Bloomfield LP

WORLD IMMIGRATION BRIEF

August 2026

GLOBAL IMMIGRATION TRENDS - August 2026

Introduction

Immigration frameworks across major jurisdictions continue to evolve as governments strengthen border management systems and forge new bilateral and multilateral mobility agreements worldwide. This update highlights the most significant recent developments in global immigration, spanning digital travel authorization rollouts, changes to visa and residence eligibility criteria, sector-specific labour mobility measures, and judicial and regulatory interventions affecting cross-border movement.

Africa

Nigeria

NIGERIA DEPLOYS PASSPORT INTERVENTION TEAM TO THE UNITED KINGDOM TO FACILITATE DIASPORA APPLICATIONS

The Nigeria Immigration Service (the **"NIS"**), on the directive of the Minister of Interior, Dr Olubunmi Tunji-Ojo, deployed a dedicated Passport Intervention Team to the United Kingdom from August 10, 2026, to work alongside the Nigerian High Commission in London to clear pending passport applications and facilitate new applications and renewals for Nigerians in the diaspora.

The intervention is open to applicants with pending passport applications, new applicants, and holders of passports with less than one (1) year remaining before expiry.
As part of the exercise, the intervention team is set to visit designated cities across the United Kingdom to conduct passport enrolment and processing, enabling eligible applicants outside London to participate.

Interested applicants are advised to monitor the official communication channels of the Nigerian High Commission in the United Kingdom for the detailed schedule, and not to attend any location until it has been officially communicated.

It should be noted that the NIS has confirmed that its existing digital passport application channels, including the Contactless Passport Application System and home delivery service, remain fully operational throughout the exercise.

Kenya

KENYA INTRODUCES MANDATORY TRAVEL HEALTH INSURANCE FOR FOREIGN VISITORS

On July 30, 2026, Kenya's Health Cabinet Secretary published Gazette Notice No. 11492 (the **"Notice"**), pursuant to the Social Health Insurance Act, 2023 and the Social Health Insurance Regulations, 2024. The Notice prescribes mandatory minimum travel health insurance benefits and coverage limits for non-Kenyan nationals intending to enter and remain in Kenya for a period less than twelve (12) months.

Under the Notice, affected travellers are required to have travel health insurance with a minimum cumulative cover benefit of at least Fifty Thousand United States Dollars (US$50,000.00) for the duration of their stay in Kenya. The minimum benefits prescribed under the Notice include:

a) Twenty Thousand United States Dollars (US$20,000.00) for medical expenses;

b) Twenty-Five Thousand United States Dollars (US$25,000.00) for emergency medical transportation and evacuation;

c) Five Thousand United States Dollars (US$5,000.00) for repatriation of mortal remains;

d) One Thousand, Three Hundred United States Dollars (US$1,300.00) for mental health treatment and prescribed medicines.

It should be noted that the Fifty Thousand United States Dollars (US$50,000.00) figure represents the minimum value of insurance benefits and is not the amount that a traveller is required to pay as a premium for the policy. The Notice further provided that the insurance was to be underwritten by insurers approved and licensed under Kenya's Insurance Act.

The requirement was intended to be incorporated into Kenya's Electronic Travel Authorisation (**"eTA"**) process, with travellers expected to provide evidence of compliant insurance cover. **However, implementation and enforcement of the Notice have since been suspended by the High Court in Marsabit.** On August 21, 2026, Justice Francis Rayola Olel issued interim orders restraining the implementation and enforcement of the mandatory travel health insurance requirement pending further proceedings. The matter is scheduled for further hearing on **September 16, 2026.**

Accordingly, **the requirement is currently not enforceable pending the outcome of the court proceedings.** The legal position may therefore change following the hearing and any subsequent orders of the Court.

South Africa

SOUTH AFRICA LAUNCHES ELECTRONIC TRAVEL AUTHORISATION SYSTEM

On August 12, 2026, the President of South Africa, Cyril Ramaphosa officially launched South Africa's Electronic Travel Authorisation (**"eTA"**) system at the O.R. Tambo International Airport, Johannesburg. The launch marked the formal rollout of the eTA as a central component of South Africa's digital immigration reform programme.

The South Africa eTA website is a fully digital immigration platform enabling eligible travellers to apply online for visitor travel authorisation without visiting a South African embassy or visa centre. Applicants can complete their visa applications, provide biometric information and receive an outcome digitally.

The first phase of the eTA rollout applies to nationals of China, India, Indonesia and Mexico, and covers short-term tourism and business visits of up to ninety (90) days, with the option of a single ninety (90)-day extension. The system incorporates biometric verification, facial recognition and machine learning-based risk assessment. It is also designed to allow pre-arrival screening before travellers reach the South African borders.

The South African Government has indicated that the eTA will progressively expand to include other nationalities and immigration categories, including student, spousal and work visas, in the coming weeks.

Travellers from countries that currently benefit from visa-free entry into South Africa are, at present, not required to obtain an ETA.

CIVIL SOCIETY MOVEMENT SETS SEPTEMBER 30 DEADLINE FOR UNDOCUMENTED FOREIGN NATIONALS TO LEAVE SOUTH AFRICA

On August 17, 2026, March and March, a South African civil society movement critical of undocumented migration, announced September 30, 2026, as a fresh deadline by which its undocumented foreign nationals must leave South Africa. The fresh deadline, which follows an earlier, unofficial June 30, 2026, deadline set by the same movement, was announced during a protest staged outside the 46th SADC Summit in Durban.

It should be noted that the September 30 deadline has been set by a private advocacy movement and does not reflect a policy position or directive of the South African Government. President Cyril Ramaphosa has publicly acknowledged the challenges posed by undocumented migration, while cautioning against the scapegoating of foreign nationals for the country's broader economic difficulties, and the South African Government has not indicated any plan to conduct mass deportations by the date set by the movement.

Deportation of undocumented individuals in South Africa continues to be governed by existing immigration enforcement procedures administered by the Department of Home Affairs, rather than by externally imposed deadlines. Individuals and organisations with personnel affected by immigration status questions in South Africa are advised to verify their position directly through the Department of Home Affairs.

Egypt

EGYPT PILOTS DIGITAL VISA-ON-ARRIVAL SYSTEM AT CAIRO AIRPORT

Effective August 1, 2026, Egypt's Ministry of Tourism and Antiquities launched a pilot digital visa-on-arrival system, replacing the traditional paper visa sticker with a QR code for eligible travellers arriving at Cairo International Airport.

Eligible travellers may obtain the QR code visa in advance through a dedicated mobile application or the official online portal, or on arrival via self-service kiosks at Cairo International Airport, with each QR code valid for seven (7) days from issuance.

The digital visa permits a single entry and a stay of up to thirty (30) days for tourism purposes only, at a total cost of approximately Thirty-Six United States Dollars (US$36.00). It should be noted that during the pilot phase, traditional bank teller windows remain available at Cairo International Airport for travellers who prefer the conventional process.
Presently, the initiative is limited to Cairo International Airport only, with other Egyptian airports continuing to operate under the existing paper-based visa-on-arrival arrangement pending the outcome of the pilot phase. Egypt has not announced a timeline for extending the digital system to other airports or to other visa categories.

North America

United States of America

U.S. LAUNCHES PUBLIC CHARGE BOND PILOT PROGRAMME FOR IMMIGRANT VISA APPLICANTS

On August 5, 2026, the U.S. Department of State (**"DOS"**) announced the implementation of a pilot programme permitting consular officers to require certain immigrant visa applicants who have been found inadmissible on public charge grounds under section 212(a)(4) of the Immigration and Nationality Act to apply for a Public Charge Bond through the U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services (**"USCIS"**) as an additional pathway to overcome the finding.

Under the pilot programme, where a consular officer determines that an immigrant visa applicant is otherwise eligible but inadmissible solely on public charge[1] grounds, the officer may direct the applicant to apply for a bond. If USCIS approves the bond, which may be set at amounts up to Two Hundred and Fifty Thousand United States Dollars (US$250,000.00) depending on the circumstances of the case, the consular officer may proceed to issue the visa. The bond is refundable where the individual does not become a public charge.

DOS has clarified that the process applies only to select cases identified by consular officers and cannot be initiated by applicants on their own accord. It should be noted that this pilot programme does not affect the validity of visas already issued. The measure follows the DOS's January 2026 suspension of immigrant visa issuance for nationals of seventy-five (75) countries pending a review of public charge screening procedures.

THE U.S EMBASSY IN NORTH AFRICA REVOKES VISAS TIED TO BIRTH TOURISM

The DOS, on August 10, 2026, has disclosed that a U.S Embassy in North Africa has revoked over One Hundred (100) visas issued to individuals identified as "birth tourist" whose primary purpose for travelling to the U.S. was to give birth to enable their children obtain the U.S. birth right citizenship.

According to the DOS, the enforcement action is part of its ongoing efforts to identify and revoke visas obtained through misrepresentation, fraudulent documentation or other abuse of the U.S immigration system.

It should be noted that the DOS also reported similar birth- tourism investigations in other regions, including West Africa and Europe.

Future U.S. visa applicants should expect increased scrutiny where the circumstances of an application suggest that giving birth in the United States may be the primary purpose of travel. While pregnancy does not automatically make an applicant ineligible for a visitor visa, applicants should be prepared to demonstrate that their stated purpose of travel is genuine and consistent with the overall circumstances of the trip.

FEDERAL COURT STRIKES DOWN VISA SUSPENSION AFFECTING NIGERIA AND SEVENTY-FOUR (74) OTHER COUNTRIES

On August 21, 2026, the U.S. District Court for the Southern District of New York (the **"Court"**), presided over by Judge Jeannette Vargas, struck down the DOS policy which had suspended the issuance of immigrant visas to nationals of seventy-five (75) countries, including Nigeria. The policy which took effect on January 21, 2026, was introduced on the basis that applicants from the designated countries posed a high risk of becoming a public charge in the USA.

In its judgement, the Court held that the policy, was "patently unlawful" and exceeded the statutory authority of the Secretary of State. The Court further found that preventing the issuance of immigrant visas based solely on an applicant's nationality represented "a direct abrogation" of the statutory scheme governing consular visa determinations. The Court held that the policy unlawfully displaced the requirement for individualised assessments of whether an applicant was likely to become a public charge with a nationality-based discrimination in the issuance of immigrant visas.

The suit was instituted by immigrant rights organisations, affected visa applicants and U.S. citizens sponsoring family members abroad. Following the decision, the DOS is expected to return to the legally required case-by-case assessment of immigrant visa applications.

U.S. PAUSES IMMIGRANT VISA APPOINTMENTS WORLDWIDE

On August 25, 2026, the United States (U.S.) Department of State (**"DOS"**) announced a worldwide pause in immigrant visa appointments and related processing at U.S. Embassies and Consulates. The pause is intended to allow consular officers undergo additional training on assessing whether immigrant visa applicants are likely to become a public charge or rely on U.S.' public benefits.

The measure applies globally and is not limited to nationals of specific countries. It is separate from the earlier suspension affecting nationals of seventy-five (75) countries. During the pause, immigrant visa applicants may experience cancelled, rescheduled, or delayed appointments and the DOS has not announced a definite date for the resumption of normal immigrant visa appointment scheduling. It should be noted that non-immigrant visa categories, including visitor and student visas, are not affected by this pause.

The development follows the DOS's increased emphasis on the public-charge assessment, which is already part of U.S. immigration law and requires consideration of factors including an applicant's financial resources, family status, education and skills. The DOS has also introduced a pilot programme allowing consular officers to require certain immigrant visa applicants to provide a public-charge bond in appropriate cases.

1. The public-charge assessment is a longstanding requirement under U.S. immigration law under which immigration authorities assess whether an applicant is likely to become primarily dependent on certain government benefits. The assessment considers the applicant's overall circumstances, including factors such as age, health, family status, financial resources, education and skills, and employment prospects.

As a result of this pause, individuals with pending or scheduled immigrant visa applications should expect potential delays and monitor communications from the relevant U.S. embassy or consulate for updates regarding their applications and appointments.

THE U.S. EMBASSY IN ABUJA ANNOUNCES CONTINUATION OF DIPLOMATIC AND OFFICIAL VISA APPLICATIONS

On August 31, 2026, the U.S. embassy in Abuja, Nigeria, announced through its official channels the continuation of visa processing for diplomatic and official visa categories, including A, G and C visas, for applicants who believe they qualify for these categories.

The Embassy further advised that applicants seeking diplomatic or official visas should first consult with the protocol office responsible for handling their visa matters before proceeding with their applications.

This announcement follows the changes to U.S. visa processing arrangements in Sub-Saharan Africa, which took effect on August 1, 2026. Under the new arrangements, routine visa services were consolidated at designated regional processing hubs, and routine visa services were consequently no longer offered at the U.S. diplomatic post in Abuja.

The affected routine visa services include tourist and business-related visas, as well as petition-based non-immigrant visas. Applicants seeking these categories may, however, continue to apply through the U.S. Consulate General in Lagos, which serves as the designated regional visa processing hub for these services.

Accordingly, the recent announcement confirms that applicants who qualify for diplomatic and official visa categories may continue to submit their applications in Abuja, subject to the applicable requirements and guidance from the relevant protocol office.

Canada

CANADA AND NIGERIA EXPAND AIR TRANSPORT AGREEMENT TO PERMIT DIRECT FLIGHTS

On August 6, 2026, the Government of Canada announced the expansion of its Bilateral Air Transport Agreement (**"BASA"**) with Nigeria, replacing the previous 2014 arrangement. The expansion will allow for direct scheduled flights between the two (2) countries for the first time.

Under the expanded BASA, designated airlines from each country may operate up to fourteen (14) weekly passenger flights and ten (10) weekly all-cargo flights, with fifth freedom rights extended to cargo operators.

Following the announcement, Air Canada confirmed that it intends to launch scheduled service to Lagos in 2027 and has commenced the process of obtaining the necessary regulatory approvals.

The expansion reflects the significant growth in Canada-Nigeria air travel and broader bilateral ties. Canadian authorities noted that air travel demand between Nigeria and Canada has more than doubled over the past decade, making Nigeria Canada's third-largest bilateral aviation market in Africa, behind Morocco and Algeria. This demand is driven by a growing Nigerian diaspora in Canada and an increasing number of Nigerian students, with over twenty-five thousand (25,000) Nigerians holding Canadian study permits as of March 2026.

CANADA RAISES PROOF OF FUNDS REQUIREMENT FOR INTERNATIONAL STUDENTS

On August 28, 2026, Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship Canada (**"IRCC"**) announced an increase in the minimum proof of funds required for study permit applicants.

Effective September 1, 2026, a single applicant seeking to study in any Canadian province or territory other than Quebec will be required to demonstrate Twenty-Three Thousand, Four Hundred and Forty-Eight Canadian Dollars (CAD$23,448.00) (approximately US$16,915.74), an increase from Twenty-Two Thousand, Eight Hundred and Ninety-Five Canadian Dollars (CAD$22,895.00) (approximately US$16516.80).

The revised amount, which is adjusted annually to reflect the cost of living, covers one (1) year of living expenses only and is seperate from tuition fees and return transportation costs, which applicants must demonstrate separately. It should be noted that where an applicant intends to travel with accompanying family members, they are required to show additional funds calculated per person.

The increase forms part of a broader tightening of Canada's international student framework, following the multi-year study permit caps introduced in 2024 and reduced further for 2026. Prospective applicants and their advisers should account for the revised threshold, along with the accompanying documentary requirements, when preparing study permit applications submitted on or after September 1, 2026

Central America

Panama

PANAMA GRANTS VISA-FREE ENTRY TO CITIZENS OF NINE (9) AFRICAN COUNTRIES

In early August 2026, Panama's National Migration Service published a list of nine (9) African countries whose citizens are permitted visa-free entry into Panama.
The countries permitted include Botswana, Comoros, Gabon, Madagascar, Mauritius, Namibia, Seychelles, South Africa and São Tomé and Príncipe. Eligible nationals of the listed countries may be permitted to enter, stay in and move freely within Panama visa-free for up to three (3) months.

Citizens of the above listed qualifying countries require only a valid passport and standard supporting documentation, such as proof of onward travel or confirmed accommodation, to pass through Panamanian immigration on arrival.
Travellers holding a valid visa or residence permit issued by the United States of America, Canada, the United Kingdom or a Schengen country may also enter Panama without a separate Panamanian visa. Nationals of countries not covered by either arrangement, including Nigeria, continue to require a visa to enter Panama.

South America

Colombia

COLOMBIA PLANS TO ESTABLISH EMBASSY IN NIGERIA

Colombia's President-elect, Abelardo de la Espriella (the **"President-Elect"**), has announced plans to establish a Colombian embassy in Nigeria as part of a broader review of Colombia's diplomatic network.

The president-elect indicated that some existing Colombian diplomatic missions may be merged or managed through concurrent accreditation as part of the review, while the establishment of an embassy in Nigeria remains a stated priority, intended to strengthen bilateral economic, cultural and strategic cooperation between the two (2) countries and the wider African region.

Asia

China

CHINA ISSUES NEW EXIT AND ENTRY ADMINISTRATION REGULATIONS

On July 22, 2026, Chinese Premier, Li Qiang, signed State Council Decree No. 841, promulgating new Regulations on Exit and Entry Administration (the **"Regulations"**), which will take effect on September 15, 2026.

The Regulations reaffirm that all applications for visas, entry, stay and residence in China must be based on genuine and lawful purposes. It also expands the circumstances under which Chinese citizens may be prohibited from leaving China, including where departure may affect national security, export control and the protection of sensitive technologies.

The Regulations further strengthen enforcement measures against immigration-related violations with the possibility of foreign nationals facing entry bans between one (1) and five (5) years for providing false information in visa or entry applications, prior border-related violations, or inclusion on relevant government sanctions or countermeasure lists.

In addition, the Regulations establish a registration and compliance system for immigration and visa service providers, requiring agencies engaged in immigration-related services to comply with enhanced regulatory record-keeping obligations. They further require the foreign affairs, culture and tourism, and other competent authorities to issue timely public overseas safety alerts and travel risk warnings for Chinese citizens traveling to international destinations. Employers, foreign nationals and organisations supporting Chinese immigration applications should expect increased scrutiny of application information and supporting documentation ahead of the effective date.

Japan

JAPAN PROPOSES STRICTER PERMANENT RESIDENCE APPLICATION REQUIREMENTS

Japan's Immigration Services Agency ("**ISA**") has released a draft guideline (the **"Guideline"**) proposing stricter financial, pension and language requirements for obtaining permanent residence in Japan.

The Guideline proposes new income and pension thresholds, enhances social integration criteria and longer waiting periods for certain family-based applicants. Under the Guidelines, applicants would be required to demonstrate an annual income above the average income of a Japanese household of the same size, and projected pension benefits equivalent to those that would be earned after thirty (30) years of contributions to Japan's employee pension system at the applicant's income level.

The Guidelines would also introduce additional integration criteria, including Japanese-language proficiency and school attendance by applicants' children. It further proposes stricter requirements for certain spouses of Japanese nationals and permanent residents. In particular, the proposed PR pathway for spouses would be extended from three (3) years of marriage and one (1) year of residence to five (5) years of marriage and three (3) years of residence.

The public comment period on the Guideline opened on August 4, 2026, and will close September 3, 2026. If approved, the Guideline is expected to take effect on April 1, 2027, while the proposed financial criteria are intended to apply from October 1, 2026. Notably, the financial criteria may also be applied retroactively to certain PR applications filed from April 2026, subject to the final form and implementation of the Guideline.

Applicants and employers supporting PR applications should therefore monitor the outcome of the public consultation and any subsequent amendments before the proposed requirements take effect.

Europe

United Kingdom

THE UNITED KINGDOM EXPANDS GLOBAL TALENT VISA TO OVER ONE HUNDRED (100) PRIVATE RESEARCH AND DEVELOPMENT COMPANIES

On August 6, 2026, the Government of the United Kingdom (the "UK") announced the expansion of the Global Talent visa's Endorsed Funder pathway to over one hundred (100) private sector research and development companies, including AstraZeneca and Jaguar Land Rover, among others. The pathway now allows eligible commercial research businesses to host and support exceptional researchers, extending the pathway beyond universities, research institutes and other academic organisations which could originally invite researchers under this pathway.

The businesses newly covered by the expansion operate across eight (8) high-growth sectors identified in the UK Government's Modern Industrial Strategy, including advanced manufacturing, digital technologies, clean energy, life sciences and the creative industries. Researchers admitted under the expanded route will be free to move between participating companies or launch their own spin-out businesses in the United Kingdom.

The UK Government indicated that over Twelve Thousand, Five Hundred (12,500) researchers from more than One Hundred and Thirty (130) countries have built careers in the United Kingdom through the Endorsed Funder pathway to date, and that the expansion is intended to channel that pipeline directly into private sector to support economic growth.

European Union

EUROPEAN TRAVEL INFORMATION AND AUTHORISATION SYSTEM (ETIAS) EXPECTED FOR VISA-EXEMPT TRAVELLERS

The European Union's European Travel Information and Authorisation System ("**ETIAS**") is scheduled to become operational in the last quarter of 2026. Once implemented, nationals of visa-exempt third countries, including the United States, Canada, Australia, etc. will be required to obtain an online travel authorisation before travelling to any of the thirty (30) European Union countries for short stays.

It must be noted that the ETIAS is not a visa. Visa-exempt travellers will continue to be able to visit the participating European countries for up to ninety (90) days within any one hundred and eighty (180)-day period but will be required to hold a valid ETIAS authorisation, linked to their passport, before boarding. The authorisation is expected to be valid for three (3) years or until the passport used to apply expires, whichever occurs first.

An approved ETIAS will not guarantee entry, as travellers will remain subject to border checks, and the final decision rests with the immigration officer at the border. A transitional period is also expected following the system's launch to allow travellers, carriers and border authorities to adapt to the new requirement.

Italy

ITALY REINTRODUCES TEMPORARY BORDER CONTROLS ON TRAVELLERS ARRIVING FROM SPAIN FOLLOWING CEUTA MIGRATION SURGE

On July 30, 2026, Italy's Ministry of Interior announced the temporary reintroduction of border controls on travellers arriving from Spain, following a mass arrival of over sixty thousand (60,000) people into the Spanish enclave of Ceuta from Morocco.

As Italy and Spain do not share a land border, the measure primarily affects travellers moving between the two (2) countries by air and sea. Italy consequently reintroduced border checks on travellers arriving from Spain for an initial period of one (1) month.

The measure does not suspend Spain's membership of the Schengen Area or generally remove the free-movement rights of EU citizens. Rather, it constitutes a temporary reintroduction of internal border controls permitted under the Schengen framework in exceptional circumstances, including where necessary to address serious threats to public policy or internal security.

Italy stated that the measure was necessary as an exceptional precaution to protect national security and mitigate the risk of the onward movement of irregular migrants into Italy and other parts of the Schengen Area.
Travellers travelling from Spain to Italy during the period of temporary border controls should carry valid travel documents and allow additional time for border checks. The controls are expected to remain in place for the period specified by the Italian authorities, subject to any extension or earlier withdrawal.

Romania

ROMANIA INTRODUCES MANDATORY WORKINROMANIA REGISTRATION FOR EMPLOYERS

Effective August 8, 2026, Romania's "**WorkinRomania.gov.ro**" electronic platform (the **"Platform"**) became the mandatory digital channel for the registration and authorisation of employers and foreign-worker placement agencies involved in the recruitment and employment of foreign nationals in Romania.

This development follows the entry into force of the Romania's Government Emergency Ordinance No. 32/2026 (the "**Ordinance**") on April 27, 2026, which established a new framework for the recruitment and employment of foreign nationals in Romania. Under the Ordinance, employers hiring foreign nationals are required to register or, where applicable, obtain authorisation through the WorkinRomania.gov.ro platform. Foreign-worker placement agencies are similarly required to register and obtain the relevant authorisation to operate under the new framework.

The Ordinance also introduced two (2) new long-stay employment visa categories: the D/AM1 visa, for highly skilled workers and other specified categories, and the D/AM2 visa, for permanent, seasonal and cross-border workers employed in occupations on Romania's shortage occupations list.

The Platform centralises employer registration and authorisation, placement agency licensing, and the submission of a single application covering both the work authorisation and long-stay employment visas.

Sweden

SWEDEN INTRODUCES NEW FAMILY IMMIGRATION REQUIREMENTS

Sweden has approved legislation introducing stricter family immigration requirements, effective October 1, 2026, as part of its broader efforts to tighten migration rules and align family reunification requirements with the minimum standards permitted under EU law.

Under the new rules, certain temporary residence permit holders will generally be subject to a two (2)-year waiting period before being eligible to apply for family reunification. The reform also introduces stricter maintenance and financial support requirements for sponsors in connection with initial applications and certain extension applications.

Exceptions will apply to certain categories, including EU Blue Card holders, researchers, doctoral students, certain work-permit holders and protected persons. The reforms also introduce additional grounds for refusing family immigration applications, including certain cases involving violence or serious abuse.
Individuals and organisations with personnel or family members intending to rely on family reunification routes to Sweden should monitor further guidance from the Swedish Migration Agency ("**Migrationsverket**") as the effective date approaches.

Poland

POLAND INTRODUCES NEW VISA REQUIREMENTS FOR GEORGIAN, COLOMBIAN AND VENEZUELAN WORKERS

Effective August 15, 2026, following a regulation signed by Poland's Foreign Minister, Radosław Sikorski, citizens of Colombia, Georgia and Venezuela are no longer permitted to enter Poland visa-free where their purpose of travel is employment. Affected nationals must instead obtain the appropriate visa or residence permit before travelling to Poland for employment, even where they already hold a Polish work permit.

The measure does not affect individuals from these three (3) countries who entered Poland before August 15, 2026, or who commenced employment on the basis of a work permit while lawfully present in Poland under the visa-free regime before the effective date. The change also does not apply to foreign nationals whose work authorisation derives from a legal basis other than a standard work permit, such as certain students and graduates.

Employers in Poland with existing or prospective Colombian, Georgian or Venezuelan employees should review current recruitment pipelines and planned dates and ensure the necessary visas or work authorisation is obtained before travel, where applicable.

Middle East

Oman

OMAN INTRODUCES FREE FOURTEEN (14)-DAY TOURIST VISA FOR ELIGIBLE NATIONALS

Under the Royal Oman Police Decision No. 109/2026, published in the Official Gazette on August 2, 2026, and effective August 3, 2026, Oman introduced a new fourteen (14)-day tourist visa, issued free of charge, to nationals of countries designated by the competent authority.

The new fourteen (14)-day visa operates alongside Oman's existing visa-free entry arrangement, which already permits citizens of over one hundred (100) countries to enter for stays of up to fourteen (14) days without a visa, subject to conditions including a passport valid for at least six (6) months, a confirmed return ticket, a hotel reservation, health insurance and sufficient funds. Holders of the fourteen (14)-day visa may, before its expiry, convert it into another tourist visa category, subject to meeting the applicable requirements and fees, although the visa cannot be extended beyond fourteen (14) days or converted into a residency visa.

The initiative forms part of Oman's Vision 2040 strategy, which targets twelve (12) million visitor arrivals annually by 2040 and follows a period of strong growth in Oman's tourism sector.
Oceania

Australia

AUSTRALIA INTRODUCES NEW OCCUPATION AND LOCATION-BASED PRIORITIES FOR SKILLED VISA PROCESSING

Effective July 25, 2026, the Australian Government introduced Ministerial Direction No. 119 ("**MD119**"), replacing Ministerial Direction No. 105 and establishing a new order of priority for the processing of a broad range of skilled visa nominations and applications, including, for the first time, the Skills in Demand (subclass 482) visa.

Under MD119, processing priority is determined by both the applicant's occupation and whether the applicant is in Australia (onshore) or outside Australia (offshore) at the time of application. The highest priority is given to occupations supporting Australia's law enforcement and defence interests, followed by onshore applicants in construction, healthcare and teaching occupations, and then other onshore and offshore applications in the prescribed order.

MD119 does not alter visa eligibility criteria. It will however apply to applications already on hand as of July 25, 2026, as well as to new applications, meaning some pending applications may now be processed under a different priority category than the one that applied when they were lodged.

New Zealand

NEW ZEALAND ISSUES FURTHER GUIDANCE ON SKILLED MIGRANT CATEGORY REFORMS

Immigration New Zealand (**"INZ"**) has issued additional clarifications on its Skilled Migrant Category ("**SMC**") reforms which took effect on August 24, 2026. The guidance addresses the evidentiary requirements for the new Skilled Work Experience and Trades and Technician pathways and the timing of applicable wage thresholds.

INZ confirmed that applicants may be required to provide employment agreements, job descriptions, tax records and qualification documents to evidence eligible work experience. Where overseas tax records are unavailable, a certificate of service from a previous employer may be provided. Self-employment will not qualify as eligible work experience under the new pathways.

The guidance also clarifies that wage thresholds are assessed at the time an applicant receives an Invitation to Apply (**"ITA"**), while skilled work experience is assessed from the date the residence application is lodged. Relevant work experience must generally have been obtained within the ten (10) years preceding the residence application.

Prospective applicants should therefore ensure they can obtain sufficient documentation to support work experience claims and understand how wage thresholds may apply to their chosen pathway.

Conclusion

Recent developments reflect a global shift towards stricter immigration compliance and increased scrutiny, alongside the expansion of digital systems and new pathways for skilled workers and international talent. Changes across various jurisdictions affect entry, residence, employment, family reunification and permanent residence requirements, while restrictive measures in the U.S. continue to face judicial scrutiny.

Given the frequency and speed of these changes, individuals and organisations are encouraged to regularly review their immigration arrangements regularly and seek timely guidance to remain compliant with evolving entry, residence and work authorization requirements.