Immigration Law Briefing: Special Edition

Overview of Greece's New Immigration Legislation (Law 5275/2026)

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A. Introduction

1. This Briefing provides an overview of Law 5275/2026, entitled 'Promotion of Legal Migration Policies' (the **Law**) which amends the Immigration Code to establish a modern and effective legal migration framework.
2. Key features include stable residence permits, a reduced administrative burden and flexible employment procedures designed to attract qualified workers and scientists to meet the needs of the Greek economy.

B. Key Provisions of the Law

1. **Transposition of EU Directive 2024/1233**: A single procedure for issuing a combined residence and work permit for non-EU citizens is established and uniform rights for lawfully employed workers are introduced.
2. **Reform of the Recruitment Procedure**: The Law:
   a. provides for temporary employment agencies to be considered as eligible employers;

b. establishes a minimum working age of 18; and
c. introduces special provisions for strategic projects under Law 4864/2021.

3. **New Categories of Visas**: Tech, talent and visiting professor visas are introduced to allow for residence permits to be granted to highly qualified employees (**EU Blue Card**) under simplified consular procedures.
4. **Expedited Processing of Pending Applications**: The Law streamlines processing by providing immediate decisions on secure permit categories with a minimum two-year validity and automatically routing applications to directorates with available capacity, regardless of the applicant's residence.
5. **Facilitations for Students**: Residence permits valid for the duration of studies can be granted together with the right to part-time employment with increased weekly working hours (20 hours, up from 15) and the right to remain in Greece for one year after completing studies to seek employment.
6. **Stricter Sanctions**: Enhanced penalties are imposed for facilitating unlawful entry or residence, with residence permits immediately revoked. Misrepresentation of NGO membership is considered an aggravating factor.

C. Single Residence Permit Scope and Exceptions

1. **Scope of Application**: The following residence permit categories qualify as single permits:
   a. ten-year residence permits;
   b. residence permits issued to or renewed for non-EU citizens, for employment or for other purposes with the right to access the labor market;
   c. permits for highly qualified employment, acquisition of a medical specialization, special purposes of employment and employment through recruitment;
   d. permits for voluntary service (where work is provided);
   e. residence permits in the public interest;
   f. permits granted to victims of migrant smuggling, human trafficking and non-EU citizens who have worked under exploitative conditions or as minors and for humanitarian reasons;
   g. permits granting the right to work for family reasons;
   h. permits granted to family members of diplomatic missions (including where the right to work is granted under bilateral agreements), of posted employees and of consular authorities;
   i. permits for domestic staff of diplomatic mission members, foreign press correspondents and persons of Greek descent issued under Article 167;
   j. residence permits under the Greece-Canada Agreement; and
   k. permits granted for exceptional reasons.
2. **Exceptions**: Family members of EU citizens, applicants for international protection, seasonal workers, posted workers and non-EU citizens under temporary protection status are excluded

from the scope of the Single Permit.

D. Application Procedures and Rights

1. **Single Procedure for Submitting Applications**: Applications for issuing, modifying or renewing a single residence permit may be submitted by non-EU citizens from outside Greece or while lawfully residing in the country and must be reviewed within 90 days from submission of a complete application. After this period, a single permit will be issued combining residence rights and labor market access, without requiring a separate work permit. Where applicable, a national entry visa must be obtained in advance. Issuance of a single residence permit is subject to whether the maximum quotas of employment positions have been reached.
2. **Rights of Single Residence Permit Holders**: Holders of single residence permits have the following rights:
    a. entry into and residence within Greek territory;
    b. free access to and exercise of employment activities;
    c. change of employer; and
    d. continued residence in the country for a specified period in the event of unemployment.
3. **Right to Equal Treatment of Workers**: The right to equal treatment is expressly enshrined in Article 82A of the Immigration Code. Workers holding single residence permits enjoy equal treatment with Greek nationals as regards:
    a. terms of employment and working conditions (remuneration, dismissal, working hours, leave);
    b. education and vocational training;
    c. recognition of professional qualifications; and
    d. access to goods and services, including housing.
4. **Exceptions to Equal Treatment of Workers**: Family benefits, unemployment benefits, study loans and allowances and various tax advantages are excluded from the equal treatment provisions.
5. **Sanctions and Complaints**: Sanctions can be imposed for violations of labor legislation by employers against non-EU citizens, particularly the principle of equal treatment. Holders of single residence permits may submit complaints (anonymously or by name) to the Labor Inspectorate, either personally or through an authorized representative.

E. New Categories of Residence Permits and Entry Visas

1. The following new categories of residence permits are introduced:
    a. Educational Residence Permit for:
        i. vocational training (Type H.5.1);
        ii. studies at Colleges (Type H.5.2); and
        iii. students or researchers remaining for one year after completing studies to seek employment or pursue entrepreneurship (Type H.11);

b. Long-Term Permanent Residence Permit for family members of Greek citizens (M.3);
c. 'Second Chance' residence permit (Type I.9);
d. United Kingdom Nationals (Withdrawal Agreement/Brexit) Residence Permit for:
   i. United Kingdom nationals (Type K.1); and
   ii. family members of United Kingdom nationals (Type K.2);
e. Humanitarian Residence Permits for two new subcategories for:
   i. persons suffering from serious health conditions; and
   ii. adults over 65 years of age with permanent residence in Greece whose permit cannot be renewed.

2. The following new categories of National Visas are introduced:
   a. visas for non-EU technical personnel transferred by an enterprise from a third country to Greece for construction and operation of industrial, technological, pharmaceutical or other infrastructure with investments exceeding €10m (Type Z.13);
   b. Tech Visas for employment in 'Elevate Greece' enterprises/companies in the National Startup Registry (Type Z.13A);
   c. National Visas for visiting professors at Higher Education Institutions and Private Non-Profit Legal Entities (Type Z.14);
   d. Talent Visas for job-seeking for nationals with high educational qualifications (Type Z.15); and
   e. National Visas for foreign students attending courses or internships at Colleges (Type Z.16).

F. Validity Period of Residence Permits

1. A minimum validity period of two years is established and automatic renewal is introduced for secure permit categories, such as dependent employment, except on grounds relating to public order and security.

2. The EU Blue Card granted for highly qualified employment is valid for three years and renewable for the same period. However, if the employment contract is shorter, the card is valid for the contract duration plus three months, not exceeding three years in total.

G. Renewals and Change of Category

1. Non-EU citizens must submit a renewal application with the required supporting documents within two months before their residence permit expires.

2. The deadline for submitting a late renewal application has been extended from one to three months following expiry, subject to an administrative fine.

3. A change of residence permit category may occur either upon expiry or during the validity period of the current permit. Holders of national entry visas must first obtain the corresponding residence permit before applying for a change of category.

4. Non-EU citizens who entered Greece for studies or research or for studies at a college may

remain in Greece for one year after completing their studies or research with a Type H.11 residence permit in order to seek employment or establish a business.

5. The scope of employment is expanded, as these individuals may now seek employment as highly qualified employees, special purpose employees or dependent employees, without requiring an available employment position (as is otherwise required for the single residence permit for employment).
6. Non-EU citizens who meet digital nomad requirements and entered Greece with a Type C Visa or under a visa exemption regime may no longer apply for a residence permit for sufficient resources (Type I.8) by providing a housing lease agreement or property purchase contract.

H. Modernization of the Admission and Residence Permits Procedure for Dependent Employment (Type E.4)

1. A Cabinet Act issued annually in the final quarter establishes maximum positions for dependent and seasonal employment per sector based on the ESCO classification (replacing the previous specialty-based system). The Act may provide for an increase of up to 15% to address urgent labor needs (up from 10% previously), designate eligible third countries for recruitment, and set country-specific quotas based on national interest, bilateral relations, consular capacity or migration agreements.
2. Employers must submit an electronic recruitment application with an employment contract of at least 6 months (reduced from one year), proof of financial capacity and a fee of €200 per worker. Dependent Employment residence permits (Type E.4) are valid for three years and renewable at 5-year intervals.
3. Companies which undertake Strategic Investments and Public Works may recruit up to 500 employees per project with priority processing, subject to a fee of €400 per person. These employees may enter the country with a Visa type C or under a visa exemption regime.

I. Framework for the Operation of NGOs

1. The law enhances transparency, strengthens criminal sanctions for involvement in smuggling and abolishes preferential partnerships.
2. Contracts must now be concluded exclusively through tender procedures.



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