



## Home Office warns UK firms to prepare to be able to hire EU staff post-Brexit as most are not ready

By **Vanessa Ganguin and Sarah Keeley King** - 23 October 2020

From January 2021, all businesses wishing to employ new workers from the EU will have to be Home Office-approved.

Previously, under the free movement principles of the single market, firms seeking to employ EU staff did not need a sponsor licence.

The UK Government's Immigration Bill is proceeding through Parliament and is due to come into force when the Brexit transition period ends at 11pm on 31 December 2020.

Yet with just weeks until freedom of movement ends, there are fears that many firms may be caught out without a sponsor licence.

The Home Office's own figures reveal that so far only 29,514 enterprises are registered to sponsor applicants on Tier 2 visas – the main immigration route for employing skilled workers. This means the majority of UK businesses are still unprepared to employ new arrivals to the country at the end of the year.

With most yet to apply, there may well be a backlog if businesses leave their sponsor licence applications to the last minute.

At present it takes around six to eight weeks for the Home Office to process a company's application for a sponsor licence and companies will also need to allow preparation time – which can also be a matter of weeks. Unless the majority of firms that have not yet applied for a sponsor licence start registering now, many will be left unprepared when the UK leaves the EU.

The Home Office has launched a campaign to persuade businesses to prepare for the new system which will run throughout the Autumn.

The Home Office says it will use a wide range of channels to reach employers, including radio, social media, digital, and outdoor

advertising. The campaign targets employers who are yet to become sponsors, with the key message that the way they hire from the EU is about to change, and that to recruit from outside the UK, they will need to be a licensed sponsor.

Home Secretary Priti Patel launched the [campaign](#), insisting that ending freedom of movement between the UK and the EU at the end of this year is a pledge that her Government was delivering on, explaining, "those seeking to work, study or settle in the UK will need a sponsor and a visa."

A Home Office spokesperson said it is committed to "providing certainty and support on the system" as it is vital that employers are ready for the implementation of the new system.

According to the Home Office, despite the end of freedom of movement and the extra expenses entailed, the new immigration system will be simpler for businesses to access the talent they need because of the removal of the Resident Labour Market Test - which will save time and money. The skills and salary threshold have also been lowered and the cap on skilled workers suspended to make hiring staff from outside the EU easier.

A Home Office spokesperson added: "We are also introducing special schemes to enable more scientists, academics, investors, entrepreneurs, and health and care workers to come to the UK easily and are reviewing the recommendations of the independent Migration Advisory Committee on the shortage occupation list, so that the government can work with sectors to fill roles quickly where shortages may occur."

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Read the full article [here](#).