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**SMITH  
STONE  
WALTERS**  
*Immigration Practice*

# INSIGHT

IMMIGRATION NEWS & VIEWS  
FROM SMITH STONE WALTERS  
WINTER 2024





*We're excited to announce that Smith Stone Walters is now part of Envoy Global, the leading corporate immigration services provider committed to delivering a better way for companies to manage global immigration. Joining forces, we are building a future together to transform global immigration services for businesses worldwide.*

**SMITH  
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Immigration Practice

**ENVOYGLOBAL**

**SMITH  
STONE  
WALTERS  
IS JOINING  
FORCES  
WITH  
ENVOY  
GLOBAL**





This partnership comes as a result of SSW’s continued success and unparalleled reputation for delivering first-class immigration services, and will enable us to meet the growing needs of our multi-national corporate clients even more effectively.

The announcement marks a big step forward in Smith Stone Walters’ growth and development, as we join forces with a like-minded team to provide even greater value to our clients, whilst expanding our global service capabilities along the way.

#### A NEW CHAPTER FOR SSW

Established in 2001, Smith Stone Walters has been a trusted partner for individuals and organisations seeking expert immigration services for over two decades.

Founded by Gary Smith, David Hugkulstone, and James Walters, each of whom remains with the business today, our company has established itself as a market leader in the UK thanks to our excellent service, approachable expertise and immigration capability.

This new partnership with Envoy Global will bring many benefits for SSW clients, including a welcome and dramatic expansion of our global footprint, US immigration expertise and access to technology.

**“Envoy Global has an exceptional track record of innovation and customer success, and we are thrilled to be joining forces with them,”** said James Walters, Co-Founder and Director at Smith Stone Walters.

**“Together, we will be able to deliver even greater value to our clients, while expanding our global service capabilities.”**

*‘Based in the United States with immigration experts in 180+ countries and more than 1,700 clients worldwide, Envoy Global delivers the complete range of services required to manage immigration for a global workforce.’*

**“We are proud to be part of a team that shares our vision of making immigration easier and more accessible for businesses and individuals alike,”** said David Hugkulstone, Co-Founder and Director at Smith Stone Walters.

**“Becoming part of Envoy Global uniquely positions us to deliver enhanced solutions that address the evolving needs of our clients,”** said Gary Smith, Co-Founder and Director at Smith Stone Walters.

**“Together, we will accelerate innovation in global mobility, ensuring seamless experiences for businesses and individuals navigating the complexities of immigration.”**

#### WHY ENVOY GLOBAL?

Based in the United States with immigration experts in 180+ countries and more than 1,700 clients worldwide, Envoy Global delivers the complete range of services required to manage immigration for a global workforce.

From securing visas and work authorisations, to supporting business travellers and remote workers, to providing strategic guidance that keeps programs running efficiently and in compliance, their legal professionals take a holistic, proactive, compassionate approach. Envoy Global’s technology platform was purpose-built by their in-house technology team to make immigration easier for mobility professionals and the global talent they depend on. Richard Burke, President and CEO at Envoy Global said:

**“The UK is a key market for us. Smith Stone Walters’ strong market presence, illustrious brand and deep immigration expertise align with Envoy Global’s vision for global expansion and our commitment to provide a better way for companies to manage global immigration.”**

Sophy King, President of Global Immigration at Envoy Global said: **“This is a milestone for us, and something that brings me a great deal of personal satisfaction. I have known and admired Smith Stone Walters for many years and am immensely proud that Gary, David and James have chosen Envoy Global as their partners for the next stage of the journey. We are committed both to nurturing the team they have created over more than 20 years, and to continuing to deliver top-notch immigration services to all our shared clients. I am so looking forward to working together with James, David and Gary and their talented team.”**

Discover more about Envoy Global’s service capabilities in this month’s Insight Special Focus.

#### WHAT’S NEXT?

We are thrilled to join Envoy Global, a well-established market leader known for its excellent service, approachable expertise, and strong immigration capabilities.

James Walters, David Hugkulstone and Gary Smith remain our directors and are already working closely with the Envoy leaders, as part of a project group, to create an integrated team. This requires care and attention and will take some time – for the time being, your Smith Stone Walters team will remain unchanged.

At SSW, our mission has always been to provide our clients with outstanding immigration services. And as we become part of the Envoy Global team over the coming months, our commitment to personalised guidance, client satisfaction and lasting relationships will remain steady. Together we will accelerate innovation in global immigration and provide the level of service organisations need to meet the demands of their growing global workforce.

*If you would like to find out more about the enhanced level of immigration services now available to your business, please reach out to your Smith Stone Walters Account Manager who will be happy to help.*



# A BETTER WAY FOR COMPANIES TO MANAGE GLOBAL IMMIGRATION

# WHAT THE MERGER MEANS FOR OUR CLIENTS

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*Following the announcement that Smith Stone Walters is joining forces with Envoy Global, we understand our clients may wish to know more about this well-established market leader and the range of global immigration services the Envoy team has to offer.*

We believe that this strategic partnership brings the best of both worlds together to deliver even greater value for our clients. This month's Special Focus dives into the key competencies that sets Envoy Global apart as the leading corporate immigration services provider committed to delivering a better way for companies to manage global immigration.

*To find out more about Envoy Global, please visit [www.envoyglobal.com](http://www.envoyglobal.com).*

## GLOBAL FOOTPRINT



The Envoy Global team is strategically situated in regional HQs and other locations worldwide to ensure assistance can happen in real-time, no matter the time zone or jurisdiction. Joining forces with Envoy Global significantly enhances our presence and service offering globally.

Smith Stone Walters' existing offices in London, Frankfurt, Mumbai, and Hong Kong remain intact. This partnership will now give us additional local operations in the US, France, Spain, Ireland, UAE, India, Singapore, Canada, Netherlands and Saudi Arabia, further expanding our on-the-ground support for employers and their assignees.

## DIVERSE WORKFORCE



Currently, Envoy Global has over 400 employees based in 12 countries worldwide. The global team is truly diverse, speaking 24 languages and representing 19 nationalities. With the addition of the Smith Stone Walters team, who speak an impressive 26 languages, those numbers will only grow, making our collective capabilities even stronger.

We believe that diversity drives innovation, fuels creativity, and enhances the services we provide to our clients across the globe. Together, we're building a dynamic and diverse global presence, and we're delighted to have you join us on this journey.

## RANGE OF SERVICES



Envoy Global's immigration service coverage extends to over 180 countries worldwide, with the US being their largest market. This partnership will therefore deliver a significant expansion of our US immigration expertise.

The Envoy Global team assists with everything from day-to-day needs to strategic guidance. Key services include securing visas, meeting compliance, planning and executing for global expansion and fully outsourced immigration programme management.

## DEDICATED SUPPORT



At SSW, we have always been proud to offer each of our clients a primary point of contact to provide seamless support during every step of an immigration case. This dedicated support will continue into our new partnership.

Several teams at Envoy Global are in place to help organisations manage their immigration programmes with ease, offering dedicated support for HR teams and sponsored employees. This relentless focus on the employee experience has resulted in a Net Promoter Score (NPS) of 75+, well above the average of 25 for law-related service providers.

## BEST-IN-CLASS TECHNOLOGY



Much like Smith Stone Walters, technology is at the heart of Envoy Global's commitment to excellent client service and continuous innovation. Clients and assignees can benefit from Envoy's industry-leading technology platform, designed to help enterprise-level immigration programmes run more efficiently from end-to-end anywhere in the world.

The centralised case management platform makes it seamless for companies to hire and manage a global workforce—from applying for work permits and visa sponsorship, to mobilising and redefining your immigration policy.

## SHARED VALUES

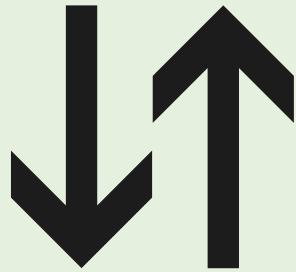


A key reason behind our belief in this partnership comes down to the shared values and like-minded team members that both SSW and Envoy have in common. At the heart of our shared mission to provide our clients with outstanding immigration services is the recognition that there are real people behind every application and case file, and each immigration journey is unique.

Our core values centre around the common themes of clear communication, continuous progress and a commitment to delivering a professional yet personalised service. Whilst this partnership will allow us to grow, we remain committed to upholding the bespoke, high-touch services our clients have come to expect.



# REMINDER: SWITCH TO AN E-VISA BEFORE 31 DECEMBER



*The government is urging all those across the UK who use a physical immigration document to take immediate action to transition to an eVisa by the end of the year, as part of plans to digitise the UK border and immigration system.*

The UK's immigration system is going 'digital by default' by 2025. This means the government is replacing physical immigration documents with a digital proof of immigration status called an eVisa. It is free and straightforward to switch to an eVisa and affected individuals must take action before 31 December 2024.

We address some of the most frequently asked questions about this significant change below.

## WHAT IS AN EVISA?

An eVisa is an online record of your immigration status and the conditions of your permission to enter or stay in the UK. You will need to create a UKVI account to be able to access your eVisa and prove your status to others, such as an employer or landlord.

Updating your physical document to an eVisa does not affect your immigration status or the conditions of your permission

to enter or stay in the UK. An eVisa offers many benefits over a physical immigration document, including greater security and a quicker and easier way to share your status with third parties.

## WHO NEEDS AN EVISA?

Anyone who currently uses a physical document to evidence their immigration status will need to take action to convert their permission to an eVisa.

For those who already have and use a UKVI account, no further action is required. British passport holders and Irish citizens also do not need to do anything.

## DO CHILDREN NEED AN EVISA?

Yes. Children will require their own UKVI account, and families cannot set up one account for the whole family. Where a child under the age of 18 is unable to create and manage their own account, a parent, guardian or responsible adult should do this for them.

## HOW CAN I PROVE MY IMMIGRATION STATUS WITH AN EVISA?

Once you have created your UKVI account you will be able to view the details of your eVisa online, for example the type of permission you hold, when your permission expires and your conditions of stay in the UK.

You can share your immigration status information with third parties, such as employers or landlords, by generating a 'share code' in the Home Office view and prove service. This will give the third party time-limited access to your immigration status information.

## CAN I TRAVEL WITH AN EVISA?

If you wish to travel internationally from 1 January 2025, you must obtain an eVisa. You can use an eVisa to travel to the UK together with your current passport which must be linked to your UKVI account.

With an eVisa, international travel will be easier. UK Border Force and international air, sea and rail carriers will be able to automatically access your immigration information that is held on your UKVI account, to verify your permission.

You should make sure your personal information and your passport details in your UKVI account are up to date well in advance before you travel. You may be delayed or denied boarding by carriers if your information is not correct.

You will still need to carry your current passport with you. If you have physical evidence of your immigration status, you should continue to carry it with you when travelling internationally until it expires.

The Home Office will allow carriers - such as airlines - to initially accept a biometric residence permit (BRP) or EU Settlement Scheme biometric residence card (EUSS BRC) which expires on or after 31 December 2024 as valid evidence of permission to travel. This transitional arrangement to be in place until 31 March 2025, but will be kept under review.

## WHAT SHOULD I DO WITH MY PHYSICAL DOCUMENTS?

Smith Stone Walters recommends keeping hold of your physical immigration document even after it expires, as it may help with future applications to stay in the UK. You may also want it for your personal records.

## WHAT SUPPORT IS AVAILABLE FOR VISA HOLDERS?

Support is available for individuals who require help with setting up their UKVI account. Individuals can obtain support from a helper or proxy to assist them with setting up an account. This could be an employer, family member or an immigration advisor.

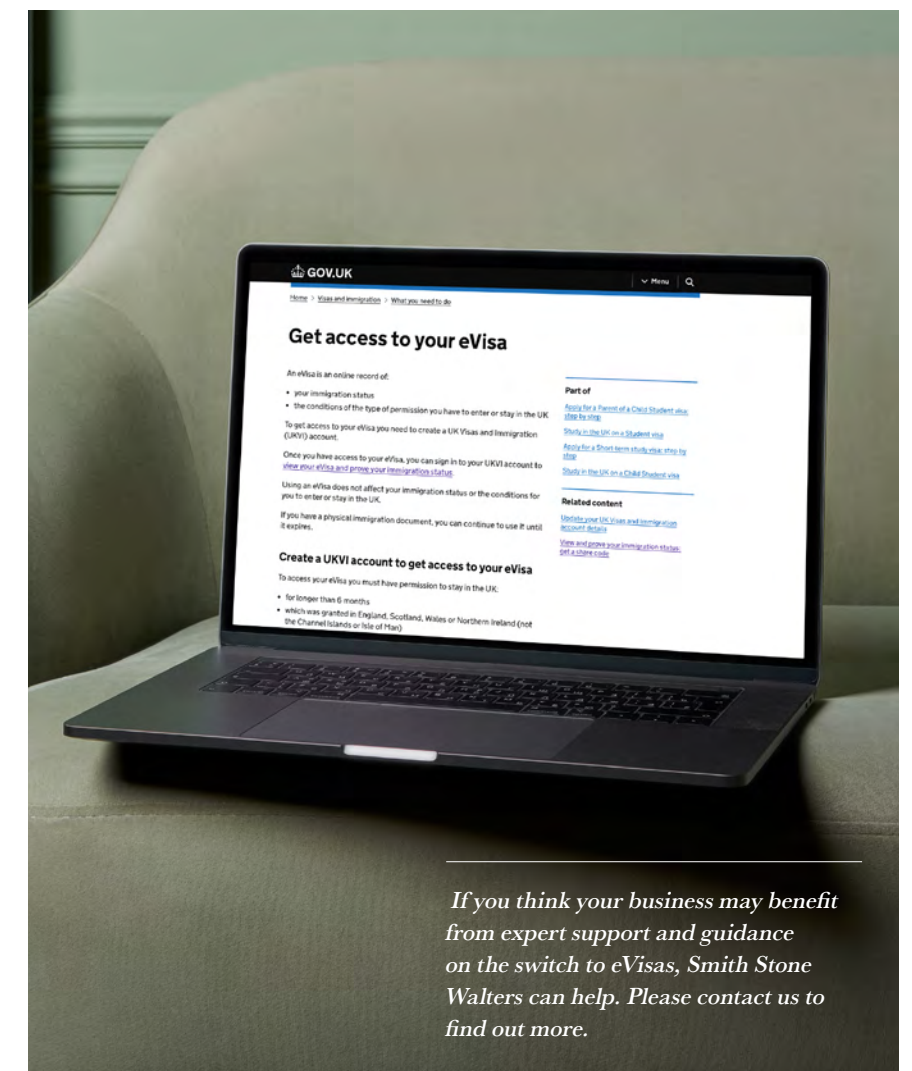
In addition, the government is providing £4 million of funding to a UK-wide network of voluntary and community sector organisations to provide immediate, free support for vulnerable individuals in their transition to an eVisa.

## HOW WILL EMPLOYERS BE IMPACTED?

In most cases, employers will not be required to carry out a follow-up right to

work check on existing employees solely because their BRP or BRC expires on the 31 December 2024. However, you should continue to carry out right to work checks as required, in accordance with the guidance for employers.

The move to digital immigration statuses will bring substantial benefits and convenience to both individual migrants, and those required to check status including employers.



*If you think your business may benefit from expert support and guidance on the switch to eVisas, Smith Stone Walters can help. Please contact us to find out more.*





*By April 2025, all visitors who do not need a visa will need an Electronic Travel Authorisation (ETA) to travel to the UK. The scheme is part of the UK government's plans to strengthen and digitise the UK border and immigration system and is being rolled out in phases.*



Once fully implemented, the ETA scheme will broadly apply to all nationalities who do not require a visa for short stays and who do not have any other UK immigration status prior to travelling to the UK. This includes European nationals.

**WHAT IS AN ELECTRONIC TRAVEL AUTHORISATION (ETA)?**

An ETA is an advance permission to travel to or transit through the UK for those who do not currently require a visa, or do not have a UK immigration status.

An ETA is linked to the individual's passport. The scheme enables the government to perform robust security checks on travellers before they begin their journey to the UK, helping to prevent abuse of the immigration system.

Once granted, an ETA will be valid for multiple journeys to the UK for stays of up to 6 months at a time over 2 years, or until the holder's passport expires – whichever is sooner.

It costs £10 to apply, and the application process can be completed online or by using the UK ETA app. Currently, applications are being processed within around 3 days.

It is important to note that whilst an ETA grants you permission to travel to the UK, it does not grant you entry.

There is no right to appeal against the decision to refuse an ETA, so those deemed unsuitable will be able to apply for a visit visa if they still wish to travel to the UK. This will give a more detailed consideration of someone's circumstances.

**ROLLOUT DATES**

The ETA scheme has already been rolled out to some nationalities during Phase 1, and more nationalities will become eligible in Phases 2 and 3, as set out below.

- **Phase 1:** The ETA requirement already applies to nationals of Bahrain, Kuwait, Oman, Qatar, Saudi Arabia and the United Arab Emirates (UAE).
- **Phase 2:** The ETA will apply to all remaining non-European visa-exempt nationalities for travel to the UK on or after 8 January 2025. These nationalities will be able to apply for an ETA from 27 November 2024.
- **Phase 3:** The ETA requirement will apply to all European visa-exempt nationalities for travel to the UK on or after 2 April 2025. These nationalities will be able to apply for an ETA from 5 March 2025.

**ETA AND THE COMMON TRAVEL AREA**

Individuals arriving in the UK, including those crossing the land border into Northern Ireland, will need to continue to enter in line with the UK's immigration framework, including the requirements to obtain an ETA when it is introduced to that nationality.

Non-Irish residents of Ireland from a nationality that does not usually need a visa to visit the UK (for example European or US nationals), do not need an ETA when travelling to the UK from within the CTA, provided they hold acceptable evidence of their residence status. Additional guidance is available on GOV.UK.

**01  
CASE STUDY**



Dan is a US national planning a 3-month vacation tracing his ancestry. He plans to take a flight from Boston into Dublin. Once in Ireland, he plans to drive across the land border into the UK, first visiting Northern Ireland, followed by taking a ferry over to Scotland and finally driving into England.

Currently, as a US national, Dan does not require permission to travel to the UK for short trips. But from 8 January 2025, as a US national, Dan will require an ETA to be able to visit the UK, which includes crossing the Ireland/Northern Ireland land border.

**02  
CASE STUDY**



Sara is a Brazilian national. She has been offered a place to study for a law degree at the University of Edinburgh in Scotland.

Currently, Sara needs to apply for a Student visa to study in the UK. If successful, she will receive a visa (eVisa), a digital permission which replaces physical documents such as vignettes in passports.

From 8 January 2025, an ETA is a requirement for Brazilian nationals to visit the UK for short trips. However, Sara will not need to apply for an ETA, as she will instead obtain an eVisa which grants her permission to study in the UK. If granted, her eVisa will be her permission to travel to the UK.

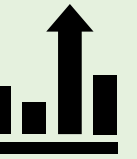
*For more information on the ETA scheme, please contact Smith Stone Walters.*



# SPONSORSHIP PRIORITY SERVICE IN HIGH DEMAND



*When managing your company's sponsor licence, it may be necessary from time to time to submit certain requests to the Home Office, such as updating the details held on your licence or making an application for additional Certificate of Sponsorship (CoS) allocations for your sponsored workers.*



Such requests are usually submitted using the online Sponsorship Management System (SMS). However, requests submitted using the SMS can take up to 18 weeks to be processed.

This can often cause significant delays to the hiring process, particularly if your business has identified a worker you wish to sponsor but you need to request an additional CoS allocation.

In urgent situations like this, sponsors are advised to use the Home Office priority service to receive an expedited decision on your request.

## WHAT IS THE PRIORITY SERVICE?

The Home Office's priority change of circumstances service allows sponsors to fast-track certain administrative changes in relation to their sponsor licence, by submitting an application by email any paying an additional fee of £200 per request.

Eligible A-rated sponsors can use the service to request:

- Additional certificate of sponsorship (CoS) allocation
- Annual certificate of sponsorship (CoS) allocation
- Add a new level 1 user
- Change level one user
- Replace the authorising officer (AO)
- Amend the authorising officer (AO)
- Replace the key contact (KC)
- Amend the key contact (KC)

- Add a representative
- Amend your organisation details – moved to new premises.

Using the priority service does not guarantee that your request will be approved, but it can considerably speed up the decision process compared to standard processing times.

## HOW IT WORKS

To submit a request using the priority service, sponsors must follow these basic steps:

- The change of circumstances request must first be submitted using the SMS.
- Once you have submitted your SMS change, you can now email [postlicencpriorityservice@homeoffice.gov.uk](mailto:postlicencpriorityservice@homeoffice.gov.uk), with a completed priority request form as an attachment. Be sure to include your organisation name (as detailed on your licence), sponsor licence number and priority request type in the email subject line.
- If your request has been successful, you will receive a confirmation email from the priority service team with further instructions, and a second email containing a link to make the payment. You have 72 hours from when you receive the second email to make a payment.

Eligible requests that have successfully made payment will be considered within 5 working days.

## LIMITED SLOTS AVAILABLE

Sponsors wishing to use the service should be aware that demand is high and slots are limited, therefore several attempts may be required to secure the priority service.

The priority service is open from 7am to 5pm Monday to Friday. Any requests made outside of this time will not be considered. A maximum of 100 priority service requests will be accepted each day.

If you do not receive a response, you should assume that your request has not been successful and you must apply again to be considered.

Given the lengthy 18-week processing period under the standard service, purchasing this optional service frequently becomes a necessity for many sponsors. Smith Stone Walters recommends the priority service to any clients with an urgent request.

However, the limit of 100 requests per day is often reached quickly and sponsors should be prepared to make several attempts before a request is accepted.

*If you require support with any aspect of sponsorship or compliance, Smith Stone Walters can help. You can call us on 0208 461 6660 or email [info@smithstonewalters.com](mailto:info@smithstonewalters.com).*



# EU DELAYS LAUNCH OF ENTRY/EXIT SYSTEM (EES)

*At a meeting of EU interior ministers in October, Home Affairs Commissioner Ylva Johansson announced that the Entry / Exit System (EES) would not be launching on 10 November 2024 as previously planned.*

The commissioner noted that France, Germany and the Netherlands had declared that they were not ready and that the EU could introduce the new system in a phased-in manner. No new timeline has been announced so far, but it is due to start in 2025.

The pushback is the latest in a string of delays that have plagued the system since the Council first adopted the regulation for the EES in November 2017, with the original implementation date scheduled for 2022.

## WHAT IS THE EES?

The Entry/Exit System (EES) is an automated IT system for registering non-EU nationals travelling for a short stay, each time they cross the external borders of any of the European countries using the system.

For the purpose of the EES, 'non-EU national' means a traveller not holding the nationality of any European Union country or the nationality of Iceland, Liechtenstein, Norway or Switzerland.

'Short stay' means up to 90 days within any 180-day period. This period is calculated as a single period for all the European countries using the EES.



EES will electronically register the time and place of entry and exit of third-country nationals and calculate the duration of their authorised stay. It will replace the obligation to stamp the passports of third-country nationals which is applicable to all Member States.

## NEW EU DIGITAL TRAVEL PROPOSALS

Despite the delay in launching the EES, in the meantime the EU is exploring new ways to digitalise travel to the Schengen area.

On 8 October 2024, the European Commission adopted proposals to digitalise passports and identity cards, also called 'EU Digital Travel application', for individuals travelling to and from the Schengen area.

*'The Commission is therefore proposing a common framework for the use of digital travel credentials and a new 'EU Digital Travel application', for travellers to create and store their digital travel credentials.'*

Both EU citizens and non-EU citizens are subject to systematic checks when crossing the EU's external borders. Currently, these checks are made physically at the border crossing point, with almost 600 million crossings recorded in 2023 alone.

The Commission is therefore proposing a common framework for the use of digital travel credentials and a new 'EU Digital Travel application', for travellers to create and store their digital travel credentials. The new rules will make traveling to and within the Schengen area easier and more secure.

It is now for the Council and the European Parliament to agree on the proposals. Once adopted, in accordance with the relevant procedures, the EU Digital Travel application and the necessary technical standards will be developed.

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*Please contact Smith Stone Walters for more information on travelling to the EU.*



# DO YOU QUALIFY FOR A UAE GOLDEN VISA?



*For many multi-national businesses looking to expand globally, the Middle East is a key area of interest and the United Arab Emirates (UAE) is quickly becoming one of the most popular destinations for international talent within this region.*

The UAE is one of the world's fastest growing tourist and business destinations. It has the most diversified economy among the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) countries and is a vital commercial and financial centre in the Middle East.

Envoy Global's 2024 EMEA Immigration Trends Report surveyed over 1,000 HR professionals specialising in corporate immigration or global mobility in the Europe, Middle East and Africa (EMEA) region.

89% of employers surveyed said that they have considered sending employees to the Middle East to study the market, with the potential of establishing an office.

Companies wishing to send employees to the UAE for work purposes have several visa categories to choose from, depending on the individual's circumstances.

However, when it comes to retaining foreign talent, employers observe that long-term visa categories, such as the UAE's Golden Visa, have a much higher retention rate. Envoy Global's survey showed that 66% of employers agree that individual on a Golden Visa show higher retention rates compared to those on regular visas.

## WHAT IS THE UAE GOLDEN VISA?

The United Arab Emirates offers a special category of long-term residence visa called the 'Golden visa', which enables foreign talents to live, work or study in the UAE while enjoying exclusive benefits.

A Golden visa grants residence for 5 to 10 years and is not tied to an employer.

Benefits of this category include:

- An entry visa valid for six months with multiple entries to proceed with residence issuance.
- A long-term, renewable residence visa valid for 5 or 10 years.
- No sponsorship requirements.
- The ability to stay outside the UAE for more than the usual period of six months in order to keep the residence visa valid.
- The ability to sponsor family members (including spouses and children regardless of their ages), and unlimited domestic helpers.
- If the primary holder of the Golden visa passes away, their family members can stay in the UAE until the end of their permit duration.

## WHO CAN APPLY?

Investors, entrepreneurs, scientists, outstanding students and graduates, humanitarian pioneers and frontline heroes are among those eligible for the Golden visa. Specific requirements depend on the category you are applying under.

The easiest way to find out if you might be eligible to apply for a UAE Golden visa is to use the online eligibility checker tool on the official UAE government website.

## OTHER WORK VISA OPTIONS IN THE UAE

The EMEA Immigration Trends report shows that employers in the Middle East are utilising innovative strategies like the

Golden Visa to capitalise on opportunities in this region.

Employees who do not qualify for a Golden Visa may be able to secure permission under an alternative category, such as the UAE Green Visa, a type of work visa that allows international talents to sponsor themselves.

*Investors, entrepreneurs, scientists, outstanding students and graduates, humanitarian pioneers and frontline heroes are among those eligible for the Golden visa.'*

Alternatively, the UAE introduced the Remote Work visa in 2022, which allows foreign nationals to live and work in the UAE while maintaining employment overseas. Envoy's survey shows that over half (51%) of employers have already received requests for this visa category from their employees.

With flexible working arrangements and 'work from anywhere' policies among the best strategies for businesses to attract and retain top talent, demand for remote working visas look set to grow in 2025 and beyond.

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*Learn more about Envoy Global's 2024 EMEA Immigration Trends report in this month's Insight Focus.*



# CANADA PLANS TO REDUCE IMMIGRATION FROM 2025

*On 24 October 2024, Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship Canada (IRCC) announced the 2025-2027 Immigration Levels Plan, which for the first time includes controlled targets for temporary residents, specifically international students and foreign workers, as well as for permanent residents.*

The levels plan is a projection of how many permanent residents will be admitted to Canada in a given year and sets targets for overall admissions per immigration category. Under the Immigration and Refugee Protection Act (IRPA), the Minister must table the levels plan in Parliament each year on or before 1 November.

Since 2017, a rolling three-year Levels Plan has been presented, which projects permanent residents (PR) admissions to Canada. Starting in the fall of 2024, IRCC is expanding the Levels Plan to include targets for both PR admissions and new temporary resident (TR) arrivals.

## FORECASTS FOR 2025 - 2027

According to IRCC, the 2025–2027 Immigration Levels Plan is expected to result in a marginal population decline of 0.2% in both 2025 and 2026, before returning to a population growth of 0.8% in 2027.

These forecasts account for the announcement of reduced targets across multiple immigration streams over the next two years, as well as expected temporary resident outflows, natural population loss and other factors.

## PERMANENT RESIDENTS

Compared to last year's plan, the government is:

- Reducing from 500,000 permanent residents to 395,000 in 2025
- Reducing from 500,000 permanent residents to 380,000 in 2026
- Setting a target of 365,000 permanent residents in 2027.

## TEMPORARY RESIDENTS

The Levels Plan also supports efforts to reduce temporary resident volumes to 5% of Canada's population by the end of 2026.

Given temporary resident reduction measures announced in September and this past year, Canada's temporary population will decrease over the next few years as significantly more temporary residents will transition to being permanent residents or leave Canada compared to new ones arriving.

Specifically, compared to each previous year, the government expects to see Canada's temporary population:

- Decline by 445,901 in 2025
- Decline by 445,662 in 2026
- Slightly increase by 17,439 in 2027.

These reductions are the result of a series of changes over the past year, including a cap on international students and tightened eligibility requirements for temporary foreign workers.

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*Smith Stone Walters and Envoy Global are committed to assisting you in achieving your global mobility objectives. Please reach out to us today.*



# MEET OUR LATEST WOW AWARD WINNER



*Each quarter, SSW team members are invited to nominate their colleagues to receive a 'WOW' Award, our company prize to recognise the hard work and outstanding contributions our staff have made to their teams and the business.*

We are delighted to introduce our latest award winner for Q4 2024: Camelia (Cami) Kane! Cami has been consistently nominated for this award in recent rounds, a testament to her unwavering dedication and exceptional contributions.

## WHAT OUR CLIENTS SAY ABOUT CAMI:

*"Cami was very polite and helpful when supporting and assisting us during the preparation for the visa application. She solved any queries and guided us to succeed a positive result. Thank you for all the assistance."*

*"Responsive, professional and knowledgeable. Had an outstanding experience collaborating with Camelia throughout the visa application process. Thank you for the great advice and kindness!"*

*"I am so happy with the help we received. Everything was dealt with so efficiently and made a very stressful process very easy."*

## WHAT OUR SSW COLLEAGUES SAY ABOUT CAMI:

*"Working and collaborating with Cami is just a breeze. She's always on hand to provide her expertise, but what I love most is her ability to work as a team. She always makes it a 'we' as it should be."*

*"Cami is an absolute joy to work with! She responds to any and all of my queries promptly and always goes above and beyond to assist, doing so with a smile. She is a true star!"*

*"Cami is a great person to work with, very meticulous and a perfectionist who keeps pushing us professionally. Always ready to jump in and help, very committed, fair and easy to approach. I am so lucky and grateful to have her as a colleague. Thank you for always being there, with a smile on your face and ready to sprinkle some magic."*



If you have worked with Cami or any other SSW team members recently and would like to share your feedback, we'd love to hear from you. You can call us on 0208 461 6660 or email [info@smithstonewalters.com](mailto:info@smithstonewalters.com).

# WHAT OUR CLIENTS SAY ABOUT US!

*We always strive to deliver a WOW service to our clients. Our dedicated team have been working hard to provide successful solutions and swift results, getting our clients where they need to be. Here is just some of the feedback we have been proud to receive recently:*

*"I would like to share a special thanks to Corina for her assistance throughout my visa application process. Corina's assistance truly reduced the stress involved in applying for the visa and I would like to express my sincere appreciation for all the effort involved in handling my application. Corina, thank you so much."*

*KR, Professional services firm*

*"The staff were helpful, and the steps were clear as day! Such an easy process. Thanks!"*

*SD, Technology company*

*"Anthony's support and advice were very clear and helpful and there were no worries within this application. As I expected, the members of SSW provided very satisfactory services. It is very easy and comfortable to apply for the visa with SSW every time. Thank you so much for your support again."*

*KM, Private client*

“  
**WOW**  
”

“  
**SINCERE**  
**SUPPORTIVE**  
**CLEAR AS DAY**  
**HELPFUL**  
**COMFORTABLE**  
**AMAZING**  
**OUTSTANDING**  
**SMOOTH**  
**SATISFACTORY**  
”

*"Emilia was very supportive from day one. With no doubts, we got the Home Office's result within two working days. Though this is not the first time I have opportunity to work with your office, I've been always grateful for your help. Smith Stone Walters has got the best talents in place!"*

*HL, Technology company*

*"Phill is amazing! So prompt, professional and efficient. He was very helpful with the entire process and working with him couldn't have been better. Thank you, Phill. You are a great asset to your organisation."*

*MF, Hospitality company*

*"Your service was outstanding. I was so relieved from the stress and hassle associated with overseas UK Immigration application process. I am so comfortable having you assist me again in future and I sincerely appreciate your kind support."*

*AO, Research company*

# FOCUS

## WHAT'S IN STORE FOR EMEA IMMIGRATION AND GLOBAL MOBILITY?

*The EMEA region (consisting of Europe, the Middle East and Africa) is known for its diverse and dynamic immigration landscape, which presents unique challenges and opportunities for those businesses moving employees across borders.*

Many multinational companies have a significant EMEA presence, but the ever-evolving immigration landscape and frequent regulatory changes mean businesses must tread carefully when operating global mobility programmes in this complex region.

For this reason, a sound understanding of regional immigration trends and best practices is essential for HR and global mobility teams working to attract and retain foreign talent.

Envoy Global recently published its 2024 EMEA Immigration Trends report, which provides key insights and data on the evolving landscape of corporate immigration across Europe, the Middle East, and Africa.

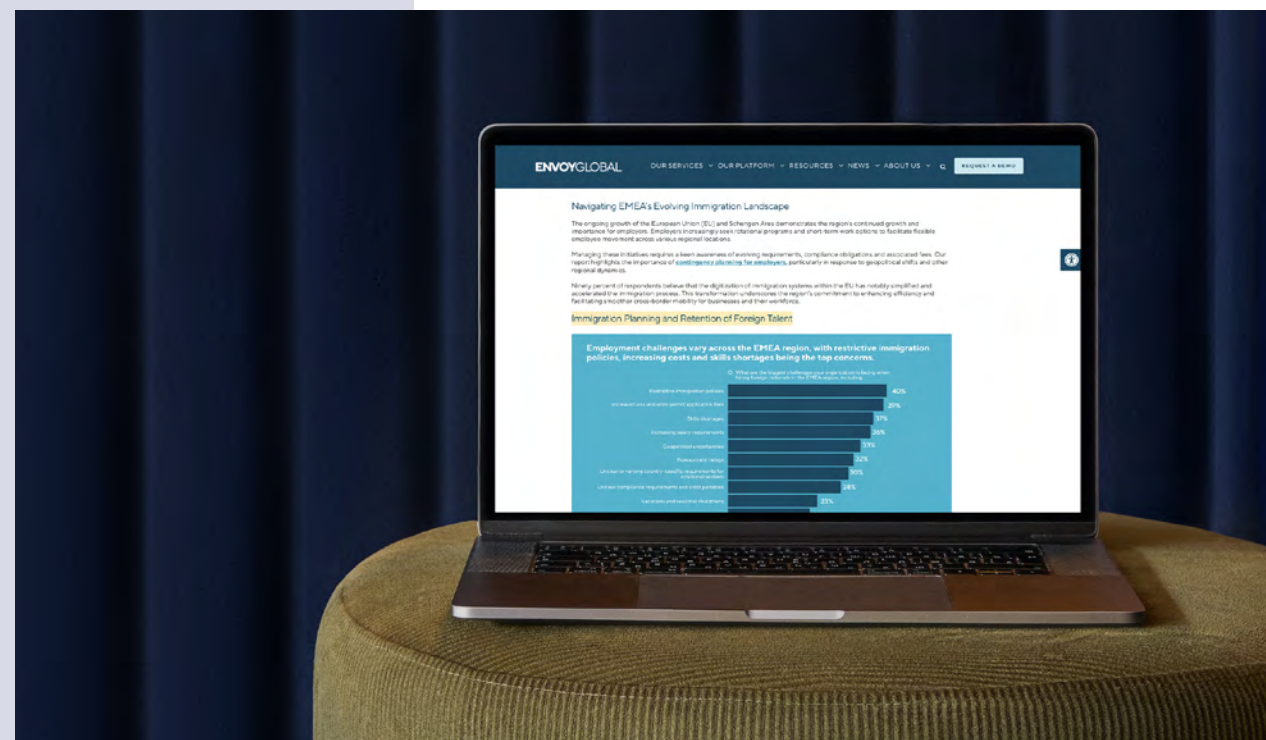
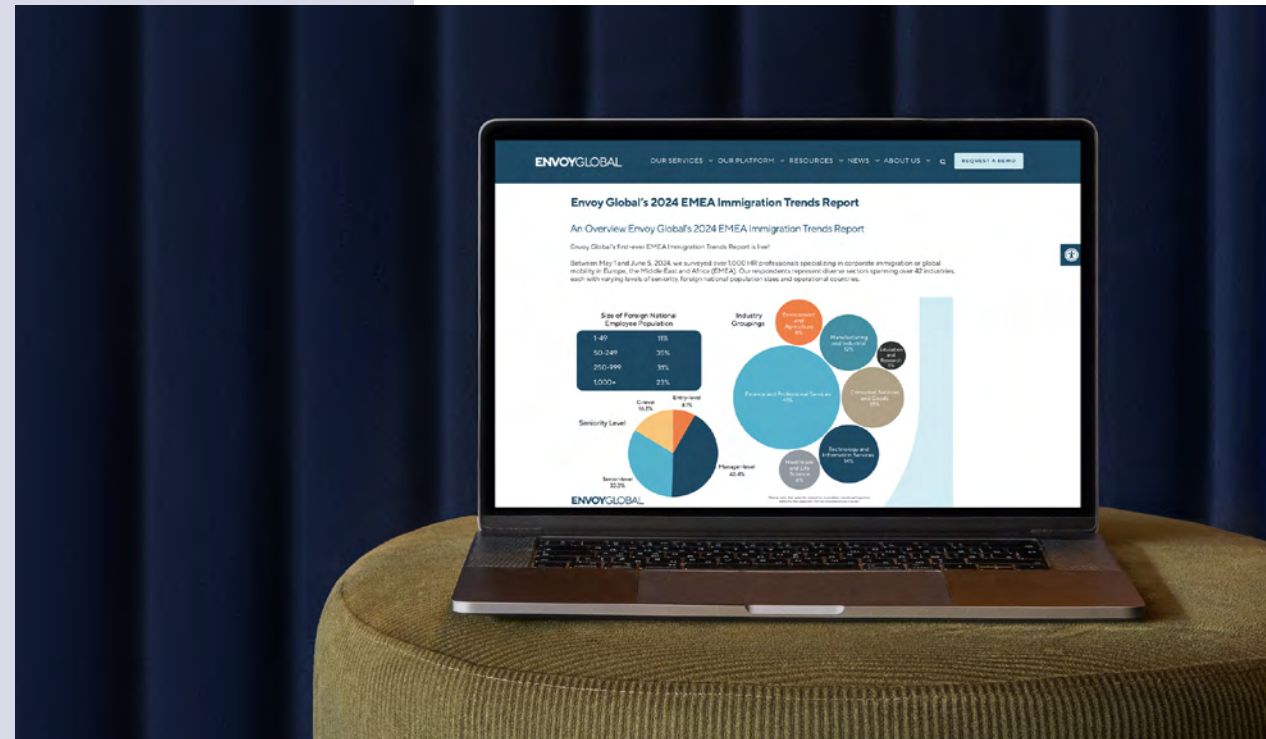
In this Focus, we summarise some of the report's key findings including current challenges, opportunities and emerging trends.

### About the report

The EMEA Immigration Trends report was compiled following a survey of over 1,000 HR professionals specialising in corporate immigration or global mobility in the EMEA region. It covers employer sentiments on country immigration systems, global immigration trends, corporate best practice and more.

### 'Skills shortages continue to be a concern for many organisations in Europe.'

The 84-page report offers a deep dive into the data from a diverse range of employers spanning over 42 industries, and provides a valuable roadmap for HR and global mobility professionals operating in the EMEA region.



### Headline findings

Envoy's survey found that overwhelmingly, EMEA -based employers:

- Prioritise proactive policy planning in their immigration and global mobility strategies, emphasising the need for forward-thinking approaches to navigate the complex regulatory landscape effectively.
- Approach many policy changes optimistically, recognising their potential impact and remaining adaptable within evolving frameworks.
- Actively track policy changes across a wide range of countries in order to remain compliant and competitive in retaining and attracting foreign talent.

### Key locations and regional differences

Employers consider a range of EMEA locations as key to their company's immigration strategy, the most popular being the UK (63%), Germany (39%), France (33%) and the United Arab Emirates (25%).

Within Europe, employers are positive about the digitalisation of immigration systems across the EU, with the majority of respondents believing processes have been made easier or faster as a result.

Most EMEA businesses are also preparing for the implementation of the European Travel Information and Authorisation System (ETIAS) and exploring strategies to prepare for EU and Schengen legislative changes.



Skills shortages continue to be a concern for many organisations in Europe. Within key markets such as the UK and France, employers are particularly seeking foreign nationals with skills and experience in IT, whilst Irish employers largely support expanding the eligible job list to include more sectors.

In the Middle East, employers are targeting markets in Saudi Arabia and the United Arab Emirates (UAE), utilising innovative strategies like golden visas, remote work visas and government policies to capitalise on these opportunities.

Many companies have considered sending employees to the Middle East to study the market with a view to establish an office, despite regional challenges such as cultural differences and stricter policies around diversification within workforces.

Expansion into African markets is also a key focus, with employers recognising the talent in these regions as comparable to elsewhere in the EMEA region. Africa poses several challenges for global mobility, such as stricter compliance and fee requirements, political instability and security concerns.

However, in key markets like South Africa, employers utilise strategic policy frameworks such as the Critical Skills List to recruit foreign talent.

Key challenges

Overall, employment challenges vary across the EMEA region, with the top concerns being:

- Restrictive immigration policies (40%)
- Increased visa and work permit application fees (39%)
- Skills shortages (37%).

When it comes to business visa procedures and application processes, the top challenges identified by employers were obtaining the necessary documentation (55%), varying processing timelines (53%) and complexities in co-ordinating multiple visa applications for employees travelling to various EMEA countries (52%).

Geographically, the survey found that Europe (excluding the UK) poses the

*‘Despite these challenges, the demand for international talent remains strong, with 68% of respondents saying that they plan to recruit more foreign nationals in the next five years.’*



greatest challenge for employers running global mobility programmes within the EMEA region, followed by the Middle East, the UK and lastly Africa. As a result of these challenges, 96% of respondents said that they require more support with immigration and global mobility matters, whether that’s hiring more internal support, seeking support from immigration service providers, or a combination of both.

The future of EMEA immigration

Despite these challenges, the demand for international talent remains strong, with 68% of respondents saying that they plan to recruit more foreign nationals in the next five years.

To help overcome some of these obstacles in international recruitment, employers are making adjustments to their global mobility policies.

When considering future global mobility activities, 96% of EMEA employers say that contingency planning is a crucial aspect of their organisation’s immigration programme.

Over half (57%) of EMEA employers are offering flexible working and remote working arrangements to attract and retain the best international talent amidst increasing competition.

*‘It is clear that employers continue to recognise the value that international workers bring to organisations.’*

Most EMEA employers are embracing remote work visas as a key employment benefit for their foreign national population.

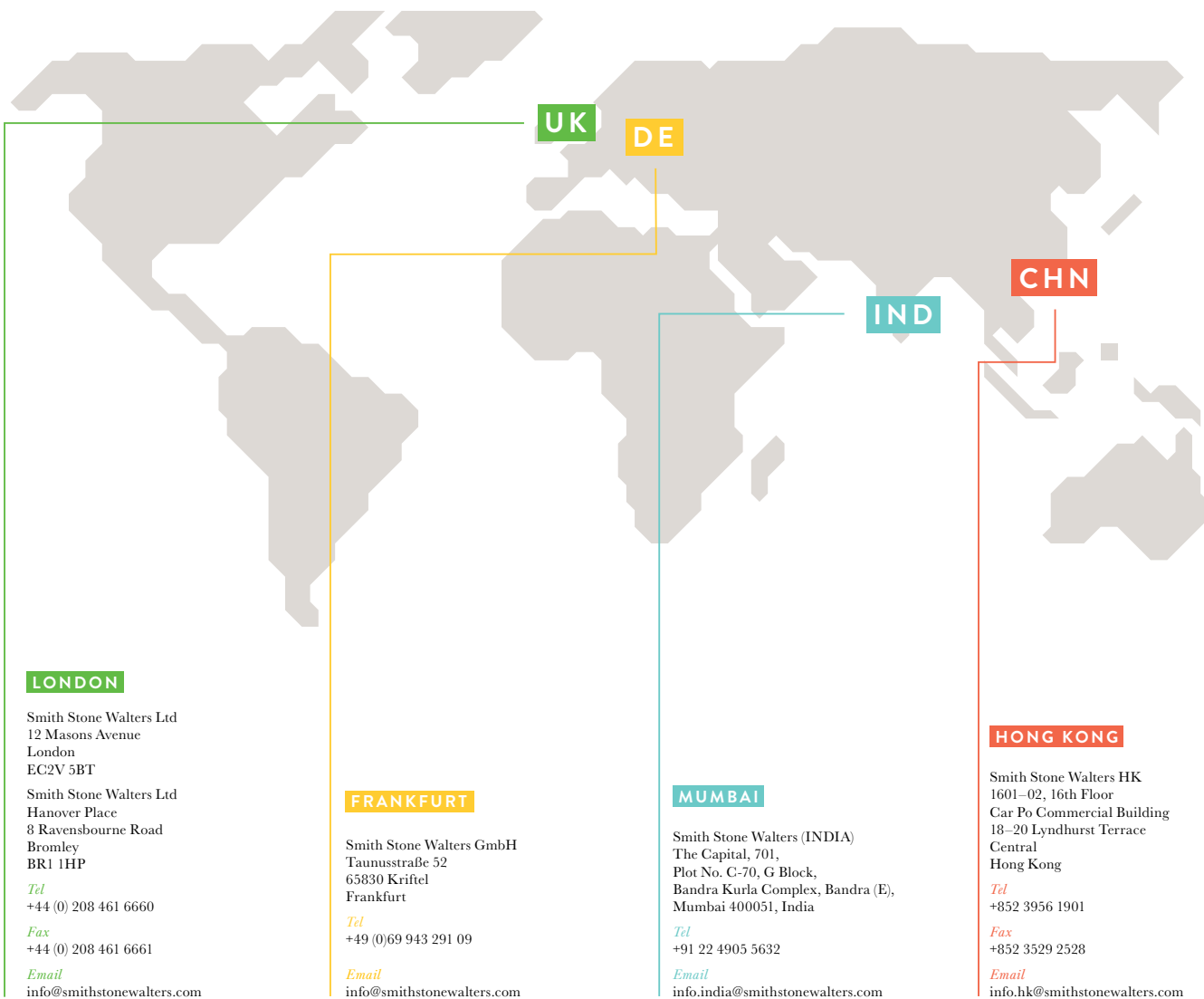
Whilst the report reveals a complex and evolving landscape of EMEA immigration, it is clear that employers continue to recognise the value that international workers bring to organisations and therefore the commitment to attracting and retaining foreign talent remains strong.

**SMITH  
STONE  
WALTERS**  
Immigration Practice

**ENVOYGLOBAL**

To download the 2024 EMEA Immigration Trends report, head to [www.envoyglobal.com](http://www.envoyglobal.com). Smith Stone Walters and Envoy Global are committed to assisting you in achieving your global mobility objectives. Please reach out to us today.

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