

## **New requirements for migrant workers in Sweden**

June 2026

As of 1 June 2026, tighter conditions will apply to work permits for foreigners. The wage threshold required for a work permit for third-country nationals will increase from 80% to 90% of the median monthly pay SEK 37,100 (€3,068). The government will, however, grant exemptions for certain professions. These exemptions will be subject to a lower salary threshold: 75% of the median monthly salary.

The current centre-right government, backed by the far-right Sweden Democrats, has introduced several reforms aimed at curbing immigration. These measures seek to tighten work permit conditions while promoting skilled labour immigration to address recruitment difficulties, particularly in certain technical occupations. For employees holding an EU Blue Card, the salary threshold remains unchanged at SEK 52,000 (€4,778).

The maximum duration of work permits is extended from two to four years for employees holding an EU Blue Card, while fines for illegal employment will be doubled.

Unions warn that weak government oversight is enabling exploitation, including double contracts, poor working conditions and wages below collectively agreed levels. This not only harms workers but also undermines trust in both the labour market and the migration system.

They are particularly critical of the proposed state-imposed salary threshold and instead favour a system where wages are set through collective agreements. Such agreements, they argue, offer greater flexibility and better reflect labour market needs, especially given Sweden's shortages in several occupations where pay levels fall below the proposed threshold. A statutory threshold would therefore function as a de facto minimum wage, which is incompatible with the Swedish model.

The government's plan to introduce exemptions for 27 occupations, setting a lower threshold set at 75% of the median wage rather than 90%, is also criticised. Unions consider this system bureaucratic and rigid, arguing that wage-setting through collective bargaining would be simpler and more effective.

Swedish trade unions hold diverse views on how to regulate work permits for third-country nationals. The Swedish Trade Union Confederation (LO) argues that work permits should be granted only in occupations where there is a labour shortage, meaning that employers are unable to recruit workers either in Sweden or within the EU. LO also advocates the introduction of a labour market test, conducted by a public authority (the Swedish Public Employment Service) in consultation with trade unions and employers' organisations. The Swedish Confederation of Professional Employees (TCO) and the Swedish Confederation of Professional Associations (Saco), however, do not share LO's position on this issue.