



# Employment procedure guides for job seekers from Kosovo aiming to work in Montenegro

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# 1. Introduction

The Republic of Montenegro, a candidate country for European Union membership, has in recent years developed a modern framework for regulating the entry, stay, and residence of foreign nationals. With its growing economy, attractive coastal cities, and proximity to the European market, Montenegro has become a destination of interest for workers, entrepreneurs, digital nomads, and investors.

Montenegro regulates the entry, residence, and employment of foreigners through the Law on Foreign Nationals.<sup>1</sup> This law provides the basis for different types of residence permits, the conditions under which foreigners may work, and the institutional responsibilities of public authorities. In addition, several by-laws, including the annual government decision on quotas for temporary residence and work permits, complement the framework by adjusting it to the needs of the Montenegrin labour market.

Montenegro's system reflects the dual policy objective of ensuring that the economy has access to needed labour, particularly in sectors such as tourism and construction, while also protecting the domestic workforce and aligning with EU standards. In practice, the state has established a system of temporary residence and work permits (TRWP) as the principal mechanism for admitting foreign workers, alongside the work registration certificate (WRC) for specific, short-term categories of work. Both schemes are embedded in a broader migration management strategy that seeks to balance openness to foreign labour with regulation and oversight.

The legal framework is dynamic and closely connected to Montenegro's EU accession process. Harmonisation with the EU acquis on migration and free movement of workers has been a central element of reforms, with the aim of ensuring transparency, non-discrimination, and the protection of rights for foreign workers. At the same time, the government maintains regulatory tools such as quotas and labour market tests to balance supply and demand for labour within the domestic context.

Foreigners seeking to reside and work in Montenegro therefore need to understand the different permit types, the requirements attached to each, and the procedures for application. Employers, on the other hand, must ensure compliance with their obligations regarding contracts, notifications, and registration, as failure to respect the rules carries penalties. The following sections of this manual provide a detailed and practical overview of the residence and work permits available in Montenegro, the rights and responsibilities they entail, and the institutions involved in their implementation.

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<sup>1</sup> Read more at: <https://www.gov.me/en/documents/e8ac34ee-953a-457c-944a-f9568b1aab65>

## 2. Entry into Montenegro and Conditions for Stay

The entry and stay of foreign nationals in Montenegro are strictly regulated by the Law on Foreign Nationals and related by-laws, with the objective of balancing the facilitation of travel with the protection of national security, public order, and public health. Foreign nationals may enter Montenegro only through designated border crossing points and must be in possession of a valid travel document. Depending on their nationality, they may also require a visa issued by Montenegrin authorities. Citizens of countries with which Montenegro has bilateral or multilateral agreements, or who are subject to EU visa liberalisation, may enter without a visa for short-term stays, typically not exceeding 90 days within a 180-day period. Nationals of countries outside these arrangements must obtain either a short-stay visa (C visa) or a long-stay visa (D visa), depending on the purpose and duration of their stay.

Beyond the requirement for valid travel documents, entry is conditional upon fulfilling several obligations. Foreign nationals may be required to demonstrate sufficient means of subsistence for the intended stay and return, provide evidence of accommodation (e.g., hotel booking, rental contract, or private invitation), and hold valid health insurance covering Montenegro. Importantly, all foreigners must register their place of stay within 24 hours (or 48 hours in some municipalities) with the local police, unless this is automatically done by a hotel or licensed accommodation provider. Registration is essential for legal compliance and is a precondition for later applications for residence permits.

Entry may be refused to individuals who do not meet the legal conditions, are subject to an entry ban, or whose presence is deemed a threat to national security or public order. The border police, in coordination with the Ministry of Interior and the Agency for National Security, are responsible for enforcing these provisions. The law also allows for the expulsion of foreigners who breach immigration rules after entering Montenegro. In practice, Montenegro's entry regime combines its sovereign immigration policy with gradual alignment to European Union standards, ensuring both openness to legitimate visitors and control over irregular migration.

## 3. Types of Residence in Montenegro

The Law on Foreign Nationals of Montenegro distinguishes between two primary categories of residence for foreign nationals: temporary residence and permanent residence. Each category has clearly defined conditions, rights, and obligations, ensuring that foreign nationals remain under a regulated legal framework during their stay.

Temporary residence may be granted to foreigners who wish to remain in Montenegro for purposes such as employment, seasonal work, education, scientific research, participation in international exchange programs, family reunification, medical treatment, humanitarian

reasons, or other justified circumstances established by law. The initial permit for temporary residence is typically issued for up to one year, with the possibility of extension upon continued fulfillment of conditions. Applicants must demonstrate sufficient means of subsistence, proof of accommodation, valid health insurance, and compliance with public order and security requirements. An additional safeguard in the law provides that if an application for temporary residence is filed while the foreigner is still within the lawful 90-day entry window, their stay is considered legal while the application is being processed, even if the original period of entry expires.

Permanent residence is regulated more strictly and is intended for foreigners who have established long-term ties to Montenegro. Eligibility requires continuous lawful residence for at least five years on the basis of temporary residence (with specific exceptions, such as marriage to a Montenegrin citizen, which may shorten the required duration). Applicants must also provide proof of adequate housing, stable means of support, and integration into Montenegrin society. Permanent residence grants a higher degree of security, including rights comparable to those of Montenegrin citizens in areas such as employment and access to education, though it does not extend to political rights.

Both types of residence are subject to revocation if the foreigner no longer fulfills the conditions under which the permit was granted or if their presence poses a threat to Montenegro's security or public order. The Ministry of Interior is the competent authority for issuing, extending, or revoking residence permits, operating under the legal framework defined by the Law on Foreign Nationals.

## 4. Temporary Residence and Work Permits (TRWP)

The Temporary Residence and Work Permit (TRWP) is the primary mechanism through which foreigners can legally reside and work in Montenegro. It combines the right of residence and the right to employment into a single permit, streamlining the process and ensuring clarity for both foreign nationals and employers.

A TRWP is generally issued for up to one year, with the possibility of renewal. The law stipulates that an application for a TRWP must be decided upon within 20 days of submission, provided all documentation is complete. Applications are submitted to the Ministry of Interior (MoI) or local police administration units, while the Employment Agency of Montenegro plays a central role in assessing whether conditions for employment of a foreigner are met, including the labour market test where applicable.

To qualify for a TRWP, a foreigner must:

- Provide proof of a valid employment contract or other basis for work in Montenegro;

- Demonstrate adequate means of subsistence and health insurance;
- Show evidence of accommodation in Montenegro;
- Possess a valid passport and not be subject to entry bans;
- Provide evidence of a clean criminal record.

Foreigners who enter Montenegro visa-free or on another legal basis are permitted to remain in the country for a short initial period while applying for a TRWP. This safeguard ensures that a foreigner is not penalized while the application is being processed, provided it is submitted before the expiry of the legal stay.

#### 4.1 TRWP for Employment

The most common form of TRWP is issued on the basis of employment. It is typically granted for one year, with the possibility of renewal. After the first renewal, the validity period may be extended up to two years.

To obtain this permit, the employer must first demonstrate that the position could not be filled by a Montenegrin citizen or permanent resident. This is established through a labour market test, which the Employment Agency conducts by checking the domestic unemployment register. Only when no suitable local candidate is available can the employer proceed with hiring a foreign national.

The foreign worker must submit the following documents:

- A work contract signed with the employer;
- Proof of qualifications or professional licenses, if required for the position;
- Confirmation from the Employment Agency that the labour market test has been completed;
- Proof of accommodation, health insurance, and subsistence.

Employers are legally required to register the foreign worker with the Employment Agency within eight days of the TRWP being issued, and to notify the authorities in case of termination of employment.

#### 4.2 TRWP for Seasonal Work

Seasonal employment plays a major role in Montenegro's economy, especially in tourism, agriculture, and construction. For this purpose, the law provides a specific TRWP category for seasonal work, valid for up to six months within a calendar year.

Key features include:

- Non-extendable duration: The permit expires after six months and cannot be extended. A new application must be made for the following year if the employer wishes to re-hire the worker.
- Labour market test: Employers must still request a check from the Employment Agency, unless the government quota decision explicitly waives it for certain seasonal jobs.
- Simplified requirements: The documentation requirements are slightly lighter than for standard employment TRWP, recognizing the short-term nature of the work.

This category is critical in absorbing labour shortages during the tourist season, where demand for workers in hospitality and services significantly exceeds domestic supply.

### 4.3 TRWP for Provision of Contracted Services

A TRWP may also be issued to a foreign national employed by a foreign company contracted to provide services in Montenegro. For example, this could involve construction firms, IT service providers, or consultancy agencies delivering a project under a commercial agreement.

The essential requirements are:

- Proof of an employment relationship abroad;
- A copy of the service contract between the foreign company and a Montenegrin entity;
- Documentation ensuring that the foreign employee will carry out only the activities stipulated in the contract.

This mechanism ensures that foreign companies can fulfil contractual obligations in Montenegro without establishing a permanent business presence.

### 4.4 TRWP for Intra-Company Transfers

Montenegrin law also provides for intra-company transfers (ICTs), in line with EU standards. This applies to managers, specialists, or trainees who have been employed by a parent company abroad for at least one year before being transferred to a branch, subsidiary, or affiliate in Montenegro.

Conditions include:

- A decision of reassignment by the parent company;
- Proof of prior employment for the required period;
- Documentation showing the foreign worker's role and responsibilities in Montenegro.



These permits are typically valid for one year, with the possibility of renewal. They aim to facilitate investment and integration of multinational companies operating in Montenegro.

## 5. Work Registration Certificate (WRC)

The Work Registration Certificate (WRC) is a simplified authorization that allows certain categories of foreigners to work in Montenegro without obtaining a Temporary Residence and Work Permit (TRWP). It is designed for situations where the foreigner's presence is of short duration, often linked to specialized, urgent, or high-value tasks.

The WRC is not a residence permit — it only legalizes the right to work. If the foreigner intends to stay longer than the permitted period or requires residence rights, they must apply for a TRWP or another residence status.

The certificate is issued by the Employment Agency of Montenegro upon request, usually based on a notification from the employer or contracting party. The law requires employers to ensure proper registration before the foreigner begins work.

A WRC is generally issued for a maximum of 90 days within a calendar year, though certain categories may be eligible for longer durations if provided by government decision. Once this period expires, the foreigner must either leave Montenegro or transition to a different legal status (e.g., a TRWP).

The Law on Foreign Nationals specifies the groups of foreigners who may perform work on the basis of a WRC. These include:

- Company representatives: Members of management boards or supervisory bodies of a Montenegrin company, if not residing permanently in Montenegro.
- Service providers: Foreigners engaged in short-term installation, servicing, or training linked to imported equipment or technology.
- Researchers and lecturers: Those delivering lectures, scientific or artistic programs, or training sessions.
- Athletes and artists: Individuals participating in sports competitions, cultural or artistic performances, or short-term projects.
- Journalists and media representatives: Accredited foreign correspondents or technical staff covering events in Montenegro.
- Humanitarian and emergency staff: Foreigners involved in relief work or urgent interventions in case of natural disasters or emergencies.

The government may, by annual decision, expand or limit the list of categories eligible for WRC, depending on labour market conditions and public interest.

## 5.1 Employer Obligations

Employers or hosting institutions must submit a request to the Employment Agency before the foreigner starts work. This request should include:

- A copy of the foreigner's passport;
- Documentation proving the nature and duration of the activity;
- Evidence that the foreigner belongs to one of the legally recognized categories.

Employers are also obliged to:

- Keep copies of the WRC and related documentation for inspection;
- Notify the authorities immediately if the engagement ends earlier than planned.

Failure to comply with these obligations can result in administrative fines and restrictions on future employment of foreign workers.

## 5.2 Distinction from TRWP

While both TRWP and WRC legalize foreign work, they differ significantly:

- TRWP grants both residence and work rights, typically for one year or longer.
- WRC only allows work for a limited duration, without establishing residence rights.
- TRWP requires a labour market test (for most categories), while WRC is exempt.
- TRWP is renewable and may lead to permanent residence; WRC does not.

This distinction ensures that the WRC remains a flexible tool for short-term needs, while longer-term employment continues to be regulated under the TRWP regime.

# 6. Permanent Residence

Permanent residence in Montenegro is a legal status granted to foreigners who have established long-term and stable ties with the country. It allows foreigners to live and work in Montenegro under conditions similar to Montenegrin citizens, with the exception of certain political rights (e.g., voting). The right to permanent residence is regulated under the Law on Foreigners and represents a step toward deeper integration, and for many, a pathway to eventual citizenship. A foreigner may be granted permanent residence if they meet the following conditions:

- Continuous lawful residence: The foreigner must have resided in Montenegro legally for five years on the basis of a temporary residence permit (e.g., TRWP, family reunification, study, etc.). Short interruptions (up to six months at a time, not exceeding ten months in total over five years) are allowed.
- Stable and regular income: Proof of sufficient means to support oneself and dependents without burdening the social welfare system.
- Accommodation: Evidence of secured housing in Montenegro (ownership or rental contract).
- Health insurance: Valid health insurance coverage.
- No threat to public order: The applicant must not have a criminal record or represent a security risk.

Foreigners holding permanent residence status enjoy broad rights, including:

- Unrestricted access to the labour market (no quotas, no work permits required).
- Equal treatment with Montenegrin citizens in most social and economic rights, including health care, education, and social protection.
- Freedom of movement within Montenegro and simplified procedures for re-entry after travel abroad.
- Eligibility to apply for Montenegrin citizenship, after an additional period of continuous residence (usually ten years total).

## 6.1 Application Procedure

Applications for permanent residence are submitted to the Ministry of Interior (Mol) or the local police directorate responsible for foreigners. The procedure includes:

1. Submission of documentation, including passport, proof of residence, income, accommodation, and health insurance.
2. Criminal record check, both from Montenegro and the applicant's country of origin.
3. Administrative review by the Mol, which may also consult security agencies.
4. Decision within 60 days of submission.

If approved, the foreigner receives a biometric residence card valid for five years, renewable indefinitely.

Permanent residence can be revoked if:

- The foreigner is absent from Montenegro for more than one continuous year without justification.
- They pose a threat to national security or public order.
- They obtained the status by fraudulent means.

In such cases, the Ministry of Interior issues a decision, which can be appealed in administrative and judicial proceedings.

Montenegro, as an EU candidate country, has gradually aligned its laws with EU standards, including the long-term resident status (EU Directive 2003/109/EC)<sup>2</sup>. While Montenegro does not yet issue EU long-term residence permits, its permanent residence regime mirrors many of the directive's provisions, to facilitate future harmonisation.

## 7. Special Categories of Residence

In addition to temporary and permanent residence permits, the Montenegrin legal framework provides for special categories of residence to address humanitarian needs, family unity, education, and other specific circumstances. These forms of residence ensure that Montenegro upholds international obligations and aligns with European standards on migration and human rights.

**Family Reunification.** Foreigners legally residing in Montenegro on the basis of a valid temporary or permanent residence permit have the right to apply for family reunification. Eligible family members include: Spouse or common-law partner; Children under 18 years of age; Adult children who cannot support themselves due to health conditions and Parents dependent on the applicant. For this the following conditions may apply:

- The sponsor must provide proof of sufficient income and accommodation.
- Family members granted residence through reunification may also apply for a work permit.
- The residence permit is usually issued for the same duration as the sponsor's residence permit.

**Students and Education.** Foreigners may be granted temporary residence for the purpose of education or study, including: Enrolment in a recognised educational institution and Participation in exchange programs or research projects. Requirements include:

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<sup>2</sup> Read more at: <https://eur-lex.europa.eu/eli/dir/2003/109/oj/eng>

- Proof of enrolment.
- Adequate means of subsistence.
- Health insurance.

Residence permits for study are typically valid for one academic year and can be renewed. Students may also be allowed to work on a limited basis, subject to additional approval.

Humanitarian Grounds and International Protection. Montenegro provides residence rights to foreigners in need of protection:

- Asylum seekers: Individuals may apply for international protection under the Law on International and Temporary Protection of Foreigners. During the procedure, they are granted lawful stay.
- Recognised refugees: Those granted refugee status receive a residence permit, access to social services, and the right to work.
- Subsidiary protection: Foreigners not qualifying as refugees but facing serious risk in their home country may be granted subsidiary protection.
- Humanitarian residence: In exceptional cases (e.g., medical treatment, humanitarian crises), a temporary residence permit may be issued.

### 7.1 Seasonal Workers

Foreigners engaged in seasonal employment (e.g., in tourism, agriculture) may be granted a short-term work registration certificate (WRC) valid for up to six months within a calendar year. These permits are exempt from annual quotas but require registration with the Employment Agency and approval by the Ministry of Interior.

### 7.2 Victims of Trafficking and Other Vulnerable Groups

In line with international commitments, Montenegro issues temporary residence permits to victims of human trafficking and other particularly vulnerable groups. These permits:

- Are valid for up to six months, renewable.
- Provide access to health care, accommodation, and social assistance.
- Can lead to long-term residence if cooperation with authorities and rehabilitation is established.

Additional grounds for residence may include:

- Scientific research and academic exchanges.

- Medical treatment in Montenegro.
- Religious service for accredited religious organisations.
- Volunteering within recognised programs.

Each category has specific requirements, but all follow the same basic structure: proof of purpose, means of subsistence, and health insurance.

## 8. Quotas for Foreign Workers

The Law on Foreigners empowers the Government of Montenegro to regulate labour migration through an annual quota system. This system applies specifically to combined permits for temporary residence and work, which are required for foreigners who seek employment in Montenegro. Each year, the Government issues a decision determining the maximum number of such permits that may be granted, as well as the distribution of quotas across different sectors of the economy.

The legal framework specifies that quotas should take into account labour market conditions, the need for specific skills, and the objective of balancing domestic employment with the admission of foreign workers. Employers may only hire foreign nationals within the limits set by the annual quota, and permits are issued by the competent authority accordingly.

The law also foresees the possibility of reserving a portion of the annual quota for flexible allocation, which allows authorities to respond to urgent or unforeseen needs in the labour market during the year. In practice, this mechanism provides flexibility for sectors like construction, tourism, and hospitality, which experience seasonal or fluctuating demand for workers.

Foreigners applying for a temporary residence and work permit must submit proof of an employment contract or a binding offer from an employer, in addition to fulfilling the general conditions for residence (subsistence, health insurance, accommodation, and security clearance). Once the quota for a given sector is exhausted, no further permits can be issued until the following year, unless the Government revises the allocation through a new decision.

For 2025, the Government set the total quota at 28,988 permits, of which 23,988 are immediately allocated (21,617 for employment and 2,371 for seasonal employment). A further 5,000 permits are reserved as a flexible tranche the competent labour authority may assign during the year, on request of the Employment Agency, to address labour-market needs. The decision also lists the sectors authorised to employ foreign workers in 2025 (e.g., construction, accommodation and food services, information and communications, trade), with the largest

single allocations to construction (6,074 total) and accommodation/food services (5,510 total). The decision applies from 1 January 2025.<sup>3</sup>

Quotas are grounded in the Law on Foreigners, which empowers the Government to determine the yearly number of temporary residence-and-work permits and to specify activities where foreigners may be employed. In practice, employers recruit within the sectoral allocations, and if needs exceed the initial distribution, the 5,000-permit reserve may be reallocated to specific purposes during the year upon proposal of the Employment Agency. Applicants and employers should therefore check the current year's government decision and sectoral tables when planning hires, as approvals are issued within the limits set by that act.

## 9. Application Procedures for Residence and Work in Montenegro

The Law on Foreigners of Montenegro establishes clear procedures for foreign nationals who intend to reside or work in the country. Applications for residence permits—whether temporary or permanent—must be submitted in person to the competent authority of the Ministry of Interior (Uprava za upravne poslove, državljanstvo i strance), unless the law provides otherwise. For combined temporary residence and work permits, the process is carried out in coordination with the Employment Agency of Montenegro, which verifies labour market needs and employer compliance with quota allocations.

Applications must generally be lodged before the expiry of lawful stay in Montenegro (e.g., before the 90-day short-stay period ends). A key safeguard in the law is that foreigners who apply within this lawful window are permitted to remain in the country while their application is processed, even if their initial period of stay expires during the procedure. This prevents legal uncertainty for workers, students, and other applicants.

Applicants are required to submit supporting documentation proving that they meet the legal conditions for residence: a valid travel document, proof of subsistence, accommodation, and health insurance, as well as a clean criminal record or statement of no security obstacles. For employment-based permits, an employment contract or a confirmed job offer is obligatory, and the employer must demonstrate compliance with the annual quota system. All documents in foreign languages must be translated into Montenegrin by a certified translator.

The Ministry of Interior is obliged by law to issue a decision within 40 days from the date of a complete application. If the decision is positive, a biometric residence card is issued to the

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<sup>3</sup> See more at: <https://wapi.gov.me/download/86db9ad9-7787-45bf-8c97-ffa8b69df362?version=1.0>

foreigner. If rejected, the applicant has the right to appeal through administrative and judicial remedies provided under Montenegrin law.

By standardizing deadlines, clarifying documentation requirements, and ensuring legal stay during processing, Montenegro's system reflects both administrative efficiency and alignment with European Union practices.

## 10. Institutional Responsibilities and Contact Points

The regulation, approval, and monitoring of foreign residence and work in Montenegro involve several government institutions. Each plays a distinct role in ensuring that the process is transparent, efficient, and aligned with both domestic and international standards.

Ministry of Interior (Ministarstvo unutrašnjih poslova – MUP). The Ministry of Interior is the primary authority for issuing residence permits to foreigners. Its responsibilities include: Receiving and processing applications for temporary and permanent residence permits; Deciding on applications for humanitarian and special categories of residence; Overseeing border management and migration control and Maintaining records of foreigners residing in Montenegro. Contact: [www.mup.gov.me](http://www.mup.gov.me)

Employment Agency of Montenegro (Zavod za zapošljavanje Crne Gore – ZZCG). The Employment Agency is responsible for regulating and monitoring foreign employment. Its key tasks include: Implementing the annual quota for temporary residence and work permits (TRWP); Conducting labour market tests to determine if a job vacancy can be filled by domestic workers before granting approval for a foreign worker; Issuing work registration certificates (WRCs) for short-term employment; Supporting employers in recruitment procedures. Contact: Website: [www.zzzcg.me](http://www.zzzcg.me)

Police Administration (Uprava policije). The Police Administration, operating under the Ministry of Interior, plays a supporting role in: Border control and monitoring entry/exit of foreigners; Preventing and addressing irregular migration and Cooperating with other institutions on enforcement of migration legislation.

Ministry of Labour and Social Welfare (Ministarstvo rada i socijalnog staranja). This ministry has an oversight role in employment policy and protection of workers' rights, including foreigners. It ensures that foreign workers enjoy equal treatment in terms of labour rights, working conditions, and social security, in line with Montenegro's international obligations.

Ministry of Foreign Affairs (Ministarstvo vanjskih poslova). Montenegro's diplomatic and consular missions abroad handle visa issuance and provide information to foreign nationals



seeking to travel, reside, or work in Montenegro. They are often the first point of contact for foreigners applying for long-stay visas or preparing to apply for residence permits.

Local Government (Opštine). Municipalities play an important role in verifying accommodation, residence registration, and local service provision for foreigners. They are also responsible for issuing certain confirmations required for residence applications.