

New Rules on Hiring Foreign Workers in Vietnam

On 7 August 2025, the Government of Vietnam issued Decree No. 219/2025/ND-CP (**Decree 219**) providing regulations on foreign employees working in Vietnam. Decree 219 took effect immediately upon issuance, replacing Decree No. 152/2020/ND-CP (**Decree 152**) and its amendment under Decree No. 70/2023/ND-CP. This is considered a significant policy shift, with the clear aim of reducing administrative burdens and facilitating the engagement of skilled foreign labour. The most notable development is the shortening of the work permit application process, achieved through the consolidation of procedural steps.

Key Changes under Decree 219

1. Simplified Work Permit Application Process

Under Decree 152, employers were first required to obtain approval for their demand for foreign labour before separately applying for the issuance of a work permit. This two-step process often extended the overall timeline and created unnecessary duplication.

Decree 219 has merged the labour demand approval with the work permit application into a single procedure. As a result, the statutory processing time is now 10 working days from the date a valid dossier is submitted, compared to the several weeks previously required. This represents a material improvement in efficiency for employers.

2. Reduced Job Posting Requirements

Previous regulations imposed on employers a mandatory job-posting requirement for Vietnamese employees before obtaining approval for the demand for foreign labour. Under Decree 219, the posting requirement applies only to the cases of recruiting foreign employees to work in Vietnam:

- (i) under labour contracts;
- (ii) by participating in executing bidding packages or projects in Vietnam; and
- (iii) under labour contracts with foreign diplomatic missions or foreign organisations in Vietnam.

Additionally, the posting period has been shortened to five business days, instead of 15 days as previously required, and the posting platform is no longer restricted.

3. Expanded Exemptions from Work Permits

Decree 219 broadens the scope of exemptions, increasing the number of exempted categories from 14 to 15. In particular, experts in priority sectors such as science, technology, digital transformation, and innovation may benefit from this exemption. Furthermore, short-term assignments of less than 90 days per

year may be exempt from the requirement to obtain a work permit exemption certificate, although employers remain subject to notification obligations.

4. Updated Qualification Standards

Decree 219 introduces more flexible criteria for “expert” and “technical worker”. Specifically, in terms of applying for a work permit, experts now only need a university degree or higher (or equivalent) plus at least two years of relevant professional experience, or a relevant university degree or higher and one year of relevant experience for priority sectors. Technical workers now need two years’ relevant experience if trained for one year or more, or three years otherwise. These revisions reflect a lower entry threshold, particularly for experts in strategic sectors, compared to Decree 152, thereby facilitating the recruitment of younger professionals.

Conclusion

Decree 219 reflects Vietnam’s policy to create a more favourable environment for foreign investment and to attract highly skilled talent in priority sectors. The most consequential reform is the consolidation of procedures, which has significantly shortened the work permit process. Nevertheless, employers should continue to pay close attention to the compliance requirements that remain in place and how the new decree is implemented.

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