

COVID-19: Management of existing UAE employee population residence permits

On 13 April 2020, the UAE Ministry of Human Resources and Emiratization announced the extension of the validity of all residency visas, entry permits and Emirates ID cards due to expire after 1 March 2020. An automatic extension has been granted for these visas until 31 December 2020 and is reflected in the immigration system.

This document includes several considerations to help businesses:

- ▶ Ensure the compliance of your existing employee population
- ▶ Provide information on the newly implemented extensions
- ▶ Demonstrate how the new system will work
- ▶ Operate with minimum interruption

Managing the new changes in immigration regulations could be challenging. You will want to understand the impacts, put in place a contingency plan and develop a communication strategy, as well as adjust any existing mobility or HR policies to adapt to the new regulations.

KEY MESSAGES

- ▶ Expats with residency visas that expired on or after 1 March 2020 will have their validity extended automatically until 31 December 2020. The visa validity extension is for residents both inside and outside the country.
- ▶ The residence permit renewal process has changed, and additional requirements can be introduced.
- ▶ Travel risk assessments will be essential once the flight suspensions are lifted.
- ▶ As we move closer to the end of the grace period (i.e. before 31 December 2020), all expired residence permits should be renewed to avoid any overstay fines.
- ▶ You can take measures to mitigate any potential challenges.

There are two options to navigate through the recently announced concession depending on your mobilisation strategy for this year.

RENEW THE RESIDENCE PERMITS PRIOR TO THE EXPIRY DATE



PROS

Avoiding any restrictions on ability to travel

Avoiding bulk renewals and expected delays at the end of the year

No medical or original documents required



CONS

Paying government fees at the expiry of the residence permit

Separate requirement of residence permit endorsement

Potential loss of government fee savings

UTILISE THE EXTENSION AND RENEW THE RESIDENCE PERMITS AT THE END OF THE YEAR



PROS

Government fee savings

Avoiding impact of any new requirements (residence permit endorsements etc)

Possibility of delaying cancellations (supporting employees during these challenging times)















CONS

Requirement to proceed with labour card renewals

Plan for bulk renewals at the end of the year

Potential travel restrictions without renewed endorsed residence permit mobilisation

How can you ensure your existing employee population remain compliant with the recent changes?

Renew residence permits prior to the expiry date	Utilise the extension and renew the residence permits at the end of the year
How we can assist	
 Eligibility assessments to proceed with renewals more than 180 days in advance of the expiry	 Conducting an audit and initiating the expiry reminders as per the extended expiry date
 Assistance with the development of HR policies to ensure timely processing of visa renewals	 Communication with the employees - adjusting the HR policy
 Timely initiation of cases - providing employees information about company policy and procedural changes	 Impact assessment on the other documents (passes, labour cards, etc)
 Availing concessions offered by the government - waiving the requirement of the medical examination and submission of original documents	 Project planning and assessments for processing renewals at the end of the year
 Guidance on the new process and any procedural challenges	 Travel risk assessments - potential restrictions to apply for the outbound visas or travel out of the UAE
 Support with the endorsement of renewed residence permits	 Analysis of potential cost savings

Understanding these recent concessions and regulatory changes will be key to developing the right strategy and company policies.

Compliantly navigating through the new UAE immigration landscape will be vital for business continuity and in ensuring quick remobilisation of resources beyond the COVID-19 period.

For an up to date summary of all COVID-19 related immigration/mobility changes worldwide, please visit Fragomen's [COVID-19 microsite](#).

For further information, please contact us at MidEast@Fragomen.com for an initial consultation.