



FIPA

FOREIGN INVESTMENT PROMOTION AGENCY
OF BOSNIA AND HERZEGOVINA

Steps for Obtaining Work Permits in B&H





LEGAL FRAMEWORK

In Bosnia and Herzegovina, the following laws govern the conditions and procedures for the employment of foreign nationals, unless otherwise provided by an international agreement.

- Law on Foreigners of B&H (“Official Gazette of B&H”, No. 88/15, 34/21, 63/23)
- Law on employment of foreigners of Federation B&H (“Official Gazette of FB&H” No. 111/12)
- Law on Employment of Foreign Citizens and Stateless Persons of Republic of Srpska (“Official Gazette of Republic of Srpska”, No. 24/09, 117/11 and 56/22)
- Law on employment of foreigners of Brcko District (“Official Gazette of BD “, No. 15/09 and 20/10)

COMPETENT AUTHORITIES

When a foreign national intends to stay in Bosnia and Herzegovina for employment, they must obtain a work permit issued by the authority responsible for employing foreign nationals, in accordance with applicable regulations. Depending on the place of residence — or more precisely, the location of the employer — the work permit is issued by the relevant authority for the employment of foreigners in the Federation of Bosnia and Herzegovina, the Republic of Srpska, or the Brčko District.

In Federation of Bosnia and Herzegovina, work permits are issued by Cantonal Employment Services upon approval of the Federal Employment Service.

In Republic of Srpska, work permits for foreign nationals are issued by the RS Employment Service regional offices responsible for the region of employer's head office.

In Brcko District work permits for foreign nationals are issued by Department for Professional and Administrative Affairs in the Government of the Brcko District.

Work permit definition

A work permit is a legal authorisation — an individual act — that allows a foreign national to take up paid employment with domestic natural or legal persons. The foreigner enjoys the same work-related rights, obligations, and responsibilities as citizens of Bosnia and Herzegovina, unless otherwise specified in an international agreement. Work permits are issued for a specific position and/or a specific type of job.

Work permit quota

Work permit quota is the number of work permits that can be issued in Bosnia and Herzegovina each year for foreigners in specific professions or for foreigners engaged in certain activities, for which a work permit is required to work in Bosnia and Herzegovina and is included in the quota. This also includes the number of work permits that can be issued in Bosnia and Herzegovina each year for seasonal workers, defined and categorized by activity for periods ranging from 90 to 180 days within the year.

The annual quota is determined by the Council of Ministers of BiH in accordance with the migration policy and the situation in the labour market. Work permits specified in the annual quota by activities and professions shall be issued first for the purpose of extending the already issued work permits, and then for new employment. When issuing work permits, priority shall be given to the foreigners who have already temporary residence permit in BiH based on family reunification.

Work permits outside the quota

Work permits outside the quota are granted in the following situations:

- A foreigner who has an education that corresponds to higher education, completed post-graduate or doctoral studies in BiH
- Foreigners whose work in BiH is based on an international agreement
- Foreigners who perform key tasks in a business entity, who are not exempt from the requirement of obtaining work permits based on international agreements
- Teachers who perform or assist in teaching in educational institutions because of their specific knowledge
- Professional athletes and sports workers who are, based on duly signed contracts, operating in the country
- a foreign national who has renounced the citizenship of Bosnia and Herzegovina
- A foreigner who is in a marriage or de facto relationship with a foreigner who has a permanent residence permit in BiH or the child of a foreigner with a permanent residence permit in BiH

Exemptions from the obligation to possess work permit

Foreigners can work without a work permit up to 90 days per calendar year, with previously obtained a certificate of work if they perform the following activities:

- Key persons in the legal entity that have a higher position in the board or managers with departments, monitor and supervise the work of other employees, who are entitled to employ and dismiss workers or they are experts who have excellent knowledge and is essential to the operation of the legal entity, research equipment, techniques or management if they were employed in that legal entity at least one year or has acted as a partner shortly before movement in Bosnia and Herzegovina if the appointment does not have characteristics of employment
- University professors invited as lecturers by universities in B&H, scientists attending scientific and specialist courses, scientists representing international organizations and scientists participating in the implementation of scientific research projects important for B&H.
- Artists and technical staff, authors and performers in opera, ballet, drama or other theatrical performances, or concert, visual arts or other cultural performances or authors and performers in the field of music, music and stage, dance and ballet arts, film artists as well as accompanying reporting, organization and technical staff taking part in the cultural workshops, gatherings, and colonies
- Experts in the field of cultural heritage, library science, and archivist
- Foreigners sent by international employers, providing education and training for persons employed at natural and legal persons with a seat in B&H.
- Foreigners performing delivery works, as well as installation and servicing of machinery and equipment
- Foreigners taking part at organized professional conferences and seminars
- Foreigners participating on fairs or exhibits where their employer is presented
- Foreigners employed in circuses or amusement parks
- Doctors who are engaged by call of medical institutions in B&H to perform specialist examinations and other medical services
- Foreigners visiting B&H to participate in sports and chess events
- Seasonal workers in the context of an employment contract for a definite period concluded between foreigner and the employer from B&H Foreigners can work without a work permit with previously obtained a certificate of work if they perform following activities:
- Founders of the company, or company based in B&H, if a company on every foreigner including the founders employs a minimum of five nationals of Bosnia and Herzegovina, pays a gross salary per employee at least equal to average gross salary in Bosnia and regularly settle the tax liability.
- Experts, teachers and lecturers from foreign cultural and educational institutions, performing their expert work in B&H within cultural and educational cooperation
- Civil and military officials of other countries' governments working in B&H based on agreements on cooperation with B&H authorities
- Members of international scientific missions, conducting research in B&H approved by the Council of Ministers
- Representatives of religious communities registered in B&H while performing duties only regarding religious service

- International correspondents accredited in B&H or reporters for international media
- Foreigners performing, based on agreements with the Council of Ministers, Ministry of Defence B&H, Ministry of Justice B&H, duties relevant for defence, legal system or state security or attending specializing courses in the mentioned fields
- Foreigners who are engaged in projects significant for B&H as experts or key persons who are important for the realization of the project or key persons important for the realization of the project or if they are sent to work in Bosnia and Herzegovina on the basis of the agreement concluded between the foreign employer and service users in B&H on the basis of an international tender for a limited time
- Foreigner who resides in B&H based on reasons based on an international treaty to which B&H is a contracting party.

Invitation letter:

An invitation letter for the entry of a foreigner into BiH can be issued by a BiH citizen or a foreigner with an approved permanent residence in BiH or a foreigner who enjoys diplomatic status in BiH, or a domestic or foreign legal person registered in BiH.

The invitation letter is certified by the Service by place of residence, i.e. the seat of the caller, based on the evidence submitted with the request and after the operational checks have been carried out. The validity period of the invitation letter is 180 days from the date of certification. If the conditions are not met, the Service rejects the request for verification of the invitation letter of which the applicant is orally informed.



STEPS FOR OBTAINING WORK PERMITS FOR FOREIGN PERSONS IN BOSNIA AND HERZEGOVINA

Application for issuing work permit

A work permit may be issued to a foreign national at the request of the person intending to employ them (the employer).

The employer shall submit the application for a work permit on behalf of the foreign worker to the competent employment service with territorial jurisdiction over the location of the employer's registered office.

Documentation supporting the application for issuance or extension of the work permit

Along with the application for the issuance of a work permit, the employer is obliged to submit certified copies of the following documents:

In Republic of Srpska:

- Data regarding the foreign national with whom the employer intends to conclude an employment contract or other appropriate agreement, including: full name, names and surnames of the parents, date of birth, gender, place of residence and address in the country of origin, reference number, and the date and place of issuance of the valid travel document.
- Information about the workplace or type of tasks, and the work conditions.
- Justification for the employment of a foreign national — a description of the job in which the foreign national will be employed, and the qualifications, professional knowledge, and skills required for the position.
- A medical certificate (only for the first issuance of a work permit).
- A certified copy of the passport.

In Federation B&H:

Along with the application for a work permit, the employer is required to submit:

- An excerpt from the relevant register of the competent court or a certificate of registration for the activity issued by the competent authority in accordance with the Law on Crafts and Related Activities.
- Information about the foreign national: full name, names and surnames of the parents; date of birth; gender; place of residence and address in the country of origin; number, date, and place of issuance of the current travel document(s).
- Information on the job position, type of work, and conditions of employment.
- Evidence of the employer's financial solvency, issued by the bank where the employer holds an account.
- A written document proving that all tax obligations and contributions have been paid for all existing employees, including the foreign national in the case of a permit extension application.
- An explanation of the justified reasons for hiring a foreign national, detailing the type of education, professional skills, and qualifications required for the position.
- A nostrified diploma of education for the foreign national, which must be translated into one of the official languages of the Federation.



Blue Card - Temporary stay for the purpose of hiring highly skilled workers

Temporary residence for the purpose of employing highly skilled workers may be granted to a foreigner if:

a) the application for residence for the purpose of employing highly qualified workers was preceded by a competition published by the employer intending to employ a foreigner.

b) the employer has published the vacancy in at least three daily newspapers available throughout the territory of BiH with a 30-day application deadline and at the same time submitted it to the Labor and Employment Agency of BiH, which made the vacancy available to all employment institutions in B&H.

- c) A BiH citizen who meets the conditions of the competition does not apply for the published competition.
- d) the advertised position requires a qualification in higher education and work experience in a profession of at least five years that has been acquired after completing formal higher education.

For this temporary stay, a residence permit is issued in BiH, the so-called blue card.

The Blue Card is issued with a validity period of 24 months. If the employment contract or other appropriate contract is concluded for a period of less than 24 months, the Blue Card shall be issued for the period of that contract extended by an additional three months, but its validity period may not exceed 24 months. If the period of validity of the blue card holder's passport would be shorter than the period of validity of the blue card, the blue card shall be issued at least for the period of validity of the passport. The Blue Card may be renewed under the conditions applicable to its issuance.

The Blue Card allows a foreigner to enter and stay in BiH during its validity period.

ISSUING WORK PERMITS TO FOREIGN INVESTORS OR FOUNDERS OF COMPANIES AND/OR PERSONS AUTHORIZED TO REPRESENT THE EMPLOYER

Founders of a company with its registered office in Bosnia and Herzegovina who perform certain tasks within that company or enterprise, provided such tasks do not constitute employment and do not exceed a total of three months per year — are not required to obtain a work permit in Bosnia and Herzegovina.

However, if a company founder serves as a manager and receives a salary for their work, they must obtain a work permit in accordance with the provisions of the Law on Foreigners of Bosnia and Herzegovina, the Law on Employment of Foreigners in the Federation of Bosnia and Herzegovina, the Law on Employment of Foreign Citizens and Stateless Persons of the Republika Srpska, and the Law on Employment of Foreigners of the Brčko District.

In such cases — including persons authorised to represent the company — there is no requirement to check whether there are unemployed individuals registered who meet the conditions set out in the work permit application (i.e. these cases fall outside the work permit quota system).



DECISION ON ISSUING WORK PERMIT

In the Federation of Bosnia and Herzegovina, the deadlines for various procedures are as follows:

If the application for the issuance of a work permit is submitted by foreign investors, company founders, and/or persons authorised to represent the employer (such as directors, executive directors, procurators, etc.), or by individuals registered to carry out independent activities (e.g. craftsmen), the procedure for issuing the work permit will be completed within no more than 15 days from the date of submission of the application. Work permits that count towards the quota, where no special examination procedures are required, may be issued within 25 days. These are cases where the records of the unemployed held by the competent service do not contain individuals that meet the requirements set by the employer for hiring a foreign national.

In other cases, where special examination procedures are applied, the procedure for issuing the work permit will be completed within a timeframe of 30 to 47 days, depending on whether the examination of records is conducted solely at the Cantonal Service level or at both the Cantonal Service and the Institute level.

In the Republika Srpska, the deadline for issuing a work permit is two weeks from the submission of the request until the adoption of the decision on issuance.

CONCLUSION OF EMPLOYMENT CONTRACTS OR OTHER APPROPRIATE AGREEMENT

An employer may not conclude an employment contract or any other relevant agreement with a foreign national prior to the issuance of a temporary residence permit.

The employer must submit a copy of the employment contract or other relevant agreement to the Service for Foreigners of Bosnia and Herzegovina immediately, and no later than three days after the contract is signed.

WORK PERMIT VALIDITY PERIOD

A work permit cannot be issued for a period longer than one year.

WORK PERMIT TERMINATION

The work permit shall cease to be valid:

- Upon expiry of the period for which it was issued, and in any case, upon the expiry of one year from the date of issuance.
- In the event of disapproval, dissolution, or cancellation of the temporary residence in Bosnia and Herzegovina.
- Upon dissolution of the validity of the employment contract.
- By withdrawal in the event of the commission of a criminal offense or serious offense against public order and peace, subject to a penalty of imprisonment, as well as in other cases provided for by law.
- For other reasons provided for in regulations governing the employment of foreign nationals.



FEE FOR CONDUCTING THE PROCEDURE

The administrative fee charged by the Employment Services ranges between €25.00 and €75.00.

Additional annual costs — including translation, document verification, and a medical certificate — are approximately:

- In the Republic of Srpska: €300*
- In the Federation of Bosnia and Herzegovina: €400*

* This includes diploma nostrification/recognition.

