



GLOBAL DIRECTIONS

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Mobility Trends in Mid-September 2018

Asia

China, People's Republic of

China Offers Mainland Residence Card to Permanent Residents of Hong Kong, Macau, and Taiwan

In August 2018, the Chinese government eliminated the work permit requirement for permanent residents of Hong Kong, Macau, and Taiwan (“HMT residents”) seeking employment in Mainland China. Effective September 1, 2018, these residents are eligible to apply for a Mainland China residence card with the local Public Security Bureau.

To be eligible for a Mainland China residence card, HMT residents must meet both of these eligibility requirements:

1. Be resident in Mainland China for at least six months, and
2. Fit at least one of these descriptions:
 - Be lawfully employed or
 - Have a legal residence in Mainland China or
 - Be engaged in continuous study

Although the work permit requirement was abolished, HMT residents are still required to complete temporary residence registration within 24 hours of arrival in Mainland China.

Once issued, the Mainland China residence card will be valid for five years. With a Mainland China residence card, HMT residents can enjoy social security and housing benefits, apply for driver's licenses, take professional qualification exams, and receive public services offered to local residents.

Japan

Changes to Japanese Immigration Program Forthcoming

Japan's Ministry of Justice recently announced plans to create an immigration agency to replace its existing bureau in April 2019. The agency will be more vast in scope and have two divisions: one handling departure and immigration control and another handling residency and auxiliary support. The new agency will be staffed with more than 5,000 employees. In addition, the agency will have more visibility with other government agencies to improve conditions for foreign workers. The agency is being created, in large part, in anticipation of an influx of foreign workers.

In addition to a new agency, the government will also introduce a new work visa program to benefit blue-collar foreign workers employed in the agriculture, construction, hospitality, and healthcare industries. Visas will be valid for up to five years. There is no option for dependent visas in this category at this time.

Additional details are anticipated in the coming months.

Europe

European Union

European Council Presses Forward with European Travel Information and Authorization System

On September 5, 2018, the European Council approved a regulation to establish the European Travel Information and Authorization Systems ("ETIAS"). ETIAS is a security tool that will perform advance checks on foreign nationals seeking entry into any European Union ("EU") member state. The system will apply to visa-exempt third country nationals who will be required to obtain travel authorization prior to traveling to the Schengen area. Each applicant will be checked against EU and relevant Interpol databases to determine whether the individual poses a security threat. ETIAS will help improve internal security, deter illegal immigration, protect public health, and reduce delays at the border.

The application fee will be €7. Travel authorization will be valid for three years or until the end validity date of the travel document used at the time the application was processed, whichever comes first.

Middle East

Iraq

Iraq's Ministry of Interior Announces Changes to Key Immigration Rules

Consistent with the Iraq prime minister's directive to streamline visas, on September 4, 2018, Iraq's Ministry of Interior ("MOI") announced several important changes to the country's immigration rules. Specifically, the changes concern multi-entry visas ("MEV"), which require a letter of approval ("LOA") from the MOI and are issued upon arrival at the Baghdad airport, and multi-entry/exit visa ("MEEV"), which are issued once a foreign worker completes certain in-country requirements.

In addition, fees have been changed. Key revised fees:

- MEVs (paid at Baghdad Airport):
 - MEV valid for one year: US\$152 (previously: US\$202)
 - MEV valid for three or six months: US\$102 (previously: US\$202)
 - Emergency visa valid for one month: US\$102 (previously: US\$82)
 - Visitor visa valid for one month: US\$52 (previously: US\$82)
 - Visitor visa valid for two months: US\$52 (previously: US\$202)
- MEEVs:
 - In-country renewal of MEEVs valid for an additional year: US\$300 (previously: US\$200) (The fee for a three or six month MEEV extension remains US\$200.)
 - Penalty for expiry of a MEEV: IQD 500,000 (approximately US\$420), regardless of the number of days past expiration or whether the visa holder has submitted an application to renew the visa or applied for an exit visa

Qatar

Qatar Eliminates Exit Permit Requirement for Certain Foreign Workers

On September 4, 2018, Qatar's emir signed a bill waiving the requirement for foreign workers to have an exit permit in order to leave the country. Previously, all foreign workers were required to obtain exit permits and permission from their sponsoring employer to depart the country while working pursuant to a valid work contract. The effective date of the law has not been announced.

The law will allow employers to request that the Ministry of Administrative Development, Labour and Social Affairs require select employees to obtain their sponsor's pre-approval before exiting Qatar. However, this determination will be based on the nature of the employees' work and is limited to 5 percent of the total headcount of the company. Foreign nationals who do not fall under the Qatari labor law, including domestic workers and dependents, will not benefit from the new rule and are still required to obtain an exit permit and their sponsor's permission in order to leave Qatar.