
THE GLOBAL REGULATORY DEVELOPMENTS JOURNAL

Editor's Note: Antimicrobial Resistance

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Three Points for Employers About Collective Bargaining in Mexico Under the New U.S.-Mexico-Canada Agreement Rules and the Labor Reform

Germán de la Garza De Vecchi

More Countries Join the Digital Nomad Visa Club: A Four-Step Employer's Guide to International Remote Work Requests

Nazanin Afshar, Jack O'Connor, and Nan Sato

UK Government Unveils Remote Work Rules for Short-Term Visitors

Paige Edwards, Claire D Nilson, and Abilio Jaribu

Monitoring Workers in the United Kingdom

Claude-Étienne Armingaud and Sophie F. Levitt

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Volume 1, No. 4

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- 225 Editor’s Note: Antimicrobial Resistance**
Victoria Prussen Spears
- 229 Addressing Antimicrobial Resistance: A Review of Global Public Policy and Legislative Approaches**
Lincoln Tsang, Greg Levine, Katherine Wang, Julie Kvedar, Ling Xu, and Helen Ryan
- 253 Electric Vehicles and Data Collection: A Tour of Several Jurisdictions**
Barbara Li, Steve Tam, Elle Todd, Sarah L. Bruno, Michael J. Rubayo, Bryan Tan, and Eng Han Goh
- 267 A New European Commission Proposal on Foreign Direct Investment Screening: Toward Greater Harmonization?**
Karl Stas, Cyriel Danneels, and Jean-Baptiste Blancardi
- 275 China Issues Rules to Clarify and Relax Cross-Border Data Transfer Controls**
Jenny “Jia” Sheng, Chunbin Xu, and Wenjun Cai
- 281 The EU and UK Introduce New Security Standards for Internet of Things**
Steven Farmer, Scott Morton, and Mark Booth
- 287 Three Points for Employers About Collective Bargaining in Mexico Under the New U.S.-Mexico-Canada Agreement Rules and the Labor Reform**
Germán de la Garza De Vecchi
- 291 More Countries Join the Digital Nomad Visa Club: A Four-Step Employer’s Guide to International Remote Work Requests**
Nazanin Afshar, Jack O’Connor, and Nan Sato
- 297 UK Government Unveils Remote Work Rules for Short-Term Visitors**
Paige Edwards, Claire D Nilson, and Abilio Jaribu
- 303 Monitoring Workers in the United Kingdom**
Claude-Étienne Armingaud and Sophie F. Levitt

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UK Government Unveils Remote Work Rules for Short-Term Visitors

Paige Edwards, Claire D Nilson, and Abilio Jaribu*

In this article, the authors discuss the remote work rules applicable to travelers to the United Kingdom—and how they differ compare to the digital nomad visas offered by other countries.

In December 2023, the UK Home Office announced changes for those traveling to the United Kingdom as visitors. The changes were prompted in an effort to relax the rules for individuals being granted entry to the United Kingdom as visitors.

Since January 31, 2024, individuals traveling to the United Kingdom have been allowed to work remotely while visiting. The primary intent of their visit must be that of a visitor; such as seeing family, having a holiday, attending a conference or business meetings, or engaging in other nonwork-related activities.

The permission granted is strictly limited to the remote performance of employment duties. Visitors are prohibited from engaging with the local market, working for organizations in the United Kingdom, or directly providing goods and services to the public.

These rules prohibit visitors from traveling to the United Kingdom with the primary purpose of remote working, which is a significant difference compared to the digital nomad visas offered by other countries.

The new remote-working provision in the immigration rules permits activities such as responding to emails, answering phone calls, or participating in remote meetings, as well as performing any other employment duties that can be completed using telecommunications.

The visa changes have also created additional opportunities for researchers, scientists, and academics, who now have permission to conduct research in the United Kingdom as part of their visit. The research can be independent or relate directly to their employment overseas.

Previously, travelers would have been obligated to apply for a visa to engage in such activities.

Furthermore, the list of Permitted Paid Engagements (PPE) will be extended to allow payment for speakers at conferences. PPE visitors will still need to plan and carry out any activities within 30 days of their arrival in the country.

Previous Situation and Related Impact

Under the previous rules, workers who come to the United Kingdom as a visitor were unable to:

- Work remotely;
- Work directly with clients in the United Kingdom;
- Be paid for speaking at conferences; or
- Engage in research if they were researchers, scientists, or academics.

Instead, workers had to apply for an appropriate work visa to engage in those activities, a process that required more time and resources; for example, sponsorship from a UK company or another form of immigration permission.

The changes to the visitor rules mean that business travel to the United Kingdom will become more flexible and attractive, and more reflective of twenty-first-century workplace realities. This is a pragmatic approach to modern, remote-working business practices, which is not reflected in the immigration rules of many other countries. For example, and in direct contrast, the United States does not at this time permit foreign visitors to undertake remote work activities there (although there have been unsubstantiated rumors that this may be considered).

Comparison to Other Countries

As traditional workplace boundaries have become more flexible, and especially as a result of the COVID pandemic, the concept of digital visas or e-visas has increased in popularity worldwide, with many countries introducing so-called digital nomad visas. This type of visa can allow workers, freelancers, and self-employed

individuals to live in one country while working remotely for a company located in a different country.

Table 1 contains some examples of the “digital nomad” visas being offered by some countries.

Table 1			
Countries	Duration	Minimum Income	Application Fee
Argentina	Up to 6 months (can be renewed)	No minimum income requirement	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Approximately \$120 immigration fee; and • Approximately \$80 consular fees
Bahamas	Up to 1 year (can be renewed)	No minimum income requirement	Professionals: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Application fee: \$25; and • Permit fee: \$1,000 Students: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Application fee: \$25; and • Permit fee: \$500
Barbados	Up to 1 year	\$50,000 annually	\$2,000
Brazil	Up to 1 year (can be extended)	\$1,500 monthly	\$100-300 (depending on which country you are making the application from)
Cayman Islands	Up to 2 years	Annual income of at least \$100,000 if applying as an individual, \$150,000 for a couple and \$180,000 for a family	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Application fee: \$1,469; and • Credit card fee: 7 percent of total application fee
Costa Rica	Up to 1 year (can be renewed)	\$3,000 monthly	\$100

Countries	Duration	Minimum Income	Application Fee
Croatia	Up to 1 year	€2,539.31 monthly	If the application is submitted at a diplomatic mission/consular post: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Application fee: €55,74; and • Biometric residence card fee: €41,14
Cyprus	Up to 1 year (can be renewed)	€3,500 monthly	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Issuance or renewal of a temporary residence permit: €70; and • Registration to the Aliens' Registry (only in cases of initial registration): €70
Greece	Up to 1 year (can be extended)	€3,500 monthly	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Visa fee: €75; and • Administrative fee: €150
Mauritius	Up to 1 year (can be renewed)	\$1,500 monthly	No application fee
Philippines (expected to be rolled out in 2024)	Up to 1 year (can be extended)	To be confirmed	To be confirmed
Portugal	Either: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A temporary-stay visa (valid for up to 1 year); or • A long-term option (can be renewed until the individual becomes eligible for a permanent residency after 5 years) 	Applicant needs to earn at least 4 times the Portuguese minimum wage	€90

Countries	Duration	Minimum Income	Application Fee
Spain	Up to 1 year (can be extended)	Must be at least 200 percent of the monthly Spanish national minimum wage (approximately €2,387.15 per month)	€73.26

In Summary

- Since January 31, 2024, individuals traveling to the United Kingdom have been allowed to work remotely while visiting. Visitors are prohibited from engaging with the local market, working for organizations in the United Kingdom, or directly providing goods and services to the public.
- These rules prohibit visitors from traveling to the United Kingdom with the primary purpose of remote working, which is a significant difference compared to the “digital nomad” visas offered by other countries.
- Digital nomad visas can allow workers, freelancers, and self-employed individuals to live in one country while working remotely for a company located in a different country.

Conclusion

Many countries worldwide have introduced digital nomad visas in response to the changing working culture. While the United Kingdom has decided against introducing such a visa, the changes implemented by the UK government will remove certain boundaries in the business travel context. The changes to the laws governing visitors in the United Kingdom do not, however, replace Skilled Worker visas (or other work visas), and visitors should educate themselves on the restrictions to avoid violating immigration laws.

Note

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