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**EMPLOYMENT OF FOREIGN
CITIZENS IN RUSSIA.
IMMIGRATION LAW ISSUES**

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General Procedure for Employment

Foreign nationals working in Russia are subject to both Russian labor and migration legislation. For a dedicated guide on labor law matters, please refer to the relevant resource provided [here](#). The present guide focuses specifically on the migration-related aspects of employment.

Foreign citizens may work in the Russian Federation in a full and lawful capacity only if they possess an employment contract, a work permit, and a work visa. The work permit and work visa are processed not by the foreign citizen themselves, but by their employer in Russia, i.e., a Russian organization (or a branch of a foreign organization).

The employment procedure is as follows:

I. Preliminary Stage:

- Negotiating the terms and accepting a job offers. For instance, this may be accompanied by a one-time trip to Russia on an electronic visa for an interview.
- Obtain necessary documents from the future employee to draft the employment contract as per the Russian law.
- Undergo a mandatory medical examination, which is required for certain professions.
- Familiarizing the candidate with all documents pertaining to the job role of future employee: Internal Labour Regulations, data protection rules, etc.

II. Stage of Processing the Work Permit and Work Visa Invitation:

There are several types of work permits in Russia: a patent for citizens from visa-free countries, a standard (simple) work permits, which is valid for up to 1 year, and a work permit for Highly Qualified Specialists (HQS), which is valid for up to 3 years. Below you will find a description of the standard work permit and the HQS permit.

Please note that the following categories of workers do not need to process any authorization documents for work:

- The person who holds either permanent residence permit or a temporary residence permit;
- Employees of foreign companies who are performing installation, commissioning, service and warranty maintenance, as well as post-warranty repairs of technical equipment supplied to Russia;
- Journalists who are accredited in Russia;
- Scientific or pedagogical workers invited by educational institutions for research and teaching activities;
- Persons who have been recognized as refugees in Russia;
- Persons who have been granted temporary asylum in Russia;
- Full time students of accredited universities, works r in their free time.

Special regulations have also been established for foreign IT specialists. Foreign IT specialists may work without any work permit, if such specialist hired under a contract with organizations operating in the field of information technology. Furthermore, such hiring companies must have special state accreditation (Please find herein the register of accredited companies: [Register of Accredited IT Companies](#)). These company must process a work visa invitation for its employee (IT specialists) and then conclude an employment contract with them. Once the contract is concluded, then notify the Ministry of Internal Affairs and the Social Fund of Russia.

III. Stage after Receipt of the Work Permit:

The employee and the employer must undertake a various steps to ensure that the hiring complies with current legislation. Following are the duties which must be complied by respective employer and employee.

Employee:

- Registration for immigration purposes at their place of stay (accommodation in an apartment, hotel, etc.);
- Opens a bank account for receiving salary;
- Registers on the State Services portal (gosuslugi.ru);
- Purchases and registers a SIM card with mandatory biometric registration.

Employer:

- Enters the start date of work into the employment contract and issues an employment order;
- Processes a Taxpayer Identification Number (INN) and a certificate of mandatory pension insurance (SNILS) for the employee;
- Fulfils other obligations stipulated by labour and immigration legislation.

Processing Work Permits for Foreign Specialists in Russia

Russia is emerging as a pioneer and popular destination for labour immigration of qualified specialists due to various factors such as liberal immigration policy (simplified processing procedures, absence of quotas, preferential immigration registration), competitive salary, geographical location which providing access to Asian and European countries, and state support in the form of programmes for specialists in certain sectors such as IT, science, etc.

Statistics confirm the growing interest. According to the data from Unified Interdepartmental Information and Statistical System ([ЕМИСС](#)), the number of work permits issued to foreign citizens from visa countries has increased significantly:

- In 2024 — approximately 170,000 permits;

- In 2025 — 240,812 permits.

According to data from the Russian Ministry of Internal Affairs for the first half of 2025, the leading countries by number of issued permits were:

- China — 42%;
- India — 20%;
- Turkmenistan and Vietnam — about 10%.

The Government of the Russian Federation has approved the annual quota for attracting foreign workers arriving with a visa in 2026, is 278,940 specialists (vide decree No. 1920 dated 28.11.2025).

There are two types of work permits issued for foreign workers from visa countries in Russia: The Standard Work Permit (Simple permit) and the Highly Qualified Workers (HQS) permit. For the sake of better clarity, please find herein; an overview of these two kinds of work permit, requirement for their processing and their comparative analysis:

Work Permit for a Foreign Highly Qualified Specialist (HQS)

A Highly Qualified Specialist (HQS) is a foreign citizen recruited by Russian company to work in Russia under a simplified procedure. The main difference from the standard processing of a foreign worker is the special procedure for issuing the work permit:

The HQS work permit is issued immediately for a period of up to three years (unlike a

regular permit — maximum one year) and can be renewed for an unlimited number of times without requiring the holder to leave the country. HQS status grants a number of advantages such as no quotas, simplified immigration registration, the ability to work in several regions, a preferential procedure for obtaining a permanent residence permit, etc.

A foreign HQS is entitled and obliged to work only within the profession and region specified in the permit. They must adhere to the rule governing their stay in Russia and comply with all validity periods in Russia.

A foreign HQS may also work for several companies, provided a separate work permit is required to obtain for each company.

Requirements for HQS Qualification and Salary

To obtain HQS status, two key conditions must be met by an applicant:

1. **Professional Qualification:** The employer independently assesses the candidate's experience, education, and professional achievements. Importantly, some departments of the Ministry of Internal Affairs may request supporting documents, including a copy of a diploma corresponding to the position held.
2. **Minimum Salary Level:** As of 01.03.2024, the base threshold is RUR 750,000, - per quarter (RUR 250,000, - per month). Reduced

requirements are established for certain categories.

Salary calculations include all elements of remuneration under the Labour Code: base salary, compensatory and incentive payments (for hazardous conditions, night work, qualification bonuses, etc.). One-time bonuses, material aid, and gifts are not excluded.

Personal Income Tax (Russian abbreviation - NDFL) on the HQS's salary in 2025 is withheld at progressive rates applicable to residents (from 13% to 22%).

Income not related to work (e.g., from renting out real estate) is taxed at a rate of 30%.

Processing the HQS Work Permit

The right to process HQS permits is granted to following entities:

- Russian legal entities;
- Accredited branches of foreign companies;
- Educational, scientific, and medical organizations;
- Sports clubs and federations.

Individual entrepreneurs are not entitled to process highly qualified specialists (HQS) permit.

The main steps for processing documents and employing a foreign HQS worker are

outlined herein:

1. *Contract Preparation.* The employer concludes an employment or civil law contract with the candidate which specify the HQS status and a salary not lower than the established minimum threshold.
2. *Processing of VHI.* The employer purchases a voluntary health insurance (Russian abbreviation DMS) policy for the entire planned period of employment — both for the specialist and for members of their family (if they will accompany them).
3. *Submission of Documents to the Ministry of Internal Affairs.* The employer submits a petition for the issuance of a work permit together with a copy of the contract, the VHI policy, and other necessary documents. The review period for the petition is 14 working days. The total period from the start of processing until commencement of work is approximately 1.5 months.
4. *Obtaining the Visa Invitation.* In parallel with the work permit, an invitation for obtaining a work visa must be processed by the employer. In this regard, the employing company must also register with the immigration authority of the region where the foreign worker will be employed (e.g., for Moscow — with the Immigration Department of Moscow).
5. *Visa Processing Abroad.* The specialist applies to the Russian consulate in their country and receives a work visa. The

work visa is issued for the validity period of the work permit (maximum 3 years) and is extended in Russia without the need of departure. The foreign specialist may be accompanied by family members during employment, for whom a corresponding visa are issued. Eligible family members include: spouse, children (including adopted), parents, grandparents, grandchildren, as well as spouses of these individuals. They all receive visas for the validity period of the HQS permit. During the period of validity, the eligible family members may freely reside and travel within Russia.

6. *Entry and Immigration Registration.* The foreigner enters Russia and must register for immigration within 7 working days after entry (this obligation applies each time upon entry into the Russian Federation). Once they receive the work permit, the registration deadline is extended to 90 days after entry. Immigration registration is carried out by the landlord who provides the premises for the foreigner's residence. As of early 2026, the maximum period of immigration registration is one year. After that, this procedure must be repeated.
7. *Medical Examination and Fingerprinting.* After arrival in Russia, the HQS undergoes a medical examination and fingerprinting. Fingerprinting is conducted once, while the medical examination must be passed each time whenever processing a work permit or renewing it.
8. *Receipt of the Permit.* The specialist

applies in person to the Ministry of Internal Affairs to receive the work permit.

Violation of employment rules and other obligations in the field of immigration law may result in a fine for the employer of up to RUR 1 Mio., and for the specialist — a fine of up to RUR 7,000 and expulsion from the country.

Following termination of the employment contract, the HQS is granted 30 days to find a new employer. During this period, the work permit and visa remain valid. If a new contract is concluded in time, the documents are reissued without leaving Russia.

If a new employer is not found, an additional 30 days are provided for departure from the country. Upon expiry of this period, stay in Russia becomes illegal.

Standard (Simple) Work Permit for Foreign Citizens

Processing a simple work permit (non-HQS) is a rather complex and time-consuming procedure containing many nuances.

The first question the employer will need to resolve is whether to hire the foreigner within the established quota or for a non-quota position. If the foreigner does not speak Russian and, consequently, cannot pass the exam in Russian language, history, and fundamentals of legislation, the first stage — quota processing — must be completed.

However, if the foreigner has a good

command of Russian, and the position for which they are planned to be hired is listed as 'non-quota' position in the register then the first stage can be skipped.

According to Order of the Russian Ministry of Labour No. 475n dated 23.09.2013, non-quota positions include positions of heads of organizations and their deputies, engineering specialties, cultural and artistic workers, specialists in the field of tourism, and certain professions of unskilled labour. The list is exhaustive. To conclude, hiring a foreign citizen for a position not included in this list is subject to the availability of quota.

The procedure for processing a simple work permit consists of the following sequential stages:

- *Stage One: Confirmation of the Absence of Russian Candidates*
The employer is obliged to post the vacancy in electronic form on the official portal "Work in Russia" (trudvsem.ru). The vacancy must be posted for a period of at least 30 calendar days, with the possibility of extension by submitting a confirmation no later than 4–5 days before the expiry of the term.
- *Stage Two: Obtaining a Quota*
The application for obtaining a quota is submitted to the authorized body of a constituent entity of the Russian Federation. The said application must be commenced by the midyear preceding the planned date of hiring the foreigner. The quota is issued for a calendar year and is not transferable to subsequent

periods.

- *Stage Three: Obtaining a Permit to Attract Foreign Labour (Russian abbreviation RPIRS)*

Based on the obtained quota, the employer applies to the territorial body of the Russian Ministry of Internal Affairs with an application for the issuance of a Permit to Attract Foreign Labour. The review period is 30 calendar days. The permit is issued in respect of one constituent entity of the Russian Federation. To employ foreigners in multiple regions, a separate permit must be processed for each constituent entity.

- *Stage Four: Processing the Work Permit*

After receiving the Permit to Attract Foreign Labour, the employer submits a set of documents for processing the actual work permit for the foreign citizen. A draft employment contract, confirmation of the planned processing of a VHI policy for the foreign worker, etc., are required for processing. The decision must be made within 15 working days from the date of submission of application. The work permit is issued for a period of up to one year.

- *Stage Five: Processing a Work Visa Invitation for the Foreign Worker*

The invitation is processed with the Ministry of Internal Affairs authorities. For this, it is necessary to register the employing company with the territorial subdivision of the UVM MVD. The processing time for the invitation is 14-21 working days.

- *Stage Six: Medical Examination and Fingerprinting*

In accordance with Decree of the Government of the Russian Federation No. 188 dated 02.04.2003, a foreign citizen entering the Russian Federation on a work visa is obliged to undergo a mandatory medical examination within 30 calendar days from the date of entry. The medical examination screens the following:

- the presence of HIV infection;
- the presence of infectious diseases posing a danger to others (with the exception of the new coronavirus infection);
- the fact of using narcotic drugs without a doctor's prescription.

Apart from the medical examination, foreign citizens entering the Russian Federation on a visa are also subject to mandatory fingerprint registration within 30 calendar days from the date of their entry.

Knowledge of Language, History, and Fundamentals of Legislation

In accordance with current legislation, a foreign citizen must provide a certificate confirming a certain level of knowledge of the Russian language, history, and fundamentals of the legislation of the Russian Federation within 90 calendar days from the date of issuance of the work permit (the term was increased from 30 to 90 days as of 11.08.2025). Failure to provide this certificate within the established deadlines results in the annulment of the work permit.

Processing HQS permit for a foreign citizen is the preferred option in terms of economic feasibility, in order to ensure the legally established minimum salary level, as it eliminates the need for quotas, simplifies immigration procedures, and reduces processing times. The standard procedure is applied in cases where the conditions for processing HQS status cannot be met and it requires strict adherence to the stages and deadlines established by legislation.

- *Stage Seven: Confirmation of*

Comparative Analysis of Procedures: HQS vs. Standard Work Permit

	HQS Work Permit	Standard (Simple) Work Permit
Minimum Salary / Remuneration	RUR 250,000/month (base threshold)	Not established by law
Quota Requirement / Quota System	Not required	Required for most positions
Certificate of Russian Language Proficiency	Not required	Required for non-quota positions
Validity Period of the Permit	Up to 3 years	Up to 1 year
Processing Time / Issuance Timeframe	14 business days (review) + approximately 30 days (total cycle)	3 to 6 months (including the quota stage)
Work in Different Regions / Multi-Region Employment	Permitted if there are separate legal entities and specified in the permit	The permit is issued for one region
Migration Registration	Simplified procedure: exemption from registration for the first 90 days	Standard procedure: registration within 7 business days of arrival
Work Visa	Up to 3 years, extendable without leaving the country	Up to 1 year
Medical Examination / Health Check	Same requirements	
Fingerprint Registration / Dactyloscopy Registration	Same requirements	
Voluntary Health Insurance (VHI)	Same requirements	
Family Members	Visas valid for the duration of the HQS permit	Visas issued under the standard procedure
Residence Permit / Permanent Residence Permit	Simplified procedure	Standard procedure

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