



Mobility: Immigration alert

February 2024

Portugal

New, streamlined immigration processes for third-country nationals and eligible dependents

Executive summary

On 18 January 2024, the Portuguese government announced the introduction of new immigration platforms and processes designed to digitize and streamline the application process for third-country nationals and dependents of Portuguese nationals and residents.

Background

With the closure of the previous immigration department (*Serviços de Estrangeiros e Fronteiras* or SEF) and the [launch](#) of a new public entity (*Agência para a Integração, Migrantes e Asilo* or AIMA), Portugal continues to introduce initiatives to digitize immigration processes, including those related to Residence Visa and Residence Permit applications and the Family Reunification procedure for Portuguese residents.

Amendments to the Regulatory Decree

While the launch date of AIMA's new online platform is yet to be confirmed, the authorities announced that once implemented, it will allow third-country nationals (i.e., nationals of countries outside the EU and EEA) to file applications for Residence Permits (and pay application fees) online and receive the authorities' decisions regarding their applications electronically, without the need to appear in person at the offices of the immigration authorities (as previously). In addition, applicants will no longer be required to file Residence Visa applications in person with the Portuguese consular post with jurisdiction over their place of residence. Instead, they will be able to file these applications and receive application decisions from consular posts electronically.

The government also announced that additional persons and entities, including Portuguese employers, research centers, institutions of higher education and professional training and other organizations (e.g., entities that host cultural activities), will be able to file immigration applications on behalf of applicants who intend to work for these organizations or study at these institutions, provided they have the applicants' consent to do so. Portuguese lawyers (including solicitors and interns) will also be authorized to file Residence Visa and Permit applications on behalf of third-country nationals who authorize them to do so.

Finally, effective 26 January 2024, Portuguese nationals and residents may apply online for Residence Permits for their qualifying dependent family members who are third-country nationals under the Family Reunification category. Currently, Portuguese nationals and residents may submit applications online only on behalf of dependent children between the ages of five and nine who are already physically present in Portugal. It is expected that electronic applications for additional categories of dependents (e.g., children between the ages of 10 and 18, spouses) will be accepted in phases until all dependent applications are accepted via the online platform. Prior to this change, applicants were required to schedule in-person appointments to file applications on behalf of their dependents at the offices of the immigration authorities, and it often took over one year to obtain an appointment.

Further details are expected in the upcoming months.

Impact on employers

The new changes echo efforts by other countries to leverage technology to streamline immigration application processes. Portuguese organizations that employ third-country nationals, and Portuguese nationals and residents who seek to sponsor third-country national dependents, are expected to benefit from simplified application requirements.

Key steps

EY will continue to monitor these developments. Should you have any questions, we encourage you to contact one of our immigration professionals.

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