

Chandrawat  
& Partners



# IMMIGRATION TO CYPRUS

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TABLE OF CONTENTS	PAGE NO.
Introduction	02
The system of immigration in Cyprus	03
Immigration purposes	06
Non-direct or other routes of immigration	08
Types of visas	09
Licenses and documentations	11
Recent changes in immigration rules	13
How we can help?	14







# INTRODUCTION

Cyprus, a beautiful Mediterranean island nation, has developed a comprehensive immigration system to facilitate the entry of individuals from around the world. Cyprus, with its rich history, vibrant culture, and robust economy, offers a wide range of opportunities for individuals seeking to immigrate. The country provides several visa categories and routes that cater to the diverse needs and aspirations of prospective immigrants. The immigration system in Cyprus is designed to attract skilled professionals, investors, students, and individuals seeking family reunification. It is governed by the laws and regulations set forth by the Cyprus government through the Ministry of Interior, ensuring a fair and transparent process for all applicants.

The purposes of immigration policies and procedures are diverse. Firstly, they contribute to economic development of the nation by attracting skilled professionals and investors who can enhance the country's industries and promote innovation and entrepreneurship. Secondly, these policies foster cultural exchange and diversity by welcoming individuals from different countries and backgrounds, enriching Cyprus's cultural fabric. Family reunification is also a key aspect, as immigration policies recognize the importance of family unity and provide avenues for family members to join their loved ones residing in Cyprus. Furthermore, immigration policies support education and research by facilitating the entry of international students and researchers, enhancing the academic institutions and research capabilities in Cyprus. The country also offers attractive options for those seeking a high-quality lifestyle, with immigration policies providing avenues for individuals with sufficient financial resources to settle in Cyprus.

In recent years, Cyprus has also made efforts to streamline and modernize its immigration system to attract a diverse pool of talent and investment. The government has introduced online application systems, simplified documentation requirements, and implemented faster processing times, making the immigration process more efficient and user-friendly.



# THE SYSTEM OF IMMIGRATION IN CYPRUS

The immigration system in Cyprus is designed to regulate the entry, stay, and eventual integration of individuals from foreign countries. It encompasses a range of visa categories and routes that cater to different purposes of immigration, such as employment, investment, education and family reunification. The system aims to attract skilled professionals, investors, students, and individuals seeking family unity, while also considering the country's economic, social, and security interests.

Several government agencies and departments play a significant role in the immigration process in Cyprus. The Ministry of Interior serves as the primary authority responsible for formulating and implementing immigration policies, regulations, and procedures. It oversees various departments, including the Civil Registry and Migration Department, which handles visa applications, residence permits, and immigration-related matters. The department operates regional offices across Cyprus to provide services and assistance to applicants. These offices serve as the initial point of contact for individuals seeking information on immigration procedures and submitting visa applications.

Other relevant government entities include the Ministry of Labour, Welfare, and Social Insurance, responsible for employment-related immigration. This ministry collaborates with the Department of Labour to ensure that the employment of foreign workers aligns with labour market needs and regulations. Additionally, the Ministry of Education, Culture, Sports, and Youth oversees student visas and education-related immigration. It works closely with educational institutions to facilitate the enrolment of international students and ensure compliance with immigration requirements.





The immigration system in Cyprus operates under a legal framework comprising key laws and regulations. The primary legislation governing immigration is the Aliens and Immigration Law, enacted to regulate the entry, residence, and employment of foreigners in Cyprus. This law sets out the general provisions, requirements, and procedures for immigration, defining different visa categories, eligibility criteria, and the rights and obligations of immigrants. It also establishes the grounds for refusal or cancellation of visas and outlines the process for appealing immigration-related decisions.

In addition to the Aliens and Immigration Law, other regulations and directives supplement the immigration system. These include regulations on specific visa types, such as work permits, student visas, and family reunification visas. These regulations outline the necessary documentation, application procedures, and conditions for each visa category. They provide clarity on requirements, such as educational qualifications, financial resources, health checks, and background checks.

Furthermore, as Cyprus is a member state of the European Union ("EU"), it follows EU directives on immigration. These directives aim to harmonize immigration policies across EU countries and ensure consistent treatment of non-EU nationals. EU directives cover various aspects, including family reunification, long-term residence, and rights of third-country nationals residing legally within the EU. Compliance with EU directives enhances the mobility and rights of individuals within the EU while establishing a framework for managing immigration.

The immigration system in Cyprus is characterized by a structured and organized process that allows individuals to apply for various types of visas based on their intended purpose of immigration. Some of the key visa categories available under the immigration system in Cyprus are:

- **Employment visas:** Cyprus offers work permits and visas for individuals seeking employment opportunities in the country. These visas are typically issued to skilled professionals, executives, and specialized workers who have secured a job offer from a Cypriot employer. The Ministry of Labour, Welfare, and Social Insurance, in collaboration with the Department of Labour, oversees the application and issuance of work permits.
- **Investment visas:** Cyprus has implemented investor-friendly policies to attract foreign investors and entrepreneurs. The government offers several investment-based immigration routes, such as the Cyprus Investment Program and the Fast Track Business Activation Mechanism. These programs provide opportunities for individuals who make significant financial investments, establish businesses, or contribute to the local economy through job creation.
- **Student visas:** Cyprus has a growing reputation as an educational hub, attracting international students from around the world. The Ministry of Education, Culture, Sports, and Youth handles student visa applications. To obtain a student visa, individuals must secure admission to a recognized educational institution in Cyprus and demonstrate sufficient financial resources to cover their tuition fees and living expenses.





- **Family reunification visas:** Cyprus recognizes the importance of family unity and provides avenues for family members to join their loved ones residing in the country. The Civil Registry and Migration Department oversee family reunification visa applications. Eligible family members, such as spouses, children, and dependent parents, can apply for the appropriate visa to join their Cypriot resident or citizen family member.
- **Retirement visas:** While Cyprus does not have a specific retirement visa category, it offers attractive options for individuals seeking to enjoy their retirement years in the country. One option is the Category F Visa. This visa is suitable for individuals who have a stable and regular income from abroad, such as retirement pensions or investments, and do not intend to engage in any employment or business activities in Cyprus.
- **Other visa categories:** Cyprus also caters to individuals seeking visas for purposes such as humanitarian reasons, religious activities, medical treatment, and research. Each visa category has specific requirements and documentation that applicants must fulfil.

Additionally, Cyprus has established bilateral agreements and partnerships with certain countries, allowing for visa exemptions and simplified immigration procedures. These agreements aim to promote tourism, cultural exchange, and business collaborations between Cyprus and its partner countries. Moreover, the immigration system in Cyprus is constantly evolving, with ongoing efforts to enhance efficiency, transparency, and accessibility for prospective immigrants. The government is committed to attracting talent, investments, and skilled individuals who can contribute to the country's economic growth and development

By establishing a comprehensive system with clear procedures and regulations, Cyprus aims to facilitate lawful and orderly immigration while protecting its national interests. The involvement of various government agencies and adherence to relevant laws ensure a fair and transparent immigration process for individuals, whether they are seeking employment, investment opportunities, education family reunification or retirement in this beautiful Mediterranean country.



# IMMIGRATION PURPOSES

Immigration to Cyprus serves various purposes, catering to individuals seeking employment opportunities, family reunification, educational pursuits, investment prospects, and retirement options. The country offers specific visa categories and programs to accommodate each purpose, ensuring a comprehensive immigration system that caters to diverse needs.

## Employment immigration:

- **Eligibility criteria:** Individuals seeking employment in Cyprus must meet specific requirements, such as possessing the necessary skills, qualifications, and work experience relevant to the job market.
- **Work permits:** Work permits are typically required for non-EU nationals and are obtained through the Department of Labour. Employers must demonstrate a genuine need to hire a foreign national and prove that no suitable candidate is available locally.
- **Employment contracts:** Employment contracts between employers and employees must comply with Cypriot labour laws, outlining the terms and conditions of employment, including salary, working hours, and benefits.

## Family reunification:

- **Sponsoring family members:** Cypriot citizens, permanent residents, or individuals with legal residency status can sponsor their family members for immigration to Cyprus. The sponsor must meet specific financial, accommodation, and relationship requirements.
- **Documentation:** Sponsors must provide supporting documents, such as proof of relationship, financial means, and suitable accommodation, to demonstrate their ability to support and accommodate the family members.

## Study immigration:

- **Student visas:** International students must obtain a student visa to study in Cyprus. They need to provide an acceptance letter from a recognized educational institution, proof of financial means, and valid medical insurance coverage.
- **Educational institutions:** Cyprus is home to reputable universities and educational institutions offering a wide range of academic programs across various disciplines. Prospective students should research and apply to the institutions that align with their educational goals.
- **Admission process:** The admission process varies by institution, but typically involves submitting application forms, academic transcripts, letters of recommendation, and language proficiency test results.



### Exchange students and educational programs:

- **Student exchange visas:** Cyprus facilitates student exchange programs by granting visas to international students who wish to study at Cypriot educational institutions for a limited period.
- **Educational and cultural programs:** Individuals participating in educational and cultural programs, such as scholarships, research grants, or language courses, may be eligible for specific visa categories tailored to their program's requirements.

### Investment Immigration:

- **Investor visas:** Cyprus offers investor visa programs that provide residency permits to individuals making substantial investments in the country. Eligibility criteria may include minimum investment amounts, investment duration, and specific sectors targeted for investment.

### Retirement Immigration:

- **Visa options:** Cyprus indirectly offers visa options for individuals looking to retire in the country. The temporary residence permit allows retirees to live in Cyprus for extended periods, while the permanent residence permit offers long-term residency rights.
- **Requirements for retirees:** Retirees must meet specific financial criteria, demonstrate sufficient income or savings, and provide evidence of suitable accommodation in Cyprus.

### Diplomatic and official missions:

- **Diplomatic visas:** Diplomats, government officials, and individuals working for international organizations may require diplomatic visas or other special categories to carry out their official duties in Cyprus.

### Special categories:

- **Athletes, artists, and performers:** Cyprus offers special visa categories for athletes, artists, and performers participating in sports events, cultural activities, or entertainment shows in the country.
- **Medical treatment:** Individuals seeking medical treatment in Cyprus can apply for medical visas. They need to provide supporting medical documents and evidence of sufficient funds to cover the treatment and related expenses.





# NON-DIRECT OR OTHER ROUTES OF IMMIGRATION

Apart from the traditional immigration routes, Cyprus also offers alternative pathways for individuals seeking to immigrate to the country. These routes cater to specific circumstances and provide options for those who may not meet the eligibility criteria of the standard immigration categories. Additionally, Cyprus recognizes the importance of providing humanitarian and refugee protection to individuals in need.

## **Special immigration schemes:**

- **Startup visa:** Cyprus has introduced a Startup Visa program to encourage and support innovative entrepreneurs in establishing and developing their startups in the country. This program provides a pathway for individuals with innovative business ideas to obtain residency permits and access the resources and support necessary for their entrepreneurial ventures.

## **Humanitarian and refugee status:**

- **Temporary protection:** Cyprus provides temporary protection to individuals who cannot return to their home countries due to ongoing armed conflicts, natural disasters, or other exceptional circumstances. This protection offers a temporary refuge until the situation in their home country stabilizes.
- **Humanitarian protection:** Cyprus grants humanitarian protection to individuals who face serious threats to their safety or well-being in their home countries, but do not meet the requirements for refugee status. This protection ensures that individuals are not returned to situations where they may be subjected to harm.

These non-direct or alternative routes of immigration provide individuals with additional avenues to pursue their aspirations of living and working in Cyprus. The special immigration schemes offer opportunities for individuals with unique skills, talents, or financial resources to contribute to the country's development. Furthermore, the humanitarian and refugee protection framework reflect Cyprus's commitment to providing assistance and support to those seeking safety and refuge within its borders.

By offering these alternative routes of immigration and providing humanitarian and refugee protection, Cyprus demonstrates its commitment to inclusivity, diversity, and supporting individuals in various circumstances seeking to establish a new life in the country.



# TYPES OF VISAS

## Short-stay visas (category C)

**Tourist visas:** Cyprus welcomes visitors from around the world for tourism purposes. Tourist visas allow individuals to stay in the country for a limited duration, typically up to 90 days within a 6 month period. These visas are suitable for individuals planning leisure trips, sightseeing, or visiting family and friends in Cyprus.

**Business visas:** For individuals seeking to engage in business activities in Cyprus, business visas are available. These visas enable individuals to attend conferences, meetings, or negotiate business deals within the country. Business visas are granted for a specific duration, allowing individuals to conduct their business activities during their stay.

**Visa-free travel:** Cyprus has visa-free travel agreements with several countries, allowing citizens of those countries to enter Cyprus for tourism or business purposes without requiring a visa. The duration of stay permitted may vary based on the specific agreements between Cyprus and the respective countries.

## Long-stay visas (category D)

Cyprus offers various residence permits for individuals intending to stay in the country for an extended period of up to 1 year. These permits include:

**Employment permits:** Designed for individuals who have secured a job offer from a Cypriot employer, employment permits allow individuals to reside and work in Cyprus.

**Student visas:** Students enrolled in recognized educational institutions in Cyprus can obtain student visas, which permit them to study and reside in the country for the duration of their academic program.

**Family reunification permits:** Individuals who are family members of Cypriot citizens or legal residents can apply for family reunification permits, allowing them to join their loved ones in Cyprus.

**Specialized residence permits:** Cyprus offers residence permits for individuals engaged in specific activities such as research, investment, or religious services.





## **Permanent residence permits and citizenship options**

**Permanent residence permits:** Individuals who have resided in Cyprus for a certain period and meet specific criteria may be eligible to apply for permanent residence permits. These permits grant individuals the right to live and work in Cyprus indefinitely.

**Naturalization:** Individuals who have resided in Cyprus for an extended period and meet specific requirements, such as knowledge of the Greek language and a satisfactory understanding of the country's culture, may be eligible to apply for Cypriot citizenship through the naturalization process.

## **Additional visa categories**

**Airport transit visa (category A):** The Airport Transit Visa ("ATV") allows individuals to transit through the international transit area of Cypriot airports without entering the country. This visa is suitable for individuals who have a connecting flight in Cyprus to their final destination.

**Multiple entry visa (category C):** The multiple entry visa allows individuals to enter Cyprus multiple times within a period of up to 5 years. This visa category is beneficial for individuals who frequently visit Cyprus for business, tourism, or other purposes.

**Visa extension (category C):** Visa extension is a process that allows individuals to extend their stay in Cyprus beyond the initial visa validity period. This category is applicable to individuals who are already in Cyprus and wish to prolong their stay for various reasons, such as continued employment, further studies, or other valid purposes. The visa extension process involves submitting an application to the local Alien and Immigration Unit for an extension of their visa for a period up to 90 days from the date of entry, within 6 months and meeting the specified requirements.

**Visa issued at the border (category C):** The visa issued at the border, also known as a Border Entry Visa ("BEV"), is a category that allows individuals to obtain a visa upon arrival in Cyprus. This category is primarily applicable to individuals who may not have obtained a visa prior to traveling to Cyprus but are eligible for visa-on-arrival. It is important to note that not all nationalities are eligible for visa-on-arrival.

Cyprus offers a diverse range of visa categories to accommodate the various needs and purposes of individuals seeking entry into the country. From short-stay visas for tourism and business to long-stay visas for specific purposes such as employment and study, the visa options provide flexibility and accessibility. Additionally, the availability of permanent residence permits and citizenship options allows individuals to establish long-term ties with Cyprus.

## **Yellow and pink slips**

**Yellow slip:** The Yellow Slip, also known as the Registration Certificate, is a document issued to EU nationals in Cyprus for purposes other than employment. It is typically granted to individuals who are self-employed, studying, or retired in Cyprus. The Yellow Slip allows individuals to reside and engage in their respective activities in the country.

**Pink slip:** The Pink Slip, also known as the Residence Permit, is issued to non-EU nationals who are employed in Cyprus. It grants individuals the right to work and reside in the country. The Pink Slip is tied to a specific job and employer, and it is renewable based on the employment contract.



# LICENSES AND DOCUMENTATIONS

When applying for immigration to Cyprus, there are various licenses and documentations that need to be considered. These requirements ensure a smooth and transparent process while meeting the country's legal and regulatory standards.

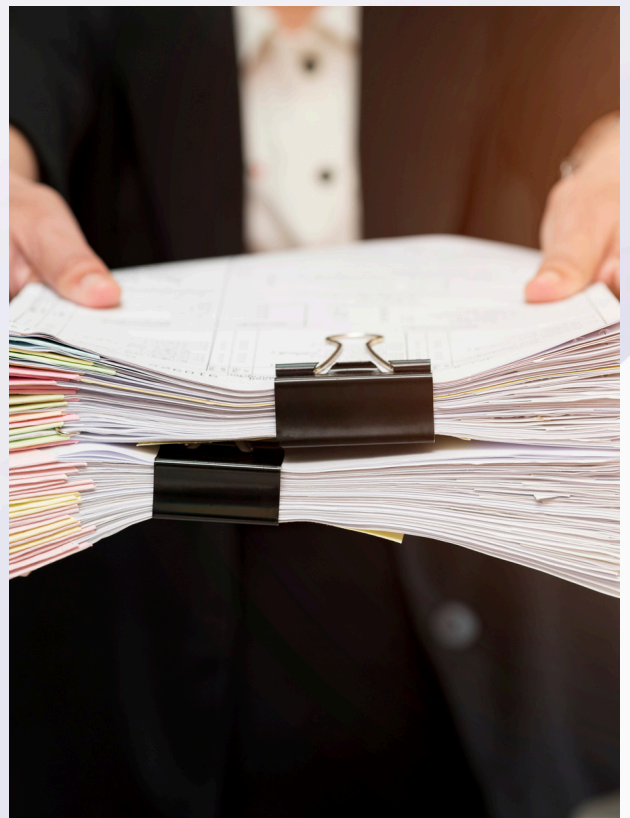
## Required documents for immigration applications:

To initiate the immigration process, applicants must gather and submit several essential documents. These documents include:

- **Valid passport:** A passport issued less than 10 years before the date of entry to Cyprus with a remaining validity of at least three months beyond the planned stay in Cyprus is required.
- **Completed application form:** Applicants must complete the appropriate application form accurately and legibly.
- **Passport-sized photographs:** Recent passport-sized photographs meeting the specified requirements should be provided.
- **Proof of financial means:** Applicants may need to demonstrate sufficient financial means to support themselves during their stay in Cyprus. This can be shown through bank statements, employment contracts, or other relevant documents.
- **Travel itinerary:** A detailed travel itinerary, including flight bookings and accommodation arrangements, may be required.

**Medical certificates and health insurance:** In some cases, applicants may need to submit a medical certificate confirming good health and the absence of contagious diseases. This certificate is usually issued by a recognized medical professional and may involve undergoing specific medical tests. Additionally, it is advisable for applicants to have health insurance coverage that is valid in Cyprus to ensure access to healthcare services during their stay.

**Police clearance and background checks:** As part of the immigration process, individuals may be required to provide police clearance certificates or undergo background checks to ensure they do not pose any security risks. These checks typically involve obtaining a certificate of good conduct from the relevant authorities in the applicant's home country or countries of previous residence.





**Translation and legalization of documents:** If any of the required documents are not in English or Greek, they must be translated into one of these languages by a certified translator. Additionally, depending on the country of origin, certain documents may need to be legalized or apostilled to verify their authenticity. Legalization involves obtaining an official stamp or certification from the relevant authorities in the issuing country.

**Financial documentation:** In addition to proof of financial means, certain immigration categories may require specific financial documentation. For example, investors applying for an investor visa may need to provide evidence of their investment funds, such as bank statements, investment portfolios, or property ownership documents. The financial documentation requirements may vary based on the immigration route chosen.

**Educational documents:** For individuals applying for study immigration or employment immigration based on educational qualifications, educational documents play a crucial role. These may include academic transcripts, diplomas, degrees, or certificates from recognized educational institutions. It is important to ensure that these documents are authentic, properly attested, and meet the standards set by the relevant educational authorities.

**Proof of relationship and dependents:** When applying for family reunification or including family members in the immigration application, applicants will need to provide proof of their relationship, such as marriage certificates, birth certificates, or adoption documents. These documents serve to establish the familial connection and are essential for the successful processing of family-based immigration applications.

**Business documents:** For entrepreneurs or individuals seeking employment in their own business ventures, specific business-related documents may be required. These can include business plans, registration certificates, tax identification numbers, and financial statements to demonstrate the viability and legitimacy of the proposed business activities.

Complying with documentation requirements is crucial to demonstrate eligibility, credibility, and adherence to immigration regulations in Cyprus. It is essential to provide accurate documents in accordance with guidelines to avoid delays or rejection. Additionally, keeping copies of all submitted documents is necessary for personal reference.

To navigate the process confidently and increase the chances of success, individuals should proactively gather and provide the required licenses and documentation. It is important to familiarize oneself with the specific requirements for each visa category. Successfully maneuvering through the process requires meticulous attention to detail and strict adherence to documentation requirements. Being organized and thorough ensures a seamless application process and greatly enhances the chances of a successful immigration journey.





# RECENT CHANGES IN IMMIGRATION RULES

Immigration rules and policies are subject to updates and amendments to ensure they remain relevant and effective in managing immigration processes. Cyprus, like many other countries, has witnessed certain changes in its immigration rules in recent years. These changes have brought about notable impacts on immigration procedures and the experiences of individuals seeking to immigrate to the country.

A significant recent change in Cyprus' immigration rules pertains to the eligibility criteria for the golden visa, also known as the Investment Visa. On May 2nd, 2023, revisions were made to the criteria for granting Immigration Permits to third-country nationals who wish to invest in Cyprus. While the required investment amount remains the same, additional control mechanisms have been introduced to ensure that applicants maintain their investment on a permanent basis.

Under the revised rules, applicants for the golden visa must invest a minimum of 300,000 euros, which should be derived from legal activities overseas. The investment options include purchasing a house from a developer worth at least 300,000 euros plus Value-Added Tax ("VAT") as the first purchase, making an investment in non-residential properties such as hotels, offices, or shops as a second purchase, investing in the share capital of a Cypriot company with a proven physical presence in Cyprus and employing at least five people, or investing in shares of a Cyprus Investment Organization for Collective Investments.

In addition to the initial investment, applicants are required to provide annual evidence of maintaining the investment and meeting the income requirements for themselves and their family. This evidence should demonstrate that the income is derived from legal activities overseas. Failure to provide the necessary documents may result in the cancellation of the immigration permit for the applicant and their family.

These recent changes aim to ensure that the Golden Visa program in Cyprus remains a reliable and attractive option for foreign investors. By introducing control mechanisms and stricter checks, Cyprus seeks to maintain the program's credibility, prevent misuse, and protect the interests of both investors and the country.

The impact of recent changes in immigration rules on immigration procedures can be significant. It is common for individuals who are already in the process of applying for immigration or planning to do so to be affected by these changes. Depending on the nature of the changes, it may require individuals to fulfil additional requirements, provide further documentation, or adhere to new processes. Such changes can lead to adjustments in timelines, increased scrutiny, or the need for additional support or resources during the application process.



# HOW WE CAN HELP?

Our team of dedicated immigration experts understand the complexities and challenges that individuals face when it comes to the immigration process and are committed to providing comprehensive support and supervision to ensure a smooth and hassle-free immigration experience for our clients who are interested in relocating to Cyprus. Here are some of the specific services our team offers for immigration to Cyprus:

**Visa application assistance:** Our team guides clients through the entire visa application process, ensuring that all necessary documents are prepared and submitted accurately and on time. Our team provides step-by-step guidance to help individuals navigate through the complexities of the application process, whether it is for a tourist visa, business visa, social visa, or any other category applicable to their situation.

**Expert advice on visa types:** Cyprus offers various visa categories, each with its own set of requirements and conditions. Our immigration professionals have a comprehensive understanding of the different visa types and can provide expert advice on choosing the most suitable visa category based on the client's purpose of visit, whether it is for employment, study, investment, or other purposes.

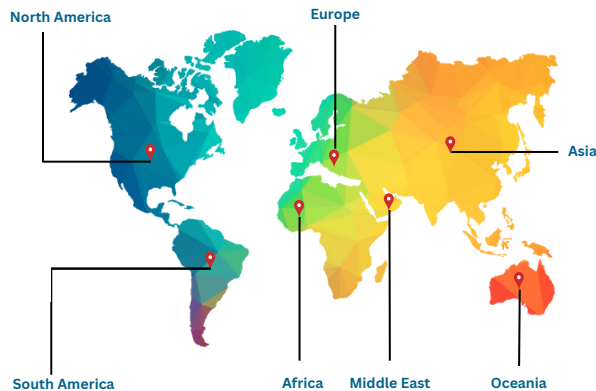
**Work permit applications:** For individuals seeking employment in Cyprus, provide assistance in obtaining the necessary work permits. Our team understands the specific requirements and procedures involved in obtaining work permits and strive to make the process as smooth as possible.

**Post-arrival support:** Our services extend beyond the visa application process. Our team provides post-arrival support to help individuals settle into their new lives in Cyprus. This includes assistance with accommodation, healthcare, education, and other essential aspects of relocation.





## SERVING CLIENTS WORLDWIDE



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