International Immigration Update: Key Changes Across Global Markets

This update highlights recent immigration developments across Denmark, Malaysia, New Zealand, Panama, the Philippines and the United States, covering changes to work, residence and investment-related immigration routes and application processes.

SEPTEMBER 2026

DENMARK

New collective agreement-based scheme for certified companies

On 3 September, 2026, the Danish Parliament passed a bill introducing a new collective agreement-based scheme for certified companies.

Employers wishing to use the new scheme to bring foreign workers to Denmark must be covered by a collective agreement concluded between the Danish Employers' Association and the Danish Trade Union Confederation.

The new scheme, which takes effect on 1 January, 2027, is limited to citizens of certain countries. Currently, these are the United States, United Kingdom, Singapore, China, Japan, Australia, Canada, India, Brazil, Malaysia, Montenegro, Serbia, North Macedonia, Albania, Ukraine and Moldova.

Other conditions for company certification include having at least ten full-time employees and a minimum of two years of operating history. Certification is valid for an initial three years, with the possibility of four-year renewals. Employees must be offered an annual salary of at least DKK 322,000, adjusted annually. Certification will be carried out by the Danish Agency for International Recruitment and Integration (SIRI).

New rules for Ukrainian men of military age (23–59 years)

The Danish Parliament has adopted a new Act amending the Ukraine Special Act, which entered into force on 3 September 2026.

The legislative amendment applies to Ukrainian men aged 23 to 59, who will in future be granted a residence permit under the Act on Temporary Residence Permits for Persons Displaced from Ukraine (the Special Act) only if they can document that they have fulfilled their military obligations and are exempt from military service in Ukraine.

The legislative amendment will not affect persons who have already been granted a residence permit under the Special Act and submitted their application before 25 June, 2026. This also applies if they subsequently apply for an extension of their residence permit.

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MALAYSIA

On 3 September, 2026, the Expatriate Services Division (ESD) of the Immigration Department of Malaysia announced that, from 7 September, 2026, organisations with incomplete details for any listed authorised personnel will be required to update and complete the relevant information in ESD Online.

When a user logs in to ESD Online, an automatic pop-up notification will appear on the homepage if any information is missing for the organisation's listed authorised personnel.

The pop-up notification will continue to appear each time the user logs in to ESD Online until all required information for the directors and company secretary has been completed.

Failure to complete the required information may affect data integration and the processing of future applications for the JTKSM Approval Letter under Section 60K of the Employment Act 1955.

NEW ZEALAND

New Build to Rent investment option added to Active Investor Plus

Immigration New Zealand (INZ) has announced that eligible Build to Rent developments will become an acceptable investment option under the Growth category of the Active Investor Plus (AIP) Visa in December 2026.

Build to Rent investment will be available through approved managed funds, giving Growth category applicants access to purpose-built rental housing developments through investment structures that meet the Active Investor Plus requirements.

Applicants and their family members will not be able to live in a Build to Rent development funded through their investment.

The Active Investor Plus visa was refreshed in April 2025, replacing the previous weighted model with two categories: Growth and Balanced. Since the refreshed settings were introduced, more than 80 percent of applications have been made under the Growth category, which requires a minimum investment of NZD 5 million.

Further information on eligibility requirements, investment structures and implementation timeframes will be provided before the change takes effect.

PANAMA

Friendly Nations residence permit extended to Ecuadorian nationals

On 31 August, 2026, the Ministry of Public Security published Executive Decree No. 16 in the official gazette. The decree amends the list of countries whose nationals are eligible to apply for a Friendly Nations residence permit, adding Ecuador as the 51st country on the list.

The qualifying countries are as follows: Andorra, Argentina, Australia, Austria, Belgium, Brazil, Canada, Chile, Costa Rica, Croatia, Cyprus, Czech Republic, Denmark, Ecuador, Estonia, Finland, France, Germany, Greece, Hong Kong, Hungary, Ireland, Israel, Japan, Latvia, Liechtenstein, Lithuania, Luxembourg, Malta, Mexico, Monaco, Montenegro, Netherlands, New Zealand, Norway, Paraguay, Poland, Portugal,

San Marino, Serbia, Singapore, Slovakia, South Africa, South Korea, Spain, Sweden, Switzerland, Taiwan, United Kingdom, United States and Uruguay.

The programme grants a two-year temporary residence permit, after which the holder may apply for permanent residence.

Among other requirements, applicants must demonstrate economic ties to Panama through employment, real estate investment or a fixed-term bank deposit. This residence status does not exempt holders who wish to work in Panama from the requirement to obtain a work permit from the Ministry of Labour. The decree took effect on 1 September, 2026.

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PHILIPPINES

Alien Employment Permit applications now submitted online only

The Department of Labour and Employment (DOLE) has announced that, effective 3 September, 2026, through the Bureau of Local Employment (BLE), all Alien Employment Permit (AEP) applications must be submitted through the official online portal.

This includes all new, renewal, exemption and exclusion applications. AEP applications submitted by email, in hard copy or in person are no longer accepted. Only applications accompanied by a duly completed application form and all required supporting documents will be accepted and processed.

Applications for DOLE Certification for the Special Visa for Employment Generation (SVEG), and for No Objection Certificates relating to the 5% increase in foreign employment under the Philippine Economic Zone Authority (PEZA), will be facilitated and issued by the relevant DOLE Regional Offices.

Only clients with a confirmed appointment for card release or an official notice to submit additional documents for further evaluation will be granted entry to the office premises.

UNITED STATES

DHS announces rule for certain children born in the United States to foreign government employees

US Citizenship and Immigration Services (USCIS) announced that, on 4 September, 2026, the Department of Homeland Security (DHS) issued an interim final rule amending its regulations to allow certain children born in the United States to foreign government employees who are not US citizens to register as lawful permanent residents.

The interim final rule replaces the term "foreign diplomatic officer" with the broader term "foreign government employee." Under the rule, "foreign government employee" includes foreign diplomatic officers accredited to the United States, certain foreign embassy or consulate employees who are nationals of that foreign country, persons employed by a foreign government in an official capacity, and persons employed by an international organisation that possesses international-organisation immunity. The rule also clarifies categories that are not included, such as personal employees or attendants of foreign officials, certain employees of state-owned enterprises, third-country nationals working for foreign governments, certain contractors, and foreign government employees visiting the United States in a personal capacity.

DHS is also updating Form I-485, Application to Register Permanent Residence or Adjust Status, and the related instructions to replace references to "Individuals Born in the United States Under Diplomatic Status" with "Individuals Born to a Foreign Government Employee in the United States", and to provide other updates reflecting these changes. DHS is also updating Form G-325R, Biographic Information (Registration), to account for children born in the United States who do not acquire US citizenship at birth, choose not to register their permanent residence under the amended regulations, and are subject to the alien registration requirements in the INA.

The interim final rule is effective 4 September, 2026 and applies to children born on or after the rule's effective date.

Given the injunction currently in place in Casa Inc. v. Trump, No. 8:25-cv-00201 (D. Md. 2 September, 2026), DHS will not take action to apply the rule specifically to any member of the certified class, or otherwise act in conflict with the preliminary injunction, unless and until the government obtains relief from the injunction. If the government obtains timely relief, DHS will implement the rule accordingly.

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ENVOY GLOBAL

If you have any questions about these changes or would like to discuss how they may affect your organisation, our team is here to help.

Further Information

For further details or support in discussing any of your mobility needs, contact Envoy Global's Advisory and Compliance team at advisory@envoyglobal.com.
www.envoyglobal.com