



IMMIGRATION DEVELOPMENTS IN THE MENA REGION

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United Arab Emirates

10 June 2022 – Electronic Issuance of Residence Visas in Dubai International Financial Center (DIFC)

Effective June 13, 2022, the Dubai International Financial Centre (DIFC) will follow the United Arab Emirates' [new streamlined process](#) and issue residence permits electronically, instead of endorsing foreign nationals' passports with a residence visa stamp. DIFC will no longer collect original passports, except for employment visa amendments concerning change of nationality (where a foreign national has obtained dual nationality from a second country abroad and is seeking to have their residence visa issued under their new nationality). Applicants can access a copy of their residence permit in the DIFC portal and dependent residence visas can be downloaded via the UAE ICP mobile app once processing is complete.

No further details have been announced regarding when other Dubai jurisdictions will begin issuing residence visas electronically.

Foreign nationals with electronic residence permits must use their Emirates Identity Card as proof of residency status in the United Arab Emirates. Additionally, foreign nationals must carry their original Emirates Identity Card if travelling internationally.

16 June 2022 – Employee Savings Scheme Forthcoming for Foreign Nationals Working in the Dubai Public Sector

Effective July 2022, Dubai International Financial Centre (DIFC) will expand its Workplace Savings Plan by implementing an employee savings scheme for foreign nationals working in the Dubai public sector.

The system will be in addition to the UAE's existing gratuity scheme. The employer will contribute towards the total end-of-service gratuity, due to the employee into the savings scheme from the date of joining the company. Afterward, employees may contribute any preferred amount until the end of their employment within the public sector. Foreign nationals will be automatically enrolled in this system, so a registration process is not required.

This new scheme is a part of ongoing efforts to enhance the economic stability, attractiveness and flexibility of the labour market in Dubai.

Foreign nationals currently employed within the Dubai public sector are eligible for the scheme.

Foreign nationals working in the private sector or on temporary contracts are not eligible for this scheme, but this may change in the future.

Employers in the public sector should notify and provide updates to their respective employees regarding this scheme. Private-sector employers are advised to stay up to date on their potential inclusion within this scheme.

30 June 2022- Revised Occupational Classification Scheme Applicable to Employers in the Mainland

The Ministry of Human Resources and Emiratization (MOHRE) has revised the occupational classification scheme that is primarily used for matching professions to suitable work permits in the mainland. This revised system is based on the [occupational classification scheme](#) that was introduced by MOHRE in 2019.

The revised scheme is comprised of a list including 1,250 job titles (previously 726) that is further categorized into nine professional levels. The objective is to determine if (1) an educational certificate is required and (2) if the applicant must attend a [labour awareness training](#) at one of the designated MOHRE Tawjeeh Service Centres. Scheme details below:

Prof. Level	Occupations	Educational Certificate	Labour Awareness Training
1	Executive and managerial positions	Required	Not required
2	Specialists in scientific, technical, and social sciences	Required	Not required
3	Technicians in scientific, technical, and social sciences	Required	Not required
4	Officer designations	Required	Not required
5	Service and sales professions	Required	Required
6	Skilled workers in agriculture and fishing industry	Not required	Required
7	Craftsmen, mechanics, and food processing industry workers	Not required	Required
8	Machinery operators, and drivers	Not required	Required
9	Simple occupations, including domestic workers	Not required	Required

If required, the work permit applicant must provide an educational certificate higher than a secondary certificate (or equivalent, depending on educational system), and it must be legalised for use in the United Arab Emirates.

Additionally, professional levels 1 through 5 are considered "skilled" by the MOHRE, unless the worker's monthly salary is less than AED 4,000. In this case, the worker's profession is considered "unskilled", regardless of having an educational certificate. Professional levels 6 through 9 are considered "unskilled", regardless of the worker's salary.

The expanded list of job titles is not currently available on the [MOHRE's website](#) but is expected to be published in the near future.

Based on scheme revisions, there are less professions that do not require an educational certificate to support a work permit application, which will affect employees who do not hold an educational certificate. In addition, there is an increase in job titles where the applicant must attend labour awareness training, which may delay the overall immigration process. Employers should continue to monitor updates and inform their prospective employees of these recent changes.

Qatar

22 June 2022 - Visa-Free Entry Announced for Nationals of Moldova

The governments of Moldova and Qatar have signed a bilateral agreement facilitating visa-free entry for nationals of each country, but it is not clear when the agreement will go into effect.

Under the agreement, nationals of Qatar will be able to travel to Moldova without a visa for stays of up to 90 days, in a 180-day period for tourism, business or transit and nationals of Moldova will be able to travel to Qatar for tourism for up to 90 days. However, those travelling to Qatar for other purposes, including business, study or work, must obtain a relevant visa in advance.

Saudi Arabia

02 June 2022 - Temporary Entry Ban for Foreign Nationals Arriving at Select Airports

Effective June 9, 2022, and until July 9, 2022, the government of Saudi Arabia will impose a temporary entry ban on foreign nationals entering Saudi Arabia on visit visas, arriving at Jeddah, Madina, Taif and Yanbu airport. The entry ban excludes Hajj permit holders.

Foreign nationals on visit visas will be eligible to enter Saudi Arabia through all other airports, including Riyadh and Dammam during this time, while Jeddah, Madina, Taif and Yanbu airports have been designated for those seeking to make the Hajj pilgrimage.

Employers must ensure that they manage the entry of foreign nationals in accordance with this new measure until July 9, 2022.

Middle East

24 June 2022 - Increase in Insurance Contribution Rates Announced for Bahraini Nationals and Their Employers in All GCC Countries

Effective immediately, the Social Insurance Organization (SIO) of Bahrain increased contribution rates by 2% of the salaries of Bahraini employees working in both the private and public sectors of all Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) countries, excluding the United Arab Emirates (UAE).

For those working in the **public sector**, employer contribution rates have increased by 2%, bringing the total percentage contribution to 17%. Effective January 2023, the employee contribution rate will increase by 1%, bringing the total percentage contribution to 7%. Until then, employee rates will remain unchanged.

For those working in the **private sector**, employer contribution rates have increased by 2%, bringing the total percentage contribution to 17%. Effective January 2023 until January 2028, the employer and employee rate will increase by 1% at the start of each year, raising overall employee contribution to 7%. The employee rate will also remain unchanged until January.

However, this new regulation does not affect the United Arab Emirates; the rate will remain unchanged at 15%. Employees working in the public sector will continue to contribute an overall rate of 9% and private sector employees will contribute 11.5%.

Employers are advised to monitor updates and inform their insured workforce about these increased contribution rates, so employees can plan accordingly.

30 June 2022 - Government Closures During Eid Al Adha Holiday

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Government offices across the Middle East and North Africa will close during the upcoming Eid Al Adha holiday, which may affect processing times for all immigration applications. Foreign nationals and their employers should expect immigration processing delays in the following weeks.

United Arab Emirates:

Government offices will remain closed from July 8 and work will resume on July 12.

Qatar:

Exact dates are yet to be announced by the authorities. It is anticipated that the government offices will remain closed from July 10 and work will resume on July 17.

Saudi Arabia:

Government offices will remain closed from July 3 and work will resume on July 17.

Oman:

Exact dates are yet to be announced by the authorities. It is anticipated that the government offices will remain closed from July 9 and work will resume on July 17.

Kuwait:

Government offices will remain closed from July 10 and work will resume on July 17.

Bahrain:

Exact dates are yet to be announced by the authorities. It is anticipated that the government offices will remain closed from July 10 and work will resume on July 13.

Jordan:

Exact dates are yet to be announced by the authorities. It is anticipated that the government offices will remain closed from July 9 and work will resume on July 14.

Lebanon:

Exact dates are yet to be announced by the authorities. It is anticipated that the government offices will remain closed from July 9 and work will resume on July 13.

Egypt:

Exact dates are yet to be announced by the authorities. It is anticipated that the government offices will remain closed from July 10 and work will resume on July 14.

Morocco:

Exact dates are yet to be announced by the authorities. It is anticipated that the government offices will remain closed from July 10 and work will resume on July 12.

Pakistan:

Government offices will remain closed from July 10 and work will resume on July 13.

Tunisia:

Exact dates are yet to be announced by the authorities. It is anticipated that the government offices will remain closed from July 10 and work will resume on July 13.

Iraq:

Exact dates are yet to be announced by the authorities. It is anticipated that the government entities will remain closed from July 10 and work will resume on July 14.

Iraqi Kurdistan:

Exact dates are yet to be announced by the authorities. It is anticipated that the government entities will remain closed from July 10 and work will resume on July 14.

Employers and employees in the United Arab Emirates, Qatar, Saudi Arabia, Oman and other Middle Eastern and North African countries should expect longer processing times for various immigration applications due to the closure of government offices during Eid Al Adha holiday. Delays could continue in the weeks following the holiday due to application backlogs that accumulated during the closures.

ABOUT FRAGOMEN

Fragomen is the world's leading single-focus provider of immigration services and support. Our firm is comprised of law practices and immigration consultancies that work together to support our clients across all regions globally. At Fragomen, we leverage our collective immigration experience to offer clients targeted and trusted solutions that help them achieve their local, regional and worldwide business goals.

Fragomen's team of dedicated immigration professionals has extensive experience in working with multinational businesses, local employers, start-ups and individual investors. We have a deep understanding of the region and maintain strong professional relationships with immigration authorities. Our MENA immigration team is supported on a global basis by over 3,800 immigration professionals in more than 50 offices worldwide. Together, we provide comprehensive immigration support in over 170 countries.

All we do is immigration, a sole focus that makes a considerable difference. Unlike many other providers, all of our thinking, passion and resources are dedicated to improving the immigration experiences of our clients and their employees. We have the track record, region specific experience and know-how to provide you with a streamlined and compliant immigration solution.

Visit our website www.fragomen.com or contact us at dubaiinfo@fragomen.com to learn more about our company and services.