

Draft work visa regulations a boon for attracting skills

South Africa's new draft work visa regulations are a milestone for the country's efforts to attract investment and promote job creation.



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This is according to President Cyril Ramaphosa who addressed the nation through his weekly newsletter on Monday.

Last week, the Department of Home Affairs released the draft second amendment of the Immigration Regulations for public comment. The draft regulations deal with remote work and critical skills visas.

“The publication of the new draft regulations are part of our ongoing drive to reform the country’s visa system, making it easier to attract the skills our economy’s needs and promoting innovation and entrepreneurship. An efficient, agile, responsive visa regime is key to attracting business investment and boosting economic growth.

“International experience shows that employees with critical skills contribute to improved productivity, enhanced innovation, and improving the competitiveness of the firms they work for,” President Ramaphosa said.

He explained that the new remote working visa is a response to “the rapidly evolving world of work, where increasing

numbers of skilled workers...are attracted by the lifestyle benefits of working from a remote location”.

“It also caters to so-called digital nomads, who are able to work virtually from any location in the world. A remote worker who wants to work in South Africa while being employed by a foreign company will be able to receive such a visa.

“The draft regulations propose the introduction of a points system for critical skills visas that will take into account factors such as age, qualifications, language skills, work experience and having an offer of employment, amongst others,” the President said.



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Attracting the right skills

President Ramaphosa explained that although South Africa has invested in producing the skills needed for the digital economy, more is needed.

“To succeed in an ever-changing global economy, our country needs far more people with the right skills. This is so that our economy can be competitive, grow and create employment. As a country, we have invested much in producing these skills, from significantly expanding access to higher education, introducing digital programmes in TVET colleges and a shift to a new pay-for-performance approach to skills development.

“However, it will take some time before we will be able to produce enough skilled people to enable our country to grow rapidly.”

He added that attracting these skills to South Africa will be important as the country is “fast becoming an increasingly attractive destination for industries like business process outsourcing and customer experience”.

“Last year, for example, a leading international strategic advisory firm ranked South Africa second as the most favoured offshore customer experience delivery destination globally. Since 2016, government has invested more than R3bn towards supporting the growth and expansion of business process outsourcing and is targeting the creation of approximately 500,000 jobs in the sector by 2030.

“In line with our ongoing efforts to attract higher levels of investment and promote job creation, the new work visa regulations are a milestone. They are part of high-impact structural reforms we are undertaking to improve the business operating environment.

“They send a clear signal to business that we are committed to attracting skills that meet the demands of a modern, inclusive and growing economy,” he concluded.

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