



GMS Flash Alert

Immigration Edition

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Netherlands - Income Requirement for Foreign Workers Modified for 2021

Many people with experience of Dutch immigration procedures are aware of the annual indexation per 1 January of the salary requirement that applies to many immigration programs for skilled labour migrants in the Netherlands.

The salary criterion for these highly-skilled migrants is contained in the Foreign Nationals Employment Act Implementation Decree (*Besluit uitvoering Wet arbeid vreemdelingen*).¹ This also stipulates that the indicated salaries are to be adjusted annually by ministerial regulation with effect from 1 January on the basis of recent index figures for negotiated wages, as published by Statistics Netherlands.²

In this *GMS Flash Alert*, we provide information on new income/salary requirements.

WHY THIS MATTERS

Meeting the salary criterion requirement can make it easier for certain employers to determine beforehand if an employee will qualify for an expedited immigration procedure. Employers that are "Recognised Sponsors" can enjoy expedited immigration procedures for their highly-skilled migrants provided, principally, they satisfy the salary criterion.

An additional upshot of this expedited procedure is that it can allow for more effective international assignment planning, since the average processing time is just two to four weeks from the filing date to arrival date, as long as the required supporting documents are provided. Normally the processing time can take between eight weeks and three months.

Companies that make use of the procedure need to be aware of the new criteria to determine if their employees satisfy the conditions. The new criteria apply to every application filed after 1 January 2021. There is no requirement to adjust the salary if the employee still holds a valid residence permit; but note that the employee should meet the new requirement if his/her permit is up for renewal.

Context

As noted above, Dutch-based companies that have acquired official status as “Recognised Sponsor”³ from the Dutch immigration authorities may benefit from expedited immigration procedures with respect to their so-called qualifying highly-skilled migrants. Because of the expedited processing times and transparent criteria, the highly-skilled migrant procedure is a very popular immigration channel for companies in the Netherlands.

The main requirement is that the employee satisfies the salary requirement which is set for his/her category as noted below.

Update to Salary Criterion for 2021

The following gross monthly salaries (excluding vacation allowance) apply as of 1 January 2021:

- Highly-skilled migrant 30 years and older: €4,752 (€4,612 for 2020);
- Highly-skilled migrant younger than 30 years: €3,484 (€3,381 for 2020);
- Dutch graduates qualifying for “search year”: €2,497 (€2,423 for 2020);
- EU “Blue Card” applications: €5,567 (€5,403 for 2020).

These amounts exclude the (mandatory) 8-percent vacation allowance.

The salary criterion is assessed solely in light of the salary received in cash, i.e., the fixed contractual gross salary in cash. Non-cash salary payments and uncertain salary components such as over-time, tips, and benefit payments are therefore excluded. However, expense allowances may be included provided they are guaranteed and regularly paid each month.

It is also important that the salary be paid at least monthly into a bank account held by the employee. The pay-slips must be made available for inspection upon first request by the *Immigratie- en Naturalisatiedienst* (IND) or Labour Inspectorate (“Inspectie SZW”).

MEIJBURG & CO. NOTE

Fixed allowances such as a 13th-month payment or fixed year-end bonus may only be included in the gross salary if these are laid down in the contract and if these are paid to the highly-skilled migrant on a monthly basis. Although it is uncommon that the 13th-month’s salary payment or year-end bonus is paid on a monthly basis, in practice this is the only way it may contribute to the salary calculation.

Applicability of Salary Criterion

Applications that have been filed before 1 January 2021, are subject to the 2020 salary criterion. The 2020 criterion also applies in situations where the Entry and Residence (*Toegang en Verblijf*, TEV) application was filed before 1 January 2021, although the highly-skilled migrant will only arrive in the Netherlands in 2021.

The same salary criterion also applies to applications for residence permits that are filed for “intra corporate transfer” applications under the ICT Directive⁴.

In addition to these residence permit applications, the salary criterion also applies to the following types of applications for a **work permit**:

- **Short stay by highly-skilled migrants** – This program is limited to group employees in a key or specialist position who are employed by a Recognised Sponsor and work for a maximum of 90 days in the Netherlands within a period of six months.
- **Application in the context of an intra-group transfer** – There are special categories for key positions, knowledge transfer, and trainees. The salary criterion for highly-skilled migrants older than 30 years of age applies to the first two categories. For trainees, the lower criterion for migrants younger than 30 years of age applies.
- **Highly-skilled migrants resident in another EU member state but working in the Netherlands** – This program is particularly attractive for employers in the border region, who are thus able to employ highly-skilled migrants although they do not live in the Netherlands.

Legal Fees

Besides the changes in the salary criterion, it’s usual that the applicable legal fees are also subject to changes with effect from the new calendar year. The new 2021 amounts have not yet been announced, but a raise of approximately 3 percent is expected.

FOOTNOTES:

1 See (in Dutch) *Besluit uitvoering Wet arbeid vreemdelingen* (valid from 1 Sep 20 til present) at: [Artikel 1d Besluit uitvoering Wet arbeid vreemdelingen](#).

2 See (in Dutch) *Staatscourant 2020 Nr. 61666* under section H: <https://zoek.officielebekendmakingen.nl/stcrt-2020-61666.html>.

3 See (in English) IND, “Employer: recognition as sponsor,” at: <https://ind.nl/en/work/Pages/Recognition-as-a-sponsor.aspx>.

4 See (in English) IND, “Intra Corporate Transferees (Directive 2014/66/EU),” at: https://ind.nl/en/work/working_in_the_Netherlands/Pages/Intra-Corporate-Transferees.aspx.

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Contact us

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