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Feature Article

PROFESSIONAL AND ACADEMIC CREDENTIALS AND LICENSES: AN OVERVIEW

This article provides an update on professional and academic credentials and licenses in several countries.

Italy

When moving to Italy for work, one important aspect to understand is how professional qualifications are treated. Italy distinguishes between regulated professions and non-regulated professions, and the difference has a direct impact on visa options and on the steps required to work legally in the country.

Non-Regulated Professions

These are professions that can be carried out without a specific academic degree or professional license. They are open both to Italian and foreign qualification holders, and no formal recognition of foreign credentials is required for immigration purposes.

This category includes many roles in the creative, artistic, communication, and marketing sectors, as well as roles such as interpreters and translators. For these professions, a foreign qualification is normally sufficient to support a work visa application without any additional recognition procedure. For non-regulated professions, it is generally sufficient to provide proof of relevant professional experience or possession of the necessary academic qualifications, duly validated by Italian consular authorities abroad by means of the *Dichiarazione di Valore* (Declaration of Value), which is an official statement confirming the level and nature of the foreign degree.

Regulated Professions

Regulated professions are those for which Italian law requires a specific academic degree, professional training, and very often a State exam or registration with a professional body. This applies, for example, to medical and healthcare professions, engineering, architecture, teaching, law, and several other fields. The recognition process in Italy may also include additional steps such as a practical training period or specific tests requested by the relevant authority.

Only individuals who are formally authorized under Italian law can practice these professions. Foreign professionals must therefore obtain official recognition of their professional qualifications from the relevant Italian authority before they can work in Italy in such a role.

Where to Check if a Profession is Regulated

Italy keeps an official list of all regulated professions, including the relevant authority and recognition procedures. The list is available on the government portal, [Impresa in un giorno](#). This is an essential resource to determine whether a specific profession requires prior recognition and which documents are needed before applying for a work visa or starting a professional activity in Italy.

Mexico

Foreign nationals who wish to work in Mexico must comply with both immigration and professional-licensing requirements, which are legally independent from each other. Regardless of qualifications, a foreigner must first hold a Mexican immigration status that allows work, such as Temporary Resident with permission to work, or Permanent Resident.

To legally practice a regulated profession in Mexico, a foreign national must obtain a *cédula profesional* (official professional license authorizing practice in Mexico). This license is issued by the Ministry of Education in Mexico, and it is required for both Mexican and foreign professionals. There is a list of regulated professions in Mexico; the most common are law, medicine, engineering, architecture, accounting, and psychology.

Before obtaining the professional license, the foreign national's studies should be revalidated to be recognized in Mexico, which confirms that the foreign education is academically equivalent to a Mexican degree.

To work legally as a professional in Mexico, a foreign national generally needs:

1. Valid immigration status with work authorization;
2. Recognition or revalidation of a foreign degree (if applicable);
3. A *cédula profesional* issued by the Dirección General de Profesiones (if applicable); and
4. Proper tax registration.

Spain

Pursuant to Articles 71 and 71 Bis of Chapter IV of the Entrepreneurs' Act 14/2013 related to Highly Qualified Professionals, Spanish immigration law provides for a residence permit applicable throughout Spain when a company or a foreign professional is required to carry out a highly qualified employment or professional activity. This permit may be granted under two modalities: the European Union (EU) Blue Card or the national residence permit for highly qualified professionals. In both cases, eligibility is based either on formal academic qualifications or on equivalent professional experience. For the EU Blue Card, applicants must hold a higher education qualification of at least three years corresponding to *Marco Español de Cualificaciones para la Educación Superior* (MECES) [Spanish Qualifications Framework for

Higher Education] Level 2 and European Qualifications Framework Level 6, or alternatively demonstrate five years of relevant professional experience, reduced to three years within the previous seven years for information and communication technology professionals and managers. For the national authorization, applicants must hold a qualification equivalent to at least MECES Level 1 (Spanish Qualifications Framework for Lifelong Learning [MECU] Level 5A) or demonstrate a minimum of three years of professional experience considered equivalent to the required qualification.

As a general rule, the competent authorities assess whether the qualification or professional experience meets the legally required level and is appropriate for the position specified in the employment contract. Formal homologation or official recognition of foreign academic qualifications is not required for either Highly Qualified Professional modality, unless the activity to be performed constitutes a regulated profession in Spain, in which case recognition must be obtained in accordance with the sector-specific regulations applicable to the profession and prior application for the residence permit.

Türkiye

Turkish immigration law restricts work authorization to engage in many fields that require professional licenses. This includes not only those fields that most countries restrict (e.g., medical doctors, pharmacists, lawyers) but also areas many countries do not restrict for foreigners (e.g., engineers, midwives, tour guides). For many fields, the restriction is related to the fact that the degree is foreign. So, for example, a Turkish national who earns an engineering degree outside of Türkiye will need to have a degree equivalency to work in a capacity as a licensed engineer. This will involve both an education equivalency process and acquiring membership in the Union of Chambers of Turkish Engineers and Architects (TMMOB). Conversely, a foreigner who obtains an engineering degree in a Turkish university will generally only need to acquire membership in TMMOB to apply for a work permit as an engineer.

The field of engineering is particularly nuanced. If the position requires a licensed engineer or an architect who will need to act as signatory for a project/works, an equivalency is required as well as acquisition of membership in TMMOB, and certain signatory roles may even require Turkish nationality. But if the position is more generally engineering- or technology-oriented, and the job title does not include "engineer," a work permit can be considered without an equivalency or membership in TMMOB.

Some fields require actual Turkish citizenship to engage in the profession, such as lawyers (engaging in litigation), notaries, judges, and many public-sector positions, including licensed tour guides. Certain exceptions exist under laws related to the field (e.g., health and education-related regulations, laws related to Turkic peoples).

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Country Updates

CANADA

This article summarizes the Canadian government's announcements with respect to immigration as of the end of 2025 and the start of 2026.

To wrap up 2025 and kick off 2026, Immigration, Refugees, and Citizenship Canada (IRCC) announced a number of developments.

IRCC announced the end or the continued pause of some programs in line with the government's targeted reduction in the number of new permanent residents. It also announced a new Express Entry category to help alleviate the shortage of physicians in Canada and bolster the healthcare sector.

5,000 Express Entry Permanent Residence Spaces for Doctors. To help alleviate Canada's shortage of healthcare professionals and, in this case, physicians, the government announced that it will [launch an Express Entry category that will target doctors](#) and that in 2026, 5,000 spaces will be allocated for these doctors so they can apply for permanent residence (PR). International doctors who have at least one year of Canadian work experience in an eligible occupation in the last three years will be eligible for this stream. Further, doctors who are invited to apply under this stream and who submit work permit applications to stay in status while their PR applications are being processed will also receive expedited 14-day processing of their work permit applications.

Expanded Eligibility for Self-Employed Physicians in Ontario. Ontario has [expanded the eligibility criteria for self-employed physicians](#) under the Ontario Immigrant Nominee Program (OINP) Employer Job Offer: Foreign Worker Stream. Due to the nature of their work, in which they often work with multiple health organizations, physicians are often self-employed. As per the OINP, physicians under National Occupational Classification (NOC) codes 31100 (Specialists in clinical and laboratory medicine), 31101 (Specialists in surgery) and 31102 (General practitioners and family physicians) who are members in good standing with the College of Physicians and Surgeons of Ontario, and hold a provisional certificate of registration, are now eligible to apply as self-employed to the OINP for a certificate of nomination as long as they have an Ontario Health Insurance Plan (OHIP) billing number.

Additionally, the postgraduate license has been removed from the list of eligible licenses because postgraduate license-holders are unable to meet the requirement of having an OHIP billing number. Instead of the Employer Job Offer: Foreign Worker Stream, recently graduated license-holders may be eligible under the OINP's Employer Job Offer: Foreign Worker stream if they have a job offer with an Ontario employer.

Start-Up Visa Program Closing. IRCC has announced that as of December 31, 2025, [it will no longer accept new Start-Up Visa \(SUV\) Program applications for permanent residence except for those who already have a valid commitment from a designated organization in 2025 but have not yet applied](#). Further, as of December 19, 2025, the optional work permit available to SUV Program applicants is no longer available except for those already in Canada applying to extend their current SUV work permits. This cancellation of the SUV Program follows other measures to reduce the number of PRs as part of the government's reduction in overall PR numbers.

Continued Pause of the Self-Employed Persons Program. [The government has also announced](#) that it will continue [the pause of the Self-Employed Persons PR Program](#), which was targeted to those with experience in cultural activities or in athletics/sports. Currently, there is no planned date for this program to begin accepting applications again.

Continued Pause of the Home Child Care Provider Pilot and Home Support Worker Pilot. The [Home Child Care Provider Pilot and Home Support Worker Pilot programs for PR have been paused since June 17, 2024](#). IRCC announced that in line with its Immigration Levels Plan, [it will not be re-opening these pilot programs or accepting new applications in 2026](#).

International Experience Canada Working Holiday Open Work Permit Program for 2026 Now Open. [IRCC has opened the intake for the 2026 International Experience Canada \(IEC\) Working Holiday program for young people aged 18 to 35 to apply for open work permits](#). The candidate must be a citizen of an eligible country or have an invitation from a Recognized Organization. Those interested should create a profile to join the pool for potential selection by IRCC as soon as possible to maximize their chances of being selected. They can do so on this [webpage](#).

Large Express Entry Draws Ending the Year. To close the year, [IRCC conducted Express Entry draws, which are some of the largest conducted all year](#). It continues to focus on those with French language proficiency, those with Canadian work experience, and those who have been nominated under a

Provincial or Territorial Nominee Program. The cut-off Comprehensive Ranking System (CRS) score for the Canadian Experience Class draw on December 16, 2025, was 515 and on December 10, 2025, it was 520. These represent some of the lowest scores all year. However, many still do not have the requisite points to be selected since the government removed the points for a Canadian job offer earlier this year.

The government continues its focus on increasing use of the French language through French proficiency draws. On December 17, 2025, 6,000 people were invited to apply for PR with a CRS cut-off of 399 points, and on October 29, 2025, 6,000 people were also invited to apply for PR with a CRS cut-off of 416 points.

On December 8, 2025, a Provincial/Territorial Nominee Program draw was conducted with a cut-off score of 731 (600 points are allocated for a provincial or territorial nomination) and with 1,123 people invited to apply for PR. On December 15, 2025, another draw was conducted with a cut-off score of 731 and 399 candidates invited to apply for PR.

Francophone Immigration Targets Exceeded. As the federal government continues its initiative to expand the proportion of French-speaking immigrants outside of Québec to 12 percent by 2029, [it has announced that in 2025, French-speakers accounted for 8.9% of new permanent residents outside of Québec](#). It has further announced that 5,000 permanent resident spaces will be allocated to the provinces and territories for their nominee programs to designate French-speaking immigrants. The goal is to reduce the shortage of Francophone and bilingual workers in order to strengthen the dynamic of French as an official language of Canada.

CRS Scores for Express Entry Draws Slowly Dropping. As the number of temporary residents—comprising students, workers, and those staying long-term under visitor status—in Canada is reduced in line with the government's goal of less than 5% as a proportion of the total population by the end of 2027, the lowest draw for the Canadian Experience Class since September 2024 occurred on January 21, 2026. The Comprehensive Ranking Score (CRS) cutoff was 509. On January 7, 2026, a draw also occurred with a cutoff CRS score of 511. The CRS cutoffs are expected to come down slowly as fewer temporary residents are admitted to Canada.

U.S. Customs and Border Protection Pre-Clearance Expansion Moving Ahead. Pre-clearance with U.S. Customs and Border Protection (CBP) in Canada before traveling to the United States is available at multiple airports and one seaport of entry. This process allows travelers to clear customs and immigration for the United States before traveling. CBP has confirmed that expanding pre-clearance is part of its border security strategy, and [it will move ahead with this despite the U.S. Ambassador to Canada casting doubt on this](#) due to decreased travel of Canadians to the United States. One of the expanded pre-clearance facilities will be Billy Bishop Airport in Toronto. The current pre-clearance locations in Canada are listed here: <https://www.publicsafety.gc.ca/cnt/brdr-strtg/prclrc/index-en.aspx?wbdisable=true>.

Effects on Healthcare Coverage of Long Work Permit Extension Processing Times. Applicants who have applied before their existing immigration status expires can benefit from maintained status and continue to remain in Canada and work or study under the conditions of their expired work or study permit until a decision is made on their pending application. However, these individuals often run into issues in renewing their provincial or territorial healthcare coverage. Experiences differ from province/territory to province/territory, and from officer to officer.

Effects on Driver's Licenses of Long Work Permit Extension Processing Times. Ontario and some other provinces are now considering amending the requirements for a driver's license requiring proof of an applicant's valid immigration document. Consequently, this could lead to issues, especially for those on maintained temporary resident status who need to drive to get to work or who drive for work.

New Publications and Items of Interest

Alliance of Business Immigration Lawyers:

- ABIL is available on X (formerly Twitter): @ABILImmigration
- Recent ABIL member blogs are at <http://www.abilblog.com/>

ABIL Member/Firm News

Vic Goel was quoted by *Forbes* in [DHS Finalizes Controversial Immigration Rule on H-1B Lottery](#). He said, "The Department of Labor's [DOL] [Occupational Employment and Wage Statistics] wage levels are designed as a job classification tool that reflects the amount of experience, supervision and responsibility required for a position, not an assessment of whether the worker is 'highly skilled' or 'less skilled.' A Level I role is simply an entry-level version of the occupation, while Level IV is a senior-level position requiring greater judgment and independence." Mr. Goel said he disagrees with the central premise of the rule: that higher wage levels in the DOL system equate to higher skill and greater economic value. "[U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services] used its framing to justify weighting the lottery in favor of Level III and IV beneficiaries. Wage levels don't correspond to skill in the way USCIS suggests, and instead they correspond to how DOL has structured job progression for prevailing wage purposes." He said that the two systems are incompatible because the DOL wage levels focus only on making sure an employer's pay for foreign nationals is fair relative to the job requirements. "USCIS lottery weighting attempts to twist those same levels into a proxy for 'skill' and 'best and brightest,' " he said.

Klasko Immigration Law Partners, LLP, has announced that four of its EB-5 attorneys have received recognition in the [2025 Top 25 issue of EB5 Investors Magazine](#): **Ron Klasko**, **Anu Nair**, **Jessica DeNisi**, and **Alison Li**. Mr. Klasko was recognized on the EB-5 All Stars list. Ms. Nair and Ms. DeNisi were recognized as Top Immigration Attorneys. Ms. Li was recognized on the Top 10 Rising Stars list. With offices in Philadelphia, New York, and Washington, DC, the firm provides top-tier legal services to individuals, multinational corporations, small companies, universities, and hospitals.

Klasko Immigration Law Partners, LLP, has published several client alerts: [EEOC's New Guidance Targeting Anti-American Bias: What Employers Should Know](#) and [Temporary Pause on Certain Immigrant Visas Pending Public Charge Review](#).

Charles Kuck, of **Kuck Baxter**, was quoted by *World* in [ICE Memo Argues for Home Searches Without Judicial Warrant](#). He said, "I am slack-jawed. It's truly unbelievable. Prior to this, we saw ICE doing this, but we just assumed it was rogue agents. Now we know they're being instructed to violate the Constitution." Mr. Kuck added, "Our Constitution protects 'people,' it doesn't [just] protect 'citizens.' Everybody that is in the United States, regardless of their immigration status, [is] protected by the basic rights of the Bill of Rights, which includes the right to be free of search and seizure without a judicial warrant." Mr. Kuck noted that not every individual who has deportation orders is trying to flee justice. Often, individuals don't even know that they have final orders calling for their removal, he said. "There are hundreds of thousands of people walking around the United States with removal orders that don't know they have them. I see it every week at my practice, when someone comes in and I'm the one to inform them that they have a removal order." Additionally, he said that there may be some legal relief available even after removal orders are issued. He also said, "We really haven't seen the level of enforcement in Georgia that you've seen elsewhere around the United States. "But I have colleagues around the country that are actively putting together these complaints and moving forward."

Mr. Kuck was interviewed by *ABC News Australia* on its program, [Trump Administration Defends Killing](#)

[Man in Minneapolis, Contradicting Videos.](#)

Cyrus Mehta has authored several blog posts: [Police State for Noncitizens in the U.S.?](#), [DOS Announces Temporary Pause on Certain Visas for Nationals of 75 Countries Based on Unfounded Concerns That They Will Seek Public Benefits](#), [Evisceration of the H-1B Program Through Executive Action](#), [2025 in Perspective Through the Insightful Immigration Blog](#), and [No Dramatic Changes in Immigration Cases After Loper Bright](#).

Mr. Mehta and **Kaitlyn Box** co-authored several new blog posts: [Another Round of Country Bans Driven by Presidential Animus](#) and [Deferred Action for Special Immigrant Juveniles Survives Trump's Attempts to Eliminate It](#).

Mr. Mehta appeared on a [CNBC program](#) about the new H-1B wage prioritization rule and the \$100,000 fee. The program was broadcast in India nationally and released on YouTube.

Mr. Mehta was quoted by the *Times of India* in ['Fits the Pattern': Former Immigration Official Says Trump Could Permanently End Green Card Program as Lottery Stops](#). The article quoted Mr. Mehta's "[X](#)" [post](#): "One person's bad actions should not be used to shut down the entire Diversity Visa program that is mandated by Congress. The Brown University shootings were not as a result of the visa program but based on the motivations of an individual. The President has in the past unfortunately attacked the DV program because it brings people from 'shithole' countries to the U.S. The alleged killer in this case is from Portugal, which hardly qualifies from among the countries that Trump has denigrated. The administration should not be using these unfortunate killings as a pretext to shut down immigration programs it disfavors."

Mr. Mehta was quoted by the *Economic Times* in [A Million-Dollar Gold Card, Yet the Same Long Wait for Indians Eyeing American Shores](#). Commenting on the long waits people born in India will face if they apply for the Gold Card, he said, "If you are born in India, beware of Trump's Gold Card, as you will be stuck in the India EB-1 or EB-2 backlogs for years and even decades after you have shelled out \$1 million or more and won't see your green card for a very long time or never."

Mr. Mehta was quoted by the *Times of India* in [U.S. to Scan Social Media of all H-1B, H-4 Visa Applicants From December 15](#). Commenting on the new social media vetting policy for H-1Bs, he said, "The policy to punish H-1B holders who have been involved in censorship in the tech sector appears to be hypocritical. The Trump administration will deny a visa benefit if you (say as an executive in a social media company) have censored a person or viewpoint they favour – however politically incorrect, hurtful or obnoxious it may be. On the other hand, the Trump administration will have no compunctions to punish you if you have expressed views that they disfavor such as views perceived to be anti-Americanism even if it is protected under the First Amendment."

Stephen Yale-Loehr, of **Miller Mayer, LLP**, co-authored an op-ed published in *The Hill*, [Back to the Future: Trump's Restrictions Echo the Immigration Act of 1924](#).

Mr. Yale-Loehr was quoted by *Law360* in [The Legal Fights Set to Define Access to Justice in 2026](#). He said that although the Supreme Court has largely deferred to President Trump on most immigration issues, the birthright citizenship case might present an opportunity to distance itself from his administration's policies. "The court wants at least one case, I think, to show that it does have some independence from President Trump by ruling against him. I think this is an example of such a case," he said.

Mr. Yale-Loehr was quoted by the *New York Times* in [Trump Administration Pauses Diversity Immigration Program After Brown Shooting](#). He noted that the program was created by Congress and presidents "cannot unilaterally negate or terminate an immigration program." He said that although the Trump administration was likely to argue that the president could [bar the entry of any foreign national who posed a national security risk](#), the courts would have to decide whether that authority allowed the president to suspend the diversity visa program entirely. "This is another example of the Trump administration acting first and letting the courts figure out the legality later," he said.

Mr. Yale-Loehr was quoted by *Smart Cities Dive* in [Illinois Law Tightens State Limits on Federal Immigration Enforcement](#). He said that "the dividing line between federal and state regulation of immigration has always been murky," but "federal law has generally trumped state efforts to regulate immigration because courts have ruled that immigration touches on sovereignty and foreign relations."

Mr. Yale-Loehr was quoted by *MarketWatch* in [Trump's \\$1 Million 'Gold Card' Immigration Program is Close to Launching. Here's What's Ahead](#).

Mr. Yale-Loehr and four other Cornell Law experts will present a free webinar on Thursday, January 8, 2026, from 1 to 2 p.m. ET on how immigration law and policy changed in 2025 and what we might expect in 2026. If you can't make the live webinar, you can register to get the link to view the webinar afterwards. More information and registration is here:

<https://ecornell.cornell.edu/keynotes/overview/K010826a/>

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About ABIL

The Alliance of Business Immigration Lawyers (ABIL) offers a single point of contact for customer needs, news alerts, staff training, and other programs that benefit clients through the collaboration of more than 370 member lawyers and their more than 800 staff. Corporate counsel, human resource professionals, in-house immigration managers, and other corporate decision-makers turn to ABIL lawyers for outstanding legal skills and services. ABIL's work also includes advocating for enlightened immigration reform, providing speakers and media sources, presenting at conferences, publishing books and articles on cutting-edge immigration topics, and sharing best practices, all with the ultimate goal of offering value-added services to business immigration clients.

The Alliance of Business Immigration Lawyers' website is at <https://www.abil.com/>.

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