



GLOBAL IMMIGRATION TRENDS – September 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 IMMIGRATION SERVICE EXTENDS SPECIAL PASSPORT INTERVENTION EXERCISE IN THE UNITED KINGDOM

The Nigeria Immigration Service (the “NIS”) on September 25, 2026, announced the second extension of its Special Passport Intervention Exercise (the “Exercise”) in the United Kingdom (the “UK”) to run from October 6 to October 30, 2026.

This announcement follows an earlier extension that amended the deadline for the Exercise at the London and Manchester centers from September 19 to October 3, 2026, in response to a high turnout of Nigerians seeking passport services. The NIS disclosed that it processed and enrolled One Thousand, Four Hundred and Seventy-Seven (1,477) applicants within the first four (4) days of the Exercise, with more than half of those enrolled having already had their passports produced and dispatched to their respective addresses.

The Exercise will now continue at the designated centers in London and Manchester, with the inclusion of Aberdeen and Cardiff centers. It should be noted that the process remains fully cashless, with applicants required to book appointments through the website of the Nigerian High Commission in the United Kingdom before attending, and to present a completed application form, payment receipt, appointment slip, current passport where applicable, and a self-addressed return envelope.

The NIS has urged Nigerian communities across the UK to take advantage of the extended window to renew or apply for passports, noting that the additional capacity is intended to clear pending applications and backlogs rather than remain open indefinitely. Thus, eligible applicants who are yet to take advantage of the opportunity are advised to schedule an appointment promptly.

NIGERIA NARROWS HEALTH DECLARATION FORM REQUIREMENT AMID EBOLA OUTBREAK IN THE DRC

On September 22, 2026, Nigeria's Centre for Disease Control and Prevention (the “NCDC”), in a public advisory, announced updated border health measures in response to the ongoing Ebola Virus Disease (“EVD”) outbreak in the Democratic Republic of the Congo (“DRC”).

The advisory revises a border surveillance protocol adopted by the Federal Ministry of Health and Social Welfare in May 2026, following the World Health Organization's declaration of the outbreak as a Public Health Emergency of International Concern, which had required every traveller entering Nigeria, irrespective of country of origin, to complete a Health Declaration Form.

Under the new advisory, only travellers arriving from countries with active or relevant EVD transmission are required to complete the Health Declaration Form; passengers arriving from all other countries are, at this time, exempt.

The requirement was previously enforced universally by airlines at the point of boarding, and now applies only to a defined subset of travellers based on the NCDC's Dynamic Risk Assessment of the evolving epidemiological situation. The NCDC confirmed that, as at the date of the advisory, no case of EVD has been recorded in Nigeria.

It should be noted that the advisory does not name the specific countries considered to have active or relevant EVD transmission, nor does it expressly address passengers connecting through, rather than departing from, an affected country.

NIGERIA AND CANADA DISCUSS VISA PROCESSING DELAYS, AIR CONNECTIVITY AND MIGRANT REMOVAL COOPERATION

On September 8, 2026, Nigeria's Minister of Interior, represented by its Permanent Secretary, Dr Magdalene Ajani, received the Chargé d'Affaires of the Canadian High Commission, David Sproule, and his delegation in Abuja on a courtesy visit to discuss and reaffirm both countries' commitment to deepening cooperation on migration management, air transport and other areas of mutual interest.

The meeting involved extensive deliberation on persistent delays in the processing of Canadian visa applications by Nigerian citizens, particularly students, as well as emerging opportunities under the expanding Nigeria-Canada Air Transport Agreement. The Canadian delegation also proposed the development of a Standard Operating Procedure framework to strengthen collaboration between both governments on the removal of Nigerian nationals not legally entitled to remain in Canada, which Canada considers necessary to support passenger traffic expected once direct flights commence.

While no binding agreement was concluded at this stage, both countries agreed to continue engagement on these issues and to establish a joint working group to address the visa-processing delays and the removal-cooperation framework. Nigerian nationals with pending Canadian visa applications, particularly study permit applicants, should expect continued attention to processing timelines as bilateral discussions progress, but should not anticipate immediate changes to existing application procedures.

Ghana

GHANA EXPANDS VISA-FREE TRAVEL NETWORK TO THREE (3) NEW DESTINATIONS

On September 8, 2026, Ghana's Ministry of Foreign Affairs (the “Ministry”) announced, in a public notice, that visa waiver agreements with the Maldives, Zambia, and Antigua and Barbuda have been ratified by Ghana's Parliament and have now entered into force, extending Ghana's visa-free travel network across Asia, Africa and the Caribbean.

The waivers apply to holders of Ghanaian ordinary, service and diplomatic passports. Ghanaian travellers may enter the Maldives and Zambia visa-free for stays of up to thirty (30) days, while travellers to Antigua and Barbuda may stay for up to ninety (90) days. It should be noted that all three (3) arrangements are reciprocal; thus, citizens of the Maldives, Zambia and Antigua and Barbuda are allowed to enter Ghana visa-free, subject to the same duration limits.

The Ministry has, however, cautioned that visa-free entry does not exempt Ghanaian travellers from meeting the immigration and entry requirements applicable in each destination country, including proof of onward travel and sufficient funds.





North America

United States of America

DHS PROPOSES NEW FEE OF \$103,265.00 FOR CAP-SUBJECT H-1B PETITIONS

On August 25, 2026, the U.S. Department of Homeland Security (the “DHS”) published a proposed rule in the Federal Register establishing a new fee of One Hundred and Three Thousand, Two Hundred and Sixty-Five United States Dollars (US\$103,265.00) for all H-1B petitions subject to the annual numerical cap, including petitions filed under the advanced-degree exemption. The proposed fee will be payable at the time of filing and in addition to all other applicable fees.

The proposed rule provides that the proposed fee would not apply to cap-exempt H-1B petitions filed by universities, non-profit research organizations or government research organizations, nor to petitions to extend or amend existing H-1B status, or to change existing H-1B worker's employer. It is important to note that this proposed fee is legally and administratively distinct from the earlier One Hundred Thousand United States Dollars (US\$100,000.00) H-1B fee introduced by presidential proclamation in September 2025, which a Massachusetts federal court struck down as an unlawful tax on June 8, 2026, and which remains under appeal.

DHS accepted public comments on the proposed rule through September 24, 2026, and is in the process of considering those comments before issuing a final rule. The proposed fee is therefore not currently in effect, and no petitions filed to date are affected. Employers that rely on the H-1B programme should nonetheless begin evaluating the potential cost impact on future fiscal-year cap filings, as significant legal challenges are widely anticipated if the rule is finalized.

FEDERAL COURT PAUSES IMPLEMENTATION OF FIXED-PERIOD ADMISSION RULES FOR F-1 AND J-1 VISA HOLDERS

On September 14, 2026, the United States District Court for the District of Massachusetts issued a nationwide preliminary injunction pausing the implementation of the DHS fixed-period admission rule that would have replaced the longstanding “duration of status” admission framework for F-1 students, J-1 exchange visitors and I nonimmigrants (foreign media representatives), which was scheduled to take effect September 15, 2026.

Under the new paused rule, F-1 and J-1 holders would generally have been limited to four (4) year admission periods, with individuals requiring additional time to file formal extension-of-stay applications with U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services rather than relying on their designated school official or programme sponsor.

It should be noted that the court's order is a preliminary order, pausing the implementation of the rule and not a final ruling on the merits invalidating the rule. For the time being, F-1, J-1 and I nonimmigrants continue to be admitted for the duration of their status, and current rules on school transfers, programme changes and practical training remain unaffected. Affected students, exchange visitors and their institutions should continue to monitor developments rather than take any premature action based on the now-postponed fixed-term framework.

UNITED STATES ANNOUNCES NEW VISA RESTRICTION POLICY TARGETING PERSONS WHO FACILITATE BIRTH TOURISM

On September 23, 2026, U.S. Secretary of State, Marco Rubio, announced a new visa restriction policy under Section 212(a)(3)(C) of the Immigration and Nationality Act (“INA”), targeting individuals who knowingly engage in, have engaged in, or facilitate commercial birth tourism to the United States.

The policy is directed at persons involved in exploiting the U.S. immigration system to arrange births in the United States for the purpose of obtaining U.S. citizenship for children.

The policy may apply to owners, operators and managers of commercial birth tourism networks; visa “fixers” who coach applicants to make fraudulent statements; foreign medical providers who knowingly facilitate such travel or fraudulent use of the U.S. Medicaid system; and other individuals who support, enable or profit from commercial birth tourism. The Department of State has also indicated that certain family members of persons covered by the policy may be subject to the restrictions.

The policy builds on the Department of State's existing position that birth tourism, travelling to the United States primarily to give birth for the purpose of obtaining U.S. citizenship for the child, is not a permissible basis for a visitor visa. Travel to the United States while pregnant is not, by itself, prohibited, however, applicants must accurately state the purpose of their travel and satisfy the requirements for the visa sought.

It should be noted that the Department of State's announcement does not provide detailed procedures for determining how the restriction will be applied in individual cases or the precise circumstances in which family members may be covered. Travel agents, visa consultants, medical service providers and other intermediaries should ensure that they do not facilitate fraudulent or misleading visa applications. Prospective visitors should provide complete and accurate information concerning the purpose of their travel, as misrepresentation in a visa application may result in visa refusal and further immigration consequences.

South America

Brazil

BRAZIL INTRODUCES ELECTRONIC TEMPORARY VISA PROCESS FOR VISA-EXEMPT NATIONALS

Effective September 1, 2026, Brazil's Ministry of Foreign Affairs began issuing temporary visas (“VITEM”) electronically for nationals of countries exempt from Brazil's ordinary visitor visa requirement (“VIVIS”), eliminating the need for eligible applicants to submit their passports in person solely to have a physical visa sticker affixed.

Under the new procedure, applicants file their request through Brazil's Integrated Consular System (SCI), upload all supporting documentation electronically, and, once approved, receive their visa directly by email, typically as a printable document bearing a QR code. In-person appointments for the submission of physical documents are no longer required.

The measure applies across all temporary visa categories, including those issued for work, study, family reunification, investment and digital nomad purposes, but does not alter the substantive eligibility criteria for any visa category, nor any separate government work authorisation that may still be required. Applicants are advised to print the electronic visa for travel, and all temporary visa holders remain subject to mandatory post-arrival registration with Brazil's Federal Police.

It should be noted that, while the procedure formally took effect on September 1, 2026, its operational rollout across Brazil's global consular network remains ongoing, and applicants should confirm the applicable process with the relevant Brazilian consular post before proceeding with an application.

Asia

China

CHINA EXPANDS VISA-FREE TRANSIT AND HAINAN ENTRY ACCESS TO KYRGYZSTAN AND VIETNAM

Effective August 20, 2026, China's National Immigration Administration (the “NIA”) extended both its Two Hundred and Forty (240)-hour visa-free transit policy and Hainan Province's thirty (30)-day visa-free entry policy to nationals of Kyrgyzstan and Vietnam, bringing the number of countries covered by the transit policy to fifty-seven (57) and those covered by the Hainan policy to sixty-one (61).

It should be noted that neither policy amounts to general visa-free entry into mainland China, and each operates under distinct conditions. Under the transit policy, nationals of Kyrgyzstan and Vietnam holding an ordinary passport and confirmed onward ticket to a third country or region may enter through any of the sixty-five (65) designated ports and remain for up to Two Hundred and Forty (240) hours, provided they continue their journey onward rather than return to their country of departure.

Under the Hainan policy, eligible travellers may enter through Hainan's international ports and remain within Hainan, and only Hainan, for up to thirty (30) days. It should be noted that travel beyond the province falls outside the exemption and requires a visa.





Both policies permit tourism, business, and family-visit activities, but not employment, formal study, or journalism, for which the appropriate visa remains necessary. The NIA has described the expansion as part of a broader effort to advance exchange with China's neighbouring countries.

Vietnam

VIETNAM ISSUES DECREE 283/2026/ND-CP ON LABOUR AND SOCIAL INSURANCE PENALTIES

The Government of Vietnam has announced that Decree No. 283/2026/ND-CP (the **"Decree"**) which was issued on July 15, 2026, will take effect on **September 10, 2026**. The Decree 283 replaced No. 12/2022/ND-CP and introduced an updated framework for administrative penalties relating to violations in labour, social insurance and the deployment of Vietnamese workers abroad under contract.

The Decree introduces a clearer distinction between late payment and evasion of compulsory social insurance contributions. While the penalty for late payment remains at twelve percent (12%) to fifteen percent (15%) of the late-paid amount, capped at Seventy-Five Million Vietnamese Dong (VND 75,000,000.00) (approximately US\$2,887), evasion is now subject to a fine of eighteen percent (18%) to twenty percent (20%) of the amount evaded, also capped at Seventy-Five Million Vietnamese Dong (VND 75,000,000.00) (approximately US\$2,887). The Decree also substantially increases penalty levels for a range of other violations, including those relating to failures to comply with notification requirements, employment of foreign workers outside the scope stated in their work permit and submitting falsified or altered application documents. Depending on the severity of the violation, sanctioning authorities may also impose additional measures such as suspension of operations or deportation of a foreign employee.

Employers engaging Vietnamese or foreign employees in Vietnam should review their labour, work permit and social insurance compliance processes to ensure alignment given the increased fine exposure introduced under the new framework.

Japan

JAPAN CONFIRMS INCREASE IN RESIDENCE STATUS RENEWAL AND PERMANENT RESIDENCE FEES

Japan's Immigration Services Agency has announced that revised fees for residence procedures will take effect on October 1, 2026, following amendments to the Immigration Control and Refugee Recognition Act, approved by Japan's cabinet on August 25, 2026.

The revised framework will replace the current flat fee of Six Thousand Yen (¥6,000.00) (approximately US\$38.16) for changes or renewal of status of residence with a tiered fee structure based on the period of stay granted, ranging from Ten Thousand Yen (¥10,000.00) (approximately US\$63.60) to Seventy-Five Thousand Yen (¥75,000.00) (approximately US\$476.96). The fee for permanent residence applications will increase from Ten Thousand Yen (¥10,000.00) (approximately US\$63.60) to Two Hundred Thousand Yen (¥200,000.00) (approximately US\$1,271.90).

It should be noted that online applications will be subject to different fee amounts from applications submitted at immigration offices, with the revised payment system providing for payment only through bank or convenience-store channels.

Foreign nationals in Japan with upcoming residence status renewals or permanent residence applications should therefore factor in the revised fee structure when filing on or after October 1, 2026.

Thailand

THAILAND OFFICIALLY REDUCES VISA-FREE STAY FROM SIXTY (60) TO THIRTY (30) DAYS

Thailand's Ministry of Interior has issued regulations, published four in the Royal Gazette on August 31, 2026, repealing the special sixty (60)-day visa exemption scheme introduced in July 2024 and replacing it with a revised framework, effective September 15, 2026.

Under the revised framework, nationals of sixty (60) countries and territories, including the United States of America, the United Kingdom, Canada, Australia and all European Union member states, will be eligible to visa-free entry for tourism purposes only, for a maximum stay of thirty (30) days, down from the previous sixty (60) days. Nationals of Seychelles and Mauritius are eligible for a fifteen (15)-day visa exemption, while nationals of Azerbaijan, Belarus and Serbia will remain eligible for a Visa on Arrival, permitting a fifteen (15)-day stay for a fee of Two Thousand Thai Baht (TBH2,000.00) (approximately US\$59.93).

The change is particularly relevant to short-term business and work travellers. The former sixty (60)-day exemption covered tourism, business engagements and urgent or ad-hoc work, whereas the revised thirty (30)-day exemption is limited to tourism. Foreign nationals intending to enter Thailand for business or work-related purposes should therefore assess the applicable visa requirements before travelling. Additionally, foreign nationals who entered Thailand under the previous exemption before September 15, 2026 may remain until the expiry of the period granted on their immigration stamp.

Saudi Arabia

SAUDI ARABIA ALLOWS SKILLED WORKERS TO PROCESS FAMILY VISAS ALONGSIDE WORK PERMITS

On October 6, 2026, Saudi Arabia's Ministry of Interior (the **"Ministry"**) announced measures allowing eligible skilled expatriate workers to process entry visas for certain family members concurrently with their own employment visa procedures. The measure was introduced in coordination with the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and the Ministry of Human Resources and Social Development as part of efforts to improve residents' quality of life.

The new arrangement applies to eligible skilled expatriate heads of households and covers their spouses, sons under twenty-five (25) years, and unmarried daughters. Eligible family members may obtain entry visas while the worker's work permit is being processed, meaning that the worker does not necessarily have to complete the entire work visa process before initiating the family's entry visa applications.

The measure is intended to streamline the relocation process for skilled foreign workers and their families. Following their arrival in Saudi Arabia, the family members' residence procedures will be finalized. However, applicants must still satisfy the applicable requirements and conditions for the relevant visas.

Europe

United Kingdom

UK INTRODUCES MANDATORY MULTI-FACTOR AUTHENTICATION FOR SPONSOR LICENCE USERS

The UK Home Office has begun the phased introduction of mandatory Multi-Factor Authentication (**"MFA"**) for users of the Sponsorship Management System (**"SMS"**) from September 3, 2026. The rollout is expected to be completed for all sponsors by November 2026.

Once MFA is enabled on a sponsor's account, SMS users will be required to enter a one-time passcode in addition to their existing username and password each time they access the system. For Level 1 Users with a valid mobile number, the passcode will generally be sent by text message; otherwise, it will be sent to the user's registered email address.

The Home Office is also phasing out the Level 2 User role. From September 9, 2026, sponsors can no longer appoint new Level 2 Users, and existing Level 2 Users must either be converted to Level 1 status, where eligible, or have their accounts deactivated by March 8, 2027.

Sponsors should verify that the email address, phone number and date of birth associated with each SMS user's account are correct ahead of their organization's MFA activation date, to avoid disruption to time-sensitive sponsor licence obligations, including the assignment of Certificates of Sponsorship.





Belgium

BELGIUM INTRODUCES NEW RULES FOR CROSS-BORDER WORKERS

On August 15, 2026, Belgium made effective a new framework for cross-border workers under the Royal Decree of July 19, 2026, replacing rules that had remained unchanged since 1981. A cross-border worker is an individual whose main residence is in Luxembourg, the Netherlands, France, Germany, or the United Kingdom, but who carries out economic activity in Belgium and regularly enters and exits Belgium without residing there.

Under the new framework, third-country nationals residing in Luxembourg, the Netherlands, France or Germany must obtain an Annex 64, which replaces the former Annex 15. The Annex 64 serves as proof of their right to enter and exit Belgium for more than ninety (90) days as a cross-border worker and is issued for the duration of the employment, subject to a maximum validity of one year.

A separate regime now applies to third-country nationals residing in the United Kingdom. These individuals must obtain a long-stay D visa through the competent Belgian embassy or consulate before entering Belgium as cross-border workers. The D visa facilitates their entry and exit as cross-border workers but does not confer a right of residence in Belgium.

It should be noted that the new framework does not introduce additional entry requirements for European Union citizens, and nationals of Switzerland, Liechtenstein, Norway and Iceland, who may continue to enter and exit Belgium for the duration of their employment on the basis of a valid identity card or passport alone.

Existing Annex 15 permit holders benefit from twelve (12) months transitional period until August 14, 2027, during which their existing documents remain valid. Cross-border workers residing in the United Kingdom are, however, advised to apply for the long-stay visa promptly, as they will no longer be able to rely on an Annex 15 to enter Belgium as cross-border workers.

Switzerland

SWITZERLAND EXTENDS PROTECTION STATUS S FOR UKRAINIANS TO MARCH 2028 AND INTRODUCES NEW ELIGIBILITY REQUIREMENTS

The Swiss Federal Council (the "Federal Council") has extended Protection Status S for individuals displaced by the war in Ukraine. The Federal Council states that the extension was necessary due to continued instability in Ukraine and the absence of a durable ceasefire.

According to the Federal Council, Protection Status S will remain available until March 4, 2028, for persons who meet the existing eligibility requirements. The Federal Council has also extended Programme S, which provides integration support to persons with Protection Status S, until the same date. The federal government will also continue to contribute Three Thousand Swiss Francs (CHF 3,000.00) (approximately US\$3,619.01) per person annually towards cantonal integration measures.

Alongside the extension, the Federal Council introduced new eligibility restrictions applicable from August 20, 2026. Protection of Status S will only be granted to new applicants who have complied with any military obligations applicable to them under Ukrainian law, a requirement primarily affecting Ukrainian nationals of military service age. It should be noted that this new restriction applies only to applications submitted on or after August 20, 2026, and has no effect on individuals already holding Protection Status S.

Accordingly, while Switzerland will continue to provide temporary protection to eligible persons displaced from Ukraine through March 2028, new applicants should ensure that they meet all applicable eligibility requirements, including the new requirement concerning compliance with Ukrainian military obligations, before applying for Protection Status S.

Iceland

ICELAND ISSUES NEW GUIDELINES ON COLLECTIVE PROTECTION APPLICATIONS FOR UKRAINIANS

Iceland's Minister of Justice, Þorbjörg Sigríður Gunnlaugsdóttir, has issued new guidelines on the processing of applications for collective protection arising from the mass displacement from Ukraine, effective August 23, 2026.

Under the new guidelines, Iceland's Directorate of Immigration will generally not grant collective protection to applicants who already hold a valid temporary protection residence permit in an EU member state, or an equivalent permit in Denmark, Norway, Switzerland or Liechtenstein. There may however be case-by-case exceptions, including for applicants with family ties to individuals in Iceland who hold collective protection.

In addition, individuals who left Ukraine after August 23, 2026 must demonstrate that they were legally authorised to leave Ukraine under Ukrainian law. Applicants may be required to provide evidence such as a passport exit stamp or official documentation confirming they are not subject to obligations toward Ukraine's armed forces. It should be noted that the burden of proof rests with the applicant.

New applicants should therefore ensure that they meet the applicable eligibility requirements and have sufficient documentation to demonstrate their eligibility, including lawful departure from Ukraine where applicable. Additionally, existing holders of collective protection in Iceland should note that they are not affected by these changes.

Denmark

DENMARK APPROVES NEW WORK PERMIT SCHEME FOR CERTIFIED EMPLOYERS UNDER COLLECTIVE AGREEMENTS

On September 3, 2026, the Danish Parliament passed legislation establishing a new collective agreement-based work permit scheme, which will take effect on January 1, 2027. The scheme is intended to expand Danish employers' access to international talent while preserving safeguards for Danish wage and employment standards.

Under the new scheme, Danish employers certified by the Danish Agency for International Recruitment and Integration will be able to sponsor qualifying foreign nationals from sixteen (16) designated countries. The sixteen (16) designated countries are Albania, Australia, Brazil, Canada, China, India, Japan, Malaysia, Moldova, Montenegro, North Macedonia, Serbia, Singapore, Ukraine, the United Kingdom, and the United States of America.

Eligible positions must be full-time and covered by a collective agreement, with a minimum annual salary of Three Hundred and Twenty-Two Thousand Danish Kroner (DKK322,000.00) (approximately US\$49,400.00), which is below the threshold under Denmark's standard Pay Limit Schemes.

Employer certification will be subject to compliance requirements, including at least ten (10) full-time employees in Denmark, a minimum two (2)-year operating history, collective agreement coverage and compliance with applicable labour and immigration requirements. Employers will be subject to ongoing compliance checks, and certification may be revoked where there is a failure to meet the scheme's conditions.

Employers with recruitment needs from the designated countries should begin assessing certification requirements ahead of the January 1, 2027, effective date.

Ireland

IRELAND APPROVES PRIORITY DRAFTING OF BILL RAISING CITIZENSHIP RESIDENCY REQUIREMENT

On September 9, 2026, the Irish Government approved priority drafting of the Irish Nationality and Citizenship (Amendment) Bill 2026, which proposes significant changes to the requirements for naturalisation.

The proposed reforms would increase the general reckonable residence requirement for naturalisation from five (5) to eight (8) years for most applicants, with applicants generally required to have two (2) years of continuous residence immediately before applying and six (6) years of reckonable residence during the preceding ten (10) years.

The proposed amendments would also introduce English, Irish or Irish Sign Language requirements, an Irish civics, society and politics test, and an economic self-sufficiency requirement. Other proposed measures include additional financial eligibility conditions, restrictions relating to certain immigration offences, and changes to the residence requirements applicable to spouses and civil partners of Irish citizens.





It should be noted that these proposals have not yet been enacted. Ireland's existing naturalisation framework therefore remains in force and will continue to remain in force pending the passage and commencement of the legislation. Individuals currently accumulating reckonable residence towards Irish citizenship should nonetheless monitor the Bill's progress and any transitional provisions that may determine how the new requirements will apply.

European Union

NINE (9) EUROPEAN COUNTRIES GIVEN INFORMAL LEEWAY TO DELAY FULL ENFORCEMENT OF ENTRY/EXIT SYSTEM

Following the expiry, on September 6, 2026, of the temporary One Hundred and Fifty (150)-day grace period permitting reduced biometric checks under the European Union's Entry/Exit System ("EES"), nine (9) Schengen countries, namely Belgium, France, Germany, Greece, Italy, Malta, the Netherlands, Portugal and Switzerland, have reportedly been given informal leeway to continue limiting fingerprint and facial-image collection at certain border crossing points, in order to maintain border fluidity.

It should be noted that this development does not amount to a formal extension or a suspension of EES; no new deadline has been announced, and the European Commission has stated only that it remains in close contact with member states where adjustments are needed at specific border crossings, rather than across entire countries.

Travellers, including non-EU nationals subject to biometric registration under EES, may accordingly encounter inconsistent procedures depending on the specific airport, seaport, or land border-crossing used, and should allow additional time when traveling through the affected member states pending fuller enforcement.

Oceania

New Zealand

NEW ZEALAND MOVES MOST VISITOR VISA APPLICATIONS TO ENHANCED ONLINE SYSTEM

Immigration New Zealand ("INZ") has announced that, from September 24, 2026, new applications for most visitor visa categories will be accepted exclusively through its enhanced Immigration Online platform. The change forms part of INZ's wider transition towards a single enhanced online platform for visa applications and processing.

Applicants with existing draft applications in the old system as at September 24, 2026, will still be able to complete and submit it through that system until October 8, 2026, after which the relevant application forms will close permanently, and any remaining draft applications will be deleted. INZ has stated that it will proactively contact holders of pending draft applications. Applications already submitted through the old system will continue to be processed, and applicants will retain access to those applications to upload documents and respond to INZ requests until a decision is made.

The transition to a new system is procedural and does not change the substantive visitor visa eligibility criteria. Certain visitor visa categories, including partner and child visitor visas linked to New Zealand citizens, students or workers, are not affected by this particular transition and will remain available through their existing channels until further notice.

Prospective visitors to New Zealand, including family members visiting migrants already in the country, should begin any new visitor visa application through the enhanced Immigration Online platform from September 24, 2026, to avoid delay.

Australia

AUSTRALIA BARS NEW ENROLMENTS IN THE COURSE FOUND TO BE USED AS BACKDOOR TO RESIDENCY

Australia's Department of Home Affairs has confirmed that, from October 5, 2026, education providers will no longer be permitted to enrol new international students in the Graduate Diploma of Management (Learning), with course code BSB80120. This measure is the first use of new course-cancellation powers introduced under Australia's international education integrity reforms.

The Department cited significant evidence that the course was being used as an onshore visa pathway rather than for genuine study, enabling students to transfer between courses while already in Australia rather than pursuing bona fide education. From October 5, 2026, education providers, including vocational education agents may not enrol new international students in the course, and education agents may not recruit students for it. However, students already enrolled may continue and complete their current course of study.

Education providers and education agents should review their international student course offerings and recruitment practices in light of the Government's new course-specific integrity powers, while prospective international students should confirm that their intended course remains registered before enrolling.

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

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

Foreign currency values are subject to fluctuations, and it is advisable to verify current rates for updated fees.

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

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