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Amendments to Greece's Immigration Code

Law 5275/2026 | Overview of Key
Amendments

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The Greek Immigration Code (Law 5038/2023, A' 81) has been amended by virtue of Law 5275/2026 (Law 5275/2026, A'17), published in the National Gov. Gazette on 06.02.2026 (FEK 17/A/06.02.2026).



The new law introduces significant amendments to the residence and work permit framework, aligning national legislation with Directive (EU) 2024/1233 and modifying key aspects of labor migration, investment-related mobility and administrative processing

Alignment with EU Law | A Unified Residence and Work Permit Regime

A cornerstone of the reform is the establishment of a single residence and work permit regime for third-country nationals whose permits grant access to the labor market. The regime applies, *inter alia*, to:

- highly qualified employment,
- intra-corporate transfers,
- family reunification with work rights,
- humanitarian and protection-related cases,
- victims of human trafficking,
- ten-year residence permits,
- public interest cases

According to the new law, holders of the single permit receive (*Articles 6–8 of the new Immigration enactment and Articles 82, 82A, 82B of the Migration Code*):

- Equal treatment with Greek employees (salary, working conditions and social security contributions)
- Right to change employer
 - Mandatory stay with first employer: 6 months
 - Earlier changes allowed in cases of abuse or dismissal
- Unemployment does not automatically result in loss of permit
- Up to 3 months (or 6 months for long-term residents)

In practice:

- Residence permits are generally issued for three (3) years, renewable for an equal period.
- The duration of the EU Blue Card is extended to three-year validity, renewable for successive three-year periods.
- Employment/Work permit category E.4 is granted for an initial period of three (3) years and is renewable for five (5) years, provided all conditions are met.
- Late renewals are permitted up to three (3) months after expiry, subject to a fine of €100 per month of delay.

Moreover, employers seeking to hire third-country nationals must submit an application to the competent Directorate of Aliens and Immigration of the Decentralized Administration within the territorial jurisdiction where the employer's registered seat or branch is located.



New Visa and Employment Pathways

Visa for Specialized Technical Personnel (Article 72A – Z.13 *national visa*)

The Z.13 visa category targets specialized technical personnel employed by foreign companies implementing contracts with Greek entities for the construction or operation of production facilities in the technology, pharmaceutical, or industrial sectors.

The scheme applies to projects exceeding **€10 million** in investment value and provides a national visa of up to twelve (12) months, aligned with the duration of the project. Visa holders may subsequently apply for a residence permit of type E.1 or E.4, exclusively for employment with the Greek contracting entity.

Tech Visa for Startups (Article 79A – Z.13 *national visa*)

The Tech Visa (Z.13A) creates a fast-track entry route for highly skilled third-country nationals employed by startups registered with **Elevate Greece**. Issued for up to twelve (12) months, the visa grants immediate access to employment without requiring a residence permit.

Eligibility criteria include:

- A minimum twelve (12) month employment contract
- A salary of at least 1.6 times the national average
- Proof of high qualifications

Change of employer is not permitted during the visa's validity.

Talent Visa - Entry for Job Search or Professional Activity (Article 79Γ - Z.15 *national visa*)

The Talent Visa (Z.15) is aimed at attracting highly educated third-country nationals seeking employment or the development of a professional activity in Greece.

Eligible applicants include graduates of foreign higher education institutions holding a recent graduate, postgraduate, doctoral, or postdoctoral degree, obtained within the last five (5) years. The awarding institution must be included in at least two internationally recognized university rankings, as determined annually by joint ministerial decision.

Qualified applicants may be granted a twelve (12) month national entry visa, subject to:

- Proof of academic qualifications
- Evidence of sufficient financial resources.

Before the visa expires, holders may apply for a residence permit under Article 12, provided they meet the applicable conditions for the intended category of residence.



Temporary Employment Agencies as Employers

(Amendment of Article 27 of the Immigration Code)

For the first time, the Immigration Code formally recognizes Temporary Employment Agencies (TEAs or ΕΠΑ) as direct employers authorized to recruit third-country nationals.

Eligible TEAs must:

- Operate lawfully in Greece
- Maintain a minimum share capital of €1,000,000.

Where a Temporary Employment Agency acts as the employer, additional documentation must be submitted to demonstrate the financial capacity of the indirect employer to meet salary obligations.

Along with the application, the employer must submit proof of payment of an administrative fee of €200 per third-country national.

There are additional minimum eligibility criteria for TEAs to act as direct employers under the admission process, including requirements concerning administrative staff, guarantee obligations and, where applicable, provision of suitable accommodation.

Public or Strategic Investment Projects

Entities implementing **public or strategic investment projects of significant economic, social, or national importance** may submit an application under the Recall/Invitation procedure for the admission of up to 500 third-country nationals per project. This mechanism is designed to facilitate the timely execution and operation of large-scale investments.

The application is examined on a **priority basis** and must include:

- A valid employment contract of at least six (6) months in Greece, provided that the remuneration of the third-country national is at least equal to the monthly earnings of the unskilled employee, as determined each time, for the years 2025, 2026 and 2027, of the Labor Law Code
- Certification from the competent Ministry confirming the strategic or public character of the investment

The administrative fee per third-country national is **€400**.

Following approval, third-country nationals enter Greece with a visa or, where applicable, under national visa exemption, and must apply for an E.4 residence permit before the expiry of their entry status. Relevant visa applications are examined on a priority basis by Greek consular authorities.

National Students Visa

(Article 79Δ - Z.16 national visa)

A national entry visa (type Z.16), valid for up to nine (9) months, may be granted to third-country nationals enrolled in foreign higher education institutions who attend courses or undertake practical training in Greece in cooperation with Greek Colleges, provided that such cooperation is based on validation or franchising agreements or relates to accredited postgraduate programs.

Applicants must submit, in addition to the general requirements for a national visa:

- Proof of student status at the foreign higher education institution
- Confirmation of admission and financial settlement from the Greek College
- Evidence of language proficiency at least at B1 level
- Proof of sufficient financial resources

The visa may also be granted even where no formal cooperation agreement exists, provided that the Greek College confirms the student's acceptance for studies and practical training.

The Z.16 visa allows residence exclusively for study and practical training purposes, may not exceed nine months, cannot be converted into another residence status and requires departure upon expiry.

Article 34 of the enactment amends Article 130 of the Immigration Code, allowing third-country nationals holding residence permit type H.7 (scholarship holders or participants in special programs) to engage in part-time employment of up to twenty (20) hours per week, provided that such employment does not interfere with their study obligations.

Reduction of administrative backlogs

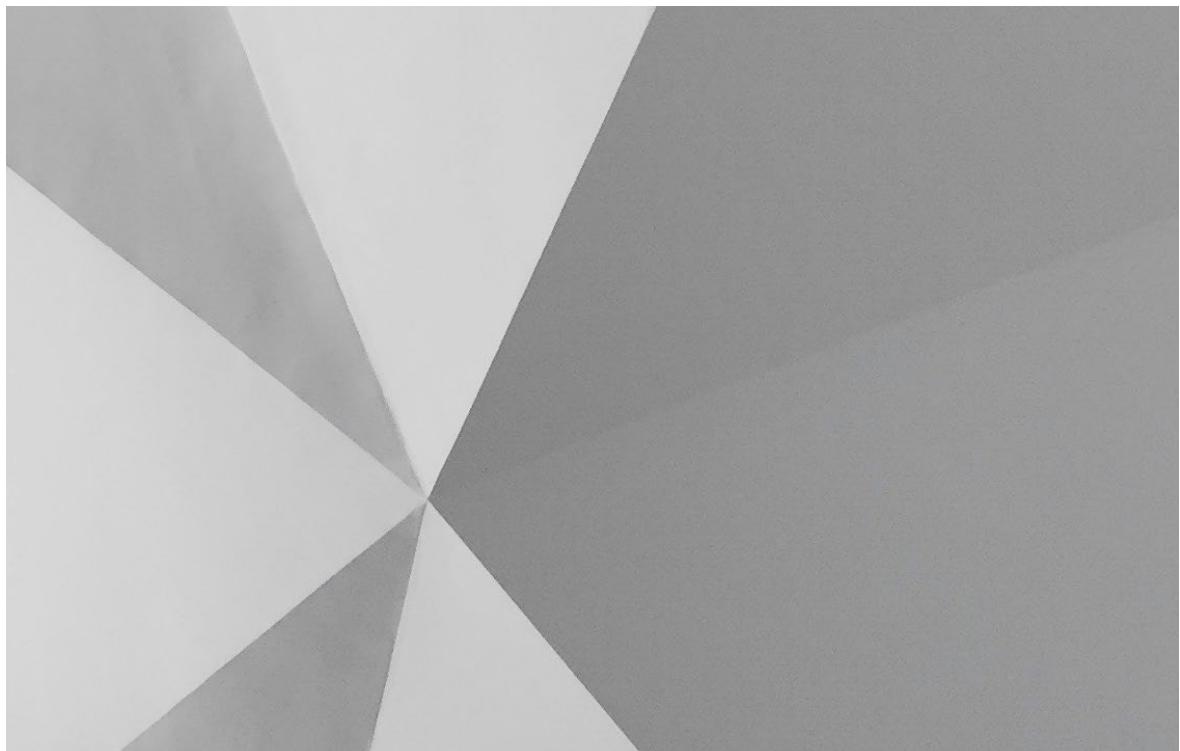
Where a residence permit has a nominal validity of at least three (3) years, the competent authority must ensure that, at the time of issuance or renewal, the remaining validity period is no less than two (2) years. If this condition is not met, the permit's duration must be adjusted accordingly.

Residence permit applications are automatically allocated to the Immigration Authority with the fewest pending cases in order to ensure more efficient processing.

Digitalisation and Enforcement

This law authorizes the Ministry of Immigration and Asylum to utilize **artificial intelligence** tools within the Integrated Information System in order to enhance processing efficiency, subject to procedural safeguards.

It also strengthens penalties relating to migrant trafficking, facilitation of irregular migration and regulatory oversight of non-governmental organizations.



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