request.

**North America**

**United States of America**

**THE USCIS ANNOUNCES REGISTRATION PERIOD FOR THE FISCAL YEAR 2027 H-1B CAP**

The United States Citizenship and Immigration Services (“USCIS”) has announced that the initial registration period for the Fiscal Year 2027 H-1B cap will run from March 4, 2026, to March 19, 2026. During this period, employers and their authorised representatives must submit electronic registrations for each beneficiary via a USCIS online account and pay a registration fee of Two-Hundred Fifteen United States Dollars (US\$215.00) per beneficiary.

Employers that do not yet have a USCIS online account must create an account before participating. While representatives may add company clients at any time, both employers and representatives may begin entering beneficiary information and submitting registrations only from March 4, 2026.

USCIS will then issue selection notifications through online accounts by March 31, 2026. Only petitioners with a selected registration will be eligible to file an H 1B cap subject petition, including petitions filed under the advanced degree exemption.

Find More: <https://www.uscis.gov/newsroom/alerts/fy-2027-h-1b-cap-initial-registration-period-opens-on-march-4>

**Canada**

**CANADA ANNOUNCES NEW CATEGORIES AND RULES FOR EXPRESS ENTRY**

On February 18, 2026, the Canadian Minister of Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship, Lena Metlege Diab, announced new categories to the Express Entry pool. The new categories are; Researchers with Canadian work experience, Senior managers with Canadian work experience, Transport occupations and Skilled military recruits with a job offer from the Canadian Armed Forces. The Minister also announced the renewal of existing categories for French speakers, skilled trades workers, STEM, education, and healthcare occupations.

It must be noted that applicants who have one (1) year of work experience during the last three (3) years in these eligible occupations will be prioritized for the forthcoming draws. This marks a change from the previous requirement of six (6) months of work experience in the occupation. Executives would also need one (1) year of work experience in their occupation in Canada to be eligible for these draws.

This initiative is part of Canada's broader International Talent Attraction Strategy and aligns with the government's priority to return immigration to sustainable levels while supporting the country's economic resilience.

**CANADA TO CHANGE HOW THE PARENTS AND GRANDPARENTS SUPER VISA INCOME REQUIREMENT IS CALCULATED**

Starting March 31, 2026, the Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship Canada (“IRCC”) will change how it calculates family income for super visa eligibility, making the program more equitable and accessible to more families while ensuring parents and grandparents are financially supported during their stay in Canada.

The new approach will provide hosts with two (2) alternative ways to meet the income requirement. The first approach is extending the income assessment period; hosts and their co-signer (if applicable) may meet or exceed the income requirement in either one of the two taxation years preceding the time of application. Previously, IRCC assessed only the year before. The second is allowing the income of the visiting parent or grandparent to be added; here if the hosts and their co-signer (if applicable) meet the required minimum percentage of income, the income of the visiting parents and grandparents can be added to cover the remaining amount.

The above changes make the visa more accessible while ensuring parents and grandparents are financially supported during their stay.

**Asia**

**India**

**INDIA REACHES RECIPROCAL AGREEMENT WITH BRAZIL TO EXTEND VALIDITY OF VISITOR VISAS**

As of February 2026, India and Brazil reached a reciprocal agreement to extend the maximum validity of visitor visas issued to each other's nationals from five (5) years to ten (10) years.

This Agreement was formalized through Verbal Note No. 164, issued jointly by the South America Division of Brazil's Ministry of Foreign Affairs and the Brazilian Embassy in New Delhi. Under the new framework, Indian and Brazilian nationals applying for tourism or business visas will be eligible for multiple entry permits valid for up to ten (10) years. Tourists visa holders will be allowed continuous stays of up to ninety (90) days while business visa holders will be allowed continuous stays of up to one-hundred and eighty (180) days per entry.

This updated arrangement significantly extends travel flexibility, strengthens mobility and is expected to facilitate business, tourism, and people to people exchanges between the two (2) countries.

**INDIA DISCONTINUES THE ACCEPTANCE OF POI CARDS**

Effective March 5, 2026, the Bureau of Immigration in India, along with Indian missions worldwide, has discontinued the acceptance of Person of Indian Origin (“PIO”) cards as valid travel documents for entering or exiting India, even when accompanied by a valid passport.

PIO cardholders are required to immediately convert their PIO cards to Overseas Citizen of India (“OCI”) cards before undertaking any travel. Failure to complete this conversion will require them to obtain a visa from the relevant Indian Mission or Post abroad for travel to India.

It is important to note that PIO-to-OCI conversion is not automatic. Cardholders must submit a formal application to receive an OCI card, which is issued as a physical, machine-readable document. Applicants must provide a completed online application (Part A and B), valid foreign passport, 2x2-inch photos, and the original PIO card. After completing the online form, physical documents are submitted to the Indian High Commission or VFS office.

**Indonesia**

**INDONESIA INTRODUCES NEW GLOBAL CITIZENSHIP SCHEME**

As of late January 2026, Indonesia has introduced significant changes to its immigration system through the new **Global Citizenship Indonesia (“GCI”) scheme**, a status designed to provide eligible foreign nationals with long-term and permanent stay options, specifically for former Indonesian citizens and their descendants.

This scheme offers different visa types focused on ancestry rather than employment or investment, with stay permits ranging from five (5) years to permanent residency.





These permits are not intended for employer sponsored assignments or foreign hires, as eligibility is based strictly on lineage and citizenship history rather than employment. Additionally, GCI does not confer work rights and holders must still obtain the appropriate work permit to work in Indonesia.

It should be noted that while the program has been formally announced, implementing regulations and detailed application procedures are still pending.

### Singapore

#### SINGAPORE INCREASES SALARY THRESHOLD FOR NEW EMPLOYMENT PASS APPLICANTS

The Singapore Government announced on February 12, 2026, that there will be higher salary thresholds for foreign work passes to align with the top one-third of local Professionals, Managers, Executives and Technicians (PMETs) wages.

Accordingly, from January 1, 2027, the minimum qualifying salary for new Employment Pass (EP) applications will be increased from Five Thousand Six Hundred Singapore Dollars (SGD\$ 5,600.00), (equivalent to approximately USD\$4,400.00) to Six Thousand Singapore Dollars (SGD\$ 6,000.00) (equivalent to approximately USD\$4,714.00) whereas for the financial sector from Six Thousand, Two Hundred Singapore Dollars (SGD\$ 6,200.00) (equivalent to approximately USD\$4,871.00) to Six Thousand, Six Hundred Singapore Dollars (SGD\$ 6,600.00) (equivalent to approximately USD\$5,186.00). This qualifying salary will also rise with the age of the applicant; minimum salary for those over forty-five (45) years will increase to Eleven Thousand, Five Hundred Singapore Dollars (SGD\$11,500.00) (equivalent to approximately USD\$9,036.00) and Twelve Thousand, Seven Hundred Singapore (SGD\$12,700.00) (equivalent to approximately USD\$9,979.00) respectively. These changes will apply to EP renewals from 1 January 2028.

The minimum qualifying salaries for S Pass applicants will also rise from January 2027, and from 2028 for renewals. The threshold will increase to Three Thousand, Six Hundred Singapore Dollars (SGD\$3,600.00) (equivalent to approximately USD\$2,828.00) (Four Thousand Singapore Dollars (SGD\$4,000) (equivalent to approximately USD\$3,143.00) for financial services), with higher age-based requirements reaching up to Five Thousand, One Hundred Singapore Dollars (SGD\$5,100.00) (equivalent to approximately USD\$4,007.00) and Five Thousand, Six Hundred and Fifty Singapore Dollars (SGD\$5,650.00) (equivalent to approximately USD\$4,439.00) for finance.

This policy reflects Singapore's approach to stay open to skills and expertise that strengthen the economy, while ensuring that Singaporeans remain firmly at the center of the workforce and policies.

### Armenia

#### ARMENIA POSTPONES NEW WORK VISA SYSTEM TO NOVEMBER 2026

Armenia has postponed the rollout of immigration reforms that will reshape how foreign workers enter and live in the country which were earlier scheduled to begin on August 1, 2026. The reforms are now scheduled to take effect on November 1, 2026.

The reforms introduced a dedicated work visa, annual quotas for foreign workers, and fully digital residence permit applications. These reforms are designed to streamline the immigration system while improving oversight of foreign employment.

Currently, Armenia does not operate a specific work visa system. Many foreign workers enter the country on a visit visa and begin short-term work while applying for a residence permit. Under the new immigration rules, foreign nationals must first obtain a work visa before applying for a temporary residence permit with work rights. The visa will allow either single or multiple entries into the country. It will also permit a stay of up to one hundred and twenty (120) days per year and cost Fifteen Thousand Armenian Dirham (AMD 15,000) which is equivalent to approximately Forty United States Dollars (USD\$40.00). The new system effectively creates a two-step process for foreign workers seeking employment in Armenia.

The changes are expected to affect international professionals, foreign residents, and companies that rely on global talent to fill skill gaps in the country's labour market.

### Hong Kong

#### HONG KONG UPDATES RULES ON SOME VISA CATEGORIES

Effective March 1, 2026, assignees admitted under the General Employment Policy ("GEP"), Mainland Talents & Professionals ("ASMTP"), the Science & Technology Talent Admission Scheme, the Quality Migrant Admission Scheme and the popular Arrangement for Non-Local Graduates may now apply to extend their stay up to ninety (90) days before their current limit of stay expires.

Under the old rules, renewal applications could be filed only four (4) weeks before expiry which often caused assignees to be worried about inadvertent overstays in the event that approvals do not come in time and global mobility teams little time to make applications.

This change therefore gives global mobility teams more planning flexibility and removes the fears of overstays from assignees. This new policy is also signals that the Hong Kong government is determined to retain its foreign expertise.

### Europe

#### EUROPEAN UNION (EU) WILL REQUIRE BIOMETRIC CHECKS FOR ALL VISITORS

Starting April 10, 2026, the new Entry/Exit System ("EES") will be fully operational at all EU border crossings in the Schengen Area which requires visitors to provide fingerprints and facial biometric photos upon entry, marking a major shift from the traditional manual passport stamp system.

Once a traveler registers with the EES at the border checkpoint, the biometric data remains on file for three (3) years before it needs to be renewed. The stored data will be tracked throughout ones stay in the Schengen Area.

### United Kingdom

#### UK GOVERNMENT IMPOSES VISA BRAKE ON FOUR COUNTRIES AFTER WIDESPREAD VISA ABUSE

The Government of the United Kingdom (the "UK") on March 4, 2026, through the Home Office Secretary, Shabana Mahmood (the "Secretary"), announced the imposition of an "emergency brake" on study visas for nations from four (4) countries following a surge in asylum claims from legal routes. The countries are Afghanistan, Cameroon, Myanmar and Sudan.

According to the UK government, asylum applications by students from the above-mentioned countries rocketed by over four hundred and seventy percent (470%) between 2021 and 2025, thus making them among the most likely nationalities to claim.

Additionally, there will also be no skilled worker visas issued to nationals of Afghanistan as it is reported that the number of Afghans on work visas claiming asylum is now outstripping the number of visas issued.

The Secretary stated that the government is clamping down on visa abuse to be able to maintain UK's ability and proud tradition of helping those genuinely in need.

#### UK TO IMPOSE A-LEVEL STANDARD ENGLISH TEST FOR MIGRANTS SEEKING PERMANENT RESIDENCY

The UK Home Secretary, Shabana Mahmood (the "Secretary"), announced on March 5, 2026, that migrants seeking permanent residence in the UK will be required to demonstrate a higher level of English proficiency by writing an A-level standard English test effective March 2027.

This new policy involves meeting A-level equivalent standards in reading, writing, speaking and listening, representing an increase from the current GCSE-level requirement. The reform is part of the wider "Earned Settlement" framework, which seeks to reward migrants who contribute positively to the UK economy and society.

The government has, however, not yet published a definitive list of approved tests for the new standard, though the announcement makes clear that certification through an official, accredited examination will be mandatory rather than optional or subject to discretionary waiver.

According to the Secretary, this policy is aimed at encouraging stronger integration and participation in British Society.





## UK TO INCREASE VISA, ETA AND CITIZENSHIP FEES

On March 18, 2026, the UK announced a series of increases in the charges associated with many visa categories. The change in applicable charges is to take effect from April 8, 2026.

According to the UK Home Office, the ETA fee will rise to Twenty British Pounds (£20) (equivalent to approximately USD\$27) amounting to an increase of Four British Pounds (£4) from the previous amount.

With regards to visiting visa categories, the standard short-term visit visa (up to six months) will increase from One Hundred and Twenty-Seven British Pounds (£127) (approximately equivalent to USD\$170) to One Hundred and Thirty-Five British Pounds (£135) (approximately equivalent to USD\$180). On the other hand, long-term visit visas for two (2) years will increase from Four Hundred and Seventy-Five British Pounds (£475) (approximately equivalent to USD\$634) to Five Hundred and Six British Pounds (£506) (approximately equivalent to USD\$675), the five (5) year visa will increase from Eight Hundred and Forty-Eight British Pounds (£848) (approximately equivalent to USD\$1130) to Nine Hundred and Three Pound (£903) (approximately equivalent to USD\$1204), while the ten (10) year visa will increase from One Thousand and Fifty-Nine British Pounds (£1,059) (approximately equivalent to USD\$1412) to One Thousand, One Hundred and Twenty-Eight British Pounds (£1,128) (approximately equivalent to USD\$1505).

On citizenship fees, the naturalization fee will rise from One Thousand, Six Hundred and Five British Pounds (£1,605) (approximately equivalent to USD\$2140) to One Thousand, Seven Hundred and Nine British Pounds (£1,709) (approximately equivalent to USD\$2280) while the fee for adult registration of citizenship will reach One Thousand, Five Hundred and Forty British Pounds (£1,540) (approximately equivalent to USD\$2055). A notable exception is registration fees for children are being reduced, dropping from One Thousand, Two Hundred and Fourteen British Pounds (£1,214) (approximately equivalent to USD\$1620) to One Thousand British Pounds (£1,000) (approximately equivalent to USD\$1335).

It should be noted that applications submitted before the effective date will remain subject to the current rates, while any application initiated from that point onward will fall under the new fee schedule.

## Germany

### GERMANY REVISES EU BLUE CARD SALARY THRESHOLDS FOR 2026

Germany has updated its EU Blue Card requirements for 2026 following their implementation of the new EU Directive (“Directive”), adjusting salary thresholds and clarifying eligibility criteria.

Under this Directive, standard occupations, would have an increased threshold for a gross annual salary of Fifty Thousand, Seven Hundred Euros (€50,700.00) (equivalent to approximately USD\$59,364.00) from Forty-Eight Thousand, Three Hundred Euros (€48,300.00) (equivalent to approximately USD\$56,554.00) and where the occupation is identified as a shortage field, such as engineering, healthcare or natural sciences, the threshold is Forty-Five Thousand, Nine Hundred and Thirty-Four Euros (€45,934.00) (equivalent to approximately USD\$53,783.00) from Forty-Three Thousand, Seven Hundred and Fifty-Nine Euros (€43,759.00) (equivalent to approximately USD\$51,237.00)

In addition to meeting the salary threshold, applicants must hold a specific job offer that satisfies the following conditions:

1. Employment duration of at least six (6) months.
2. The job corresponds to the applicant’s qualifications and proven professional experience.

These changes are effective for all EU Blue Card applications submitted in Germany from 2026 onward.

## Portugal

### PORTUGAL CHANGES SUBMISSION METHOD FOR INVESTMENT RESIDENCE PERMIT RENEWALS

The Portuguese government has announced that starting February 16, 2026, all Authorisation for Residence for Investment (“ARI”) renewals must be done exclusively through the Agency for Integration, Migration and Asylum’s (“AIMA”) Renewal Portal.

Following the above, in person attendance will only be required at the biometric data collection stage. The application will generally be submitted online, and an appointment will be scheduled after the online submission has been successfully submitted.

These changes are expected to ensure better procedural speed, reduce unnecessary travel, strengthen the security and integrity of the data processes and enhance the overall experience of residents and investors.

Find More: <https://aima.gov.pt/pt/noticias/portugal-de-renovacoes-aima-disponibiliza-renovacao-de-ari>

## Sweden

### SWEDEN PROPOSES STRICTER CITIZENSHIP RULES

The Swedish government on February 9, 2026, published a draft legislative proposal outlining stricter requirements for obtaining Swedish citizenship.

The new rules highlighted in the proposal include longer residence requirements from five (5) years to eight (8) years, higher standards for conduct, self-sufficiency - applicants are expected to be able to support themselves with roughly Twenty Thousand Swedish Krona (20,000 SEK) (equivalent to approximately USD\$2,186.00) per month and adequate language skills and civic knowledge.

The proposed changes are intended to take effect on June 6, 2026. These changes are intended to strengthen the value of citizenship and encourage stronger integration into the Swedish society.

## Ireland

### IRELAND RAISES SALARY THRESHOLDS FOR EMPLOYMENT PERMITS

The government of Ireland has raised salary thresholds for employment permits which take effect from March 1, 2026. The increment aims to phase out lower salary thresholds in the agri food and healthcare sectors while supporting early career graduates with adjusted entry level rates.

The salary changes are as follows: from Thirty-Four Thousand Euros (€34,000.00) (equivalent to approximately USD\$39,804.00) to Thirty-six Thousand, Six Hundred and Five Euros (€36,605.00) (equivalent to approximately USD\$42,853.00) for General Employment Permit (“GEP”), from Thirty-Eight Thousand Euros (€38,000.00) (equivalent to approximately USD\$44,487.00) to Forty Thousand Nine Hundred and Four Euros (€40,904.00) (equivalent to approximately USD\$47,886.00) for Critical Skills Employment Permit (“CSEP”), from Sixty-Four Thousand Euros (€64,000.00) (equivalent to approximately USD\$74,925.00) to Sixty-Eight Thousand Nine Hundred And Eleven Euros (€68,911.00) (equivalent to approximately USD\$80,675.00) for Critical Skills Employment Permit (“CSEP”) without relevant degree and from Forty-Six Thousand Euros (€46,000.00) (equivalent to approximately USD\$53,852.00) to Forty-Nine Thousand Five Hundred and Twenty-Three Euros (€49,523.00) (equivalent to approximately USD\$57,977.00) for Intra-Company Transfer (“ICT”).

It should be noted that the government intends to implement changes gradually until 2030, rather than completing all increases at once.

## Spain

### SPAIN LAUNCHES PUBLIC CONSULTATION ON REGULARISATION PROCESS FOR FOREIGN NATIONALS RESIDING IN SPAIN

The government of Spain has launched a period of public consultation on the implementation of a newly approved extraordinary regularization process for undocumented foreign nationals currently residing in the country.

According to the Spanish government, the process of regularization will only apply to all foreign nationals who were already present in Spain before December 31, 2025, and who demonstrate at least five (5) months of continuous residence in the country at the time of application. In addition to the residence criteria, applicants must have no criminal record and must not pose a threat to public order of public security. The Spanish government has also stated that people who applied for asylum before December 31, 2025, fall within the scope of the process.

Individuals who meet the eligibility criteria will be granted a one (1) year residence authorization. This authorization includes the right to work throughout Spain and in any sector.





The government has also indicated that once an application is formally admitted for processing, applicants may begin working legally while their case is being decided. It should however be noted that after the first year, the holders will be required to transition into one of Spain's ordinary residence pathways under the general immigration framework. Regularization is therefore an entry point into legal status and not permanent residence.

Applications are expected to open around April 2026, and run until late June 2026, pending final approval of the decree.

## Oceania

### New Zealand

#### NEW ZEALAND MAKES CHANGES TO THE SKILLED MIGRANT RESIDENT VISA

The government of New Zealand has announced changes to the Skilled Migrant Category ("SMC") Resident Visa with the addition of two (2) new residence pathways.

The first pathway is the skilled worker experience pathway; this is for migrants in skilled roles with at least five (5) years of directly relevant work experience, including two (2) years in New Zealand earning at least 1.1 times the median wage.

The second pathway is the trades and technician pathway; this is for migrants in specified trades or technician roles who hold a relevant Level four (4) or higher qualification and have at least four (4) years of post-qualification experience, including eighteen (18) months in New Zealand paid at or above the median wage.

In addition to the above requirements, applicants under both pathways will still need to meet other requirements for residence such as health, character and the English Language requirement.

These pathways will open in August 2026 with more detailed information being made available as the commencement draws closer.

## Conclusion

These early-year developments in immigration policies underscore the continually evolving global landscape, where states are constantly adjusting entry requirements to balance national interests and mobility needs. So far, we have observed more bilateral agreements, increases in salary or eligibility thresholds, and the introduction of new pathways aligned with national priorities, including enhanced protections for citizens. We have also observed immigration policy changes in response to ongoing conflicts. It is essential to closely monitor these developments to ensure ongoing compliance and informed planning for international mobility.

This alert is for general information only. It is not offered as advice on any particular matter, whether legal, procedural or otherwise.

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For additional information, please contact Bloomfield LP Email- [immigration@bloomfield-law.com](mailto:immigration@bloomfield-law.com) or your usual contact at Bloomfield LP.

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