



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

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## 1. Introduction

The legal framework governing the entry, stay, residence, and work of foreigners in the Republic of North Macedonia is primarily set out in the Law on Foreigners (Official Gazette No. 97/18, 108/19, 294/21, and 284/23).<sup>1</sup> This law regulates the rights and obligations of foreign nationals, establishes the conditions under which they may enter and remain in the country, and specifies procedures for obtaining residence permits. It also incorporates key provisions of EU legislation relevant to migration, employment, and integration, reflecting North Macedonia's EU accession trajectory.

Foreigners in North Macedonia enjoy, during their legal stay, the same rights and obligations as Macedonian nationals, unless otherwise restricted by law. These rights include access to employment, education, healthcare, and social protection, provided they comply with residence requirements. The state applies a migration policy resolution, adopted by the Assembly upon proposal by the Government, which outlines priorities for labour migration, family reunification, and integration.

Three main types of residence are foreseen: Short-term stay (up to 90 days in any 180-day period); Temporary residence (issued for specific purposes such as employment, education, or family reunification, usually valid up to one year and extendable) and Permanent residence (available after five years of continuous temporary residence, or under specific facilitated conditions)

Concerning labour migration, foreigners may work in North Macedonia only if they hold a work permit and a residence permit, except in cases explicitly exempted by law. Employment of foreigners is subject to labour market conditions, national employment strategies, and in some instances, annual labour migration quotas determined by the Government in consultation with the Ministry of Labour and Social Policy.

This manual provides a practical guide to: Entry rules and conditions for foreigners; Visa and residence permit types applicable for labour purposes; Labour quotas and employment-related rules; Application procedures for temporary and permanent residence and Institutional responsibilities for managing migration and labour permits.

The objective is to provide a clear, law-based, and accessible resource for foreigners, employers, and practitioners navigating the residency and employment system in North Macedonia.

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<sup>1</sup> Read more at: <https://www.refworld.org/legal/legislation/natlegbod/2018/en/124107>

## 2. Entry to North Macedonia: Rules, Types, and Conditions

Foreign nationals who wish to enter North Macedonia must do so under clearly defined rules that distinguish between lawful and unlawful entry. A person is considered to have entered legally if they cross the border at an official checkpoint, present themselves to border authorities, and are admitted following inspection. By contrast, anyone who crosses the border outside of authorized points, uses false or borrowed documents, or attempts to bypass control measures is treated as having entered illegally. The law makes certain exceptions, however, particularly for vulnerable groups: victims of human trafficking and those seeking international protection are not penalized for irregular entry, recognising the humanitarian circumstances in which they may find themselves.

To gain admission, every foreigner must meet a set of conditions designed to safeguard the country's security and ensure that visitors are able to support themselves during their stay. A valid passport is essential — it must have been issued within the past ten years and remain valid for at least three months beyond the intended departure date. For nationals of countries subject to North Macedonia's visa regime, a visa must also be obtained in advance, unless the person already holds a valid residence permit. In addition, travellers must be able to explain the purpose of their visit, demonstrate sufficient financial means for the duration of their stay and for their return journey, and show proof of accommodation. They must also not appear on lists of persons barred from entry, nor pose a risk to public order, public health, or national security.

The requirement to demonstrate financial means can be met in various ways, ranging from bank statements and credit cards to proof of property ownership or investment in the country. In practice, for labour migrants, a letter of guarantee from an employer often plays a crucial role. This letter not only confirms the foreigner's employment but also commits the employer to covering costs of accommodation, subsistence, and even return travel if necessary.

The law also specifies what sort of documentation is expected to establish the purpose of stay. For business travellers and workers, this might include company invitations, contracts, or evidence of ongoing cooperation. Students or trainees will need enrollment certificates or confirmations of training. Tourists and private visitors, on the other hand, may present hotel reservations or return tickets, while participants in conferences or sporting events will rely on invitations and event programmes.

While the general rule is strict compliance with entry requirements, the system does allow for flexibility. In urgent humanitarian cases, or when the national interest demands it, foreigners can be admitted even if some of the standard requirements are not met. Moreover, North

Macedonia grants simplified entry to certain categories of travellers, such as nationals of third countries who already hold permanent residence in EU or Schengen states. In exceptional cases, a visa can even be issued directly at the border crossing, though this is reserved for situations where earlier application was not possible.

Responsibility does not fall only on the traveller. Transport companies — airlines, bus operators, and others — are legally obliged to ensure that passengers they carry into North Macedonia have the necessary documents. If they fail to do so, they must cover the costs of the passenger's return and any expenses related to temporary stay or deportation.

Finally, just as there are rules for entry, there are rules for departure. Foreigners may leave the country freely, but exit can be restricted if they lack valid documents, are subject to ongoing legal proceedings, or have other outstanding obligations. Above all, they must depart before the expiry of the period for which they are authorized to stay — whether under a visa, a residence permit, or the go-day visa-free rule.

For those coming to North Macedonia for work, these provisions mean that careful preparation is essential. The right documentation must be secured in advance, employers are expected to play a part in guaranteeing the conditions of stay, and travellers must ensure they can demonstrate both purpose and means of support. These entry requirements form the first step in a broader process that links directly to the issuance of residence permits and work authorizations.

### 3. Types of Visas and Residence Permits

North Macedonia applies a structured system of visas and residence permits that regulates how foreigners may enter and remain in the country. The system is tiered, beginning with short-term stays, extending to temporary residence, and eventually allowing for permanent residence. For those intending to work in North Macedonia, the most important instruments are the long-stay visa (Visa D) and the temporary residence permit, which together form the legal basis for employment and longer-term settlement.

#### 3.1 Short-Term Stays and Visas

For brief visits — whether for tourism, private travel, or short business trips — a short-stay visa (Visa C) may be issued. This allows a stay of up to 90 days within a 180-day period. Visa C may be issued for single or multiple entries, and in the case of transit, the maximum stay is limited to five days. Nationals of many countries, especially those with which North Macedonia has visa-free arrangements, may enter without needing a Visa C, provided they respect the 90/180 rule.

The airport transit visa (Visa A) applies only in exceptional cases and is generally not relevant for labour migration, as it permits only transit through the international area of airports without entering the country.

### 3.2 The Long-Stay Visa (Visa D)

For anyone intending to remain in North Macedonia for more than 90 days — particularly for purposes such as employment, study, or family reunification — the Visa D is crucial. This visa is issued for a single entry and is valid for up to 90 days, but its real significance is that it enables the holder to apply for a temporary residence permit. Indeed, the Visa D is not sufficient in itself to exercise the rights linked to residence, such as working or studying; rather, it is a transitional tool that facilitates the issuance of the residence permit once the foreigner registers with the Ministry of Interior within five days of entry.

### 3.3 Temporary Residence Permits

The cornerstone of labour-related migration is the temporary residence permit. This permit is normally valid for one year, though it can be extended annually as long as the conditions that justified its issuance remain in place. The law lists a range of grounds on which temporary residence may be granted, including:

- Employment, whether with a local employer or as a posted worker;
- Education and training, including study programmes, professional training, and internships;
- Volunteering or research;
- Medical treatment or care in institutions;
- Family reunification;
- Humanitarian reasons.

Special provisions also exist for foreigners of Macedonian descent, close family members of citizens, and citizens of EU or OECD countries who acquire property worth at least €40,000 in North Macedonia. In all cases, the residence must match the declared purpose: a person admitted for work, for example, may not use that residence permit for unrelated activities.

### 3.4 Permanent Residence

After at least five years of continuous temporary residence (or three years in certain facilitated cases, such as marriage to a Macedonian citizen), a foreigner may apply for permanent residence. This status offers stronger security of stay, wider rights in employment, and forms the

basis for eventual naturalisation. Applicants must demonstrate financial stability, adequate accommodation, health insurance, and a clean criminal record.

### 3.5 The Link Between Residence and Work

A key principle of North Macedonian law is that residence and employment are interlinked. To work legally, a foreigner must hold both a work permit and a residence permit. In practice, this means that an application for a Visa D and temporary residence often goes hand in hand with the employer's application for a work permit. The Ministry of Interior issues the residence permits, while the Ministry of Labour and Social Policy oversees labour authorisations. This dual system ensures that migration flows remain aligned with labour market needs and national policy objectives

## 4. Labour Quotas and Employment Rules

The employment of foreigners in North Macedonia is not entirely open-ended. While the law recognises the right of foreigners to work if they hold the proper authorisations, it also gives the Government authority to regulate access to the labour market through annual quotas. These quotas are intended to balance the needs of the domestic economy with the protection of local employment opportunities, ensuring that foreign workers are admitted where they are most needed, but without displacing local labour.

Each year, upon proposal by the Ministry of Labour and Social Policy, the Government sets the maximum number of foreign workers who may be employed in the country. The decision reflects broader migration policy, as well as specific labour market conditions — for instance, shortages in certain industries such as construction, agriculture, or specialised manufacturing. The quota thus serves as a tool of labour migration management, aligning foreign labour inflows with national priorities.

In practice, the system distinguishes between several types of work authorisations:

- Employment permits, issued when a Macedonian company directly employs a foreigner. These are closely tied to job systematisation, meaning the post must be formally registered as part of the company's workforce structure.
- Personal work permits, which may be granted to foreigners under special conditions, allowing them to work independently. These can be issued for up to three years and, in exceptional cases, indefinitely.



- Work permits for posted or seconded workers, where a foreigner remains employed by a company abroad but is temporarily sent to North Macedonia. These permits may last longer than standard employment permits, in line with the assignment's duration.

The quota system applies primarily to employment permits and posted workers, but certain categories of foreigners are exempt. For example, family members of Macedonian citizens, highly qualified specialists, and foreigners with permanent residence may work without being counted within the annual quota. Exemptions are also made in cases where the work is considered in the public interest, such as humanitarian activities or critical infrastructure projects.

The issuance of work permits is not automatic: employers must first demonstrate compliance with quota availability and ensure that no legal impediments exist. Once approved, the work permit becomes one of the key documents required for the foreigner's residence application. The Ministry of Interior and the Ministry of Labour work together to ensure that residence and employment permissions are synchronised, preventing gaps in legal status.

Overall, the quota system plays a dual role: it safeguards the domestic workforce while allowing North Macedonia to respond flexibly to economic demands. For foreigners, it means that employment opportunities depend not only on meeting personal requirements but also on whether the Government has allocated sufficient space within the annual quota. For employers, it requires careful planning to secure authorisations in line with both their business needs and state regulations.

## 5. Application Procedures

Applying for the right to live and work in North Macedonia involves several stages. The process is designed to ensure that foreigners have a clear legal basis for their stay, while also protecting the domestic labour market and safeguarding public order. The Ministry of Interior is the central authority for residence permits, while the Ministry of Labour and Social Policy is responsible for labour authorisations and quota management.

### 5.1 The First Step: Visa D Application

Foreigners intending to stay for more than 90 days — whether for employment, study, or family reunification — usually begin by applying for a long-stay visa (Visa D). This application is lodged at the nearest North Macedonian diplomatic or consular mission abroad, or through an authorised consular representation arrangement. The applicant must provide:

- A valid passport (with at least three months' validity beyond the intended stay),

- A completed visa application form,
- Proof of purpose of stay (e.g., employment contract, invitation by employer, enrolment certificate),
- Proof of accommodation and sufficient means of subsistence,
- Health insurance valid for the intended stay, and
- A recent photograph.

The visa D is typically issued only after the Ministry of Interior has already made a decision approving temporary residence. Once granted, the foreigner must enter North Macedonia within the visa's validity period and appear at the Ministry of Interior within five days of arrival to collect their temporary residence permit.

## 5.2 Applying for Temporary Residence

The temporary residence permit is the cornerstone of legal stay for employment purposes. The application can be submitted either abroad (together with the visa D application) or directly in North Macedonia at the Ministry of Interior. The applicant must personally attend an interview if requested.

Documents required include:

- A valid travel document (valid at least 90 days beyond the planned stay),
- Proof of sufficient means of subsistence,
- Evidence of secured accommodation,
- Proof of health insurance,
- A clean criminal record from the country of origin or residence,
- Specific documents depending on the purpose (for employment, this means a work permit or employer's confirmation).

The Ministry of Interior decides on the application within 30 working days if submitted locally, or within 60 working days if lodged through a diplomatic-consular mission abroad. If granted, the temporary residence permit is issued for up to one year, renewable annually as long as the conditions remain valid.

## 5.3 Application for Work Permits

In parallel with residence procedures, the employer in North Macedonia is usually the one to initiate the application for a work permit with the Ministry of Labour and Social Policy. The

permit is tied to a specific position within the company's organisational plan, and approval depends on available space within the annual labour quota.

Types of work permits include:

- Employment permit (for a position in a Macedonian company),
- Personal work permit (for foreigners under special conditions, sometimes unlimited in duration),
- Posted worker permit (for foreigners seconded from abroad).

The work permit becomes one of the essential documents in the foreigner's residence application file.

## 5.4 Registration Obligations After Arrival

Once a foreigner has entered North Macedonia, there are mandatory registrations that must be completed promptly:

- Registration with the police: within 48 hours of arrival, foreigners must report their place of residence to the local police station. Failure to register may result in fines of up to €250.
- Confirmation of residence permit: within five days of entry, the foreigner must appear before the Ministry of Interior to collect the physical residence permit card (if applying with Visa D).
- Municipality/population registry registration: in some cases, foreigners must also register with the local municipality, particularly if staying long-term.

## 5.5 Extensions and Renewals

Temporary residence permits are granted for up to one year and can be extended on request. The foreigner must apply for an extension no earlier than 30 days before and no later than 15 days after the permit expires. Each extension requires proof that the conditions of stay — employment, accommodation, health insurance, and lawful conduct — remain valid. The Ministry of Interior must decide within 30 working days.

Failure to maintain legal residence can result in cancellation of the permit, fines, and even an entry ban. Foreigners who overstay may also face a temporary ban on re-entry into North Macedonia.

If an application for a visa, residence, or work permit is refused, the foreigner has the right to appeal. Appeals must be filed within eight days of receiving the decision and are reviewed by the

State Commission for Decision-Making in Administrative and Employment Procedures. An administrative dispute may also be pursued before the courts if the appeal is unsuccessful

## 6. Step by step procedures on working in North Macedonia

North Macedonia (MK) does not have a special free-movement deal with Kosovo like Albania does. Therefore, Kosovo nationals must go through the standard procedure to obtain a work permit and temporary residence in North Macedonia. The process is a bit more involved: you will need a job offer and an employer sponsor, and you'll need to coordinate with both the Employment Service Agency and the Ministry of Interior in North Macedonia. North Macedonia uses an annual quota system for foreign workers, meaning the government sets how many work permits can be given each year in various sectors. In practice, many permits are available, especially for in-demand jobs, but the employer must justify hiring a foreigner (showing no local was available, except in certain high-skill cases). Don't be intimidated by this because if a company wants to hire you, they will guide you through it. Key point is you must have legal authorization to work; working on a tourist entry is illegal and can get you deported or fined.

Since 2016, Kosovo and North Macedonia allow ID-card border crossing; stays are visa-free up to 90 days. This is useful if you want to travel to North Macedonia for job interviews or to look for work. However, once you decide to work there, you will need to transition to a long-term visa/status. Typically, North Macedonia issues a Type D (long-stay) visa for employment purposes, which you would get after your work permit is approved. Some applicants handle the paperwork while still in Kosovo (via the embassy), while others enter Macedonia and then apply – the law allows applying either at the diplomatic mission or in-country at the Ministry of Interior in some cases. The steps below cover the general path.

### Steps to Obtain a Work Permit & Residence in North Macedonia

1. **Secure a Job Offer from a Macedonian Employer:** Before you can get a work permit, you need an employer in North Macedonia who is willing to hire you. This could be a company in any sector (construction firm, restaurant, hotel, factory, IT company, etc.). The employer should provide you with a written job offer or contract. This step is crucial because the work permit process is employer-driven – you cannot apply for a standard work permit on your own without a job offer.
2. **Employer Obtains a Labor Approval (Positive Opinion):** The employer must contact the Employment Service Agency of North Macedonia and request permission to hire a foreign worker for the specific position. Essentially, the authorities check if a local worker

is available for that job. If not, they give a positive opinion allowing the hire. This is usually a formality if your skills match the job and the sector has labor shortages, but it's required. The law explicitly says a temporary residence for work is granted only after a positive opinion from the Agency and if the quota isn't exceeded, and that your employment won't negatively affect the local labor market. Your employer handles this part: they will submit information about the job and your qualifications to the Agency. Once approved, the Employment Agency issues a certified document (a copy of the work permit application or an approval letter) for the employer to give you. Employer secures the Employment Service Agency's positive opinion (within annual quotas). You then apply for a Type-D long-stay visa/residence for work, either at an embassy or in-country; employer registers employment and social insurance immediately upon start

3. **Apply for a Long-Stay Visa (Type D) and Temporary Residence Permit:** With the employer's approval in hand, you (the employee) must submit your application for the work visa/residence permit. You have two main routes:
  - At a North Macedonian Embassy/Consulate (if you are still in Kosovo or prefer to get the visa first), or
  - In North Macedonia at the Ministry of Interior (if you are already in MK, e.g. entered visa-free).

In either case, you will be applying for a Type D visa (for long stays) and a Temporary Residence Permit for employment. These are typically handled together – you get the visa to enter/stay, and the residence permit is the longer-term authorization.

Documents you need to provide with your application include:

- ⇒ Completed visa/residence application forms (the forms for work authorization; if applying at the embassy, it's a form like RD-2/1 for employment permit).
- ⇒ Your valid passport (must be valid at least 3 months beyond the permit's duration, and have blank pages).
- ⇒ Passport-sized photos (at least 1 photo).
- ⇒ Employer's certified approval letter or work permit application copy (the document from the Employment Agency proving the job position is approved for a foreigner).
- ⇒ Proof of accommodation in North Macedonia (e.g. a rental agreement, hotel booking, or letter from your employer if they provide housing).

- ⇒ Proof of sufficient funds or means of subsistence (often a bank statement or your employment contract showing your salary can suffice).
- ⇒ Proof of health insurance coverage for North Macedonia (travel health insurance if applying from outside, or national insurance once you start work).
- ⇒ Police clearance certificate (background check) from Kosovo. This is usually a document from your home country stating you have no criminal record.
- ⇒ Employment contract or letter from the employer (sometimes requested to verify the job terms).
- ⇒ Paid visa fee receipt (if applying for the D visa at an embassy).

**Tip:** Make sure all documents are in order. Some may need to be translated into Macedonian and notarized/apostilled (the embassy or authorities will inform you). Submit the application either at the embassy or the Ministry of Interior as instructed. If at the embassy, you'll get a visa stamped in your passport to enter MK; if you applied internally, you might get a temporary document.

4. **Wait for Approval:** The work permit (residence permit for work) application is processed by the Ministry of Interior in coordination with other departments. On average it takes around 45 days for the work permit to be issued. Once approved, you will receive a decision granting you temporary residence for employment. If you applied via the embassy, you'll now get the Type D entry visa in your passport to travel to North Macedonia. If you applied in-country (during your 90-day entry), you will receive a decision letter and later your residence permit card.
5. **Travel to North Macedonia and Register:** If you weren't already in North Macedonia, use the issued D visa to enter the country. Within 5 days of arriving, you must appear in person at the Ministry of Interior (Office for Foreigners) to finalize the residence permit process. Essentially, you'll need to show your passport, the decision letter, and any originals of documents if required, to get your temporary residence permit card (this is the ID card that proves you can live and work in North Macedonia). The Ministry will issue the permit card within 25 days of your in-person appearance (often sooner). Important: North Macedonia, like many countries, requires foreigners to register their local address, if you applied for the permit, this is typically done as part of that process. Just ensure the address you're staying at is known to the authorities (if you change address, update them).

6. **Start Work and Employer Registration:** Once your residence/work permit is granted, you are legally allowed to start working. North Macedonia's law mandates that the employer registers the start of your employment with the Employment Agency within a maximum of 90 days from the date the Agency initially gave the opinion/approval. In practice, your first day of work should be reported immediately by the employer to the authorities (social insurance, etc.). As an employee, ensure you have a signed employment contract and that the employer enrolls you in the mandatory social security system. You should be given the same working conditions and protections as local employees.

## 7. Institutional Responsibilities and Contact Points

The system for managing the entry, residence, and employment of foreigners in North Macedonia is shared between several key institutions. Each has distinct competences, but their work is interconnected, ensuring that migration policy, border control, and labour market needs are aligned.

**Ministry of Interior.** The Ministry of Interior (Moi) is the central authority in charge of the control of movement and stay of foreigners. Its responsibilities include: Processing and issuing residence permits (temporary and permanent); Deciding on Visa D applications in coordination with the Ministry of Foreign Affairs; Conducting security checks to ensure foreigners do not pose a threat to public order, security, or health; Registering foreigners' addresses after entry, through local police stations and Enforcing decisions on return, expulsion, and entry bans. For applicants, the Ministry of Interior is the main institution where residence procedures are completed after arrival in the country. Foreigners must report to the Moi within five days of entry to collect their residence card if they entered with a Visa D.

**The Ministry of Labour and Social Policy (MLSP)** is responsible for managing labour migration and ensuring that the employment of foreigners fits national needs. Its competences include: Proposing the annual labour migration quota to the Government; Reviewing employer applications for work permits; Issuing employment, personal, and posted worker permits; Monitoring compliance with labour laws and protecting against the misuse of foreign labour. For employers, this is the institution to approach when seeking to hire a foreigner. Work permit approval is usually a prerequisite before the residence application can be finalised.

**Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Diplomatic-Consular Missions.** The Ministry of Foreign Affairs (MFA) and North Macedonia's diplomatic and consular missions abroad handle the front line of applications. Their tasks include: Receiving applications for visas (A, C, D), including long-stay visas linked to residence; Interviewing applicants to verify the declared purpose of stay;

Forwarding decisions from the Ministry of Interior to applicants abroad and Issuing visas and forwarding refusals, along with reasons. For foreigners applying from outside North Macedonia, consulates are the first point of contact.

State Commission for Decision-Making in Administrative and Employment Procedures. This independent second-instance body reviews appeals lodged by foreigners against decisions of the Ministry of Interior or Ministry of Labour. It ensures procedural fairness in cases where residence, visa, or work permit applications have been refused. Its decisions can also be challenged in court through administrative disputes.

Local Police Stations and Municipal Registries. Upon arrival, foreigners must register their place of residence with the local police station within 48 hours. This ensures that the authorities know where the foreigner is staying and is essential for maintaining legal residence. In some cases, local municipal registries are also involved in population registration for long-term residents.

Other Supporting Institutions include:

- The Public Employment Service Agency works with the MLSP to monitor labour market conditions and may play a role in verifying whether local workers are available before a foreigner is hired.
- The Ministry of Education and Science is relevant for foreigners entering for study, as it confirms enrolments and accreditations.
- The Ministry of Health may be involved in checking health insurance or issuing medical confirmations for applicants arriving for treatment.

Key Contact Points

- Ministry of Interior: [www.mvr.gov.mk](http://www.mvr.gov.mk) — residence permits, registration, and security checks.
- Ministry of Labour and Social Policy: [www.mtsp.gov.mk](http://www.mtsp.gov.mk) — work permits and labour quota policies.
- Ministry of Foreign Affairs: [www.mfa.gov.mk](http://www.mfa.gov.mk) — visas and consular services abroad.
- Public Employment Service Agency: [www.avrm.gov.mk](http://www.avrm.gov.mk) — labour market services.