

# **Saudi Arabia introduces several new measures in light of recent Nitaqat updates**

September 2017

## ***In brief***

The Saudi government continues to introduce new measures for the employment of foreign national employees, especially those being considered for more technical roles. The more pertinent changes are in relation to an update to the list of job titles available for posting on the Taqat portal as well as the government's decision to restrict the employment of foreign national engineers with less than five years of relevant experience.

## ***In detail***

In light of recent changes to the Nitaqat framework governing Saudisation, the Human Resources Development Fund (HRDF) and the Ministry of Labour and Social Development (MOLSD) have announced several more changes to procedural requirements governing the sponsorship of foreign national employees. Key changes include an update to the list of approved job titles on the Taqat portal, hinting at further restrictions on job titles available to foreign nationals. The list has been updated in conjunction with Tasneef (the board for Arab Standard Occupational Classification) and several stakeholders from various government authorities.

In addition to the above, the MOLSD and the Saudi Council of Engineers (SCE) have also confirmed that the recruitment of foreign national engineers with less than five years of experience will no longer be permitted. This decision builds on the government's previous stance of requiring foreign national engineers to demonstrate at least three years of relevant experience and pass an interview and a professional test in order to obtain work authorisation. The new policy is in line with the government's vision to strengthen the representation of Saudi national engineers in the private sector and to ensure that any foreign talent is familiar with the profession and its many specialisations.

## ***The takeaway***

These changes are designed to improve the representation of Saudi nationals in the private sector. However, this does add additional steps for local entities looking to sponsor foreign national employees, especially those in the field of engineering. We anticipate the updated designation list to result in restrictions on job titles that are available to foreign nationals. Currently, many administrative/managerial job titles are reserved for Saudi national employees, but the involvement of the SCE and the MOLSD looks to build on the country's "technical" talent pool as well.

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