

Mobility: Immigration alert

July 2023

Japan

Specified Skilled Worker (ii) route to expand to foreign workers in nine new industries

Executive summary

In June 2023, the Japanese Immigration Services Agency announced that the Cabinet approved the expansion of the Specified Skilled Worker (ii) (SSW-2) route to foreign nationals working in nine additional industries.

Specified Skilled Workers

Japan introduced the SSW (1 and 2) status of residence in 2019 for foreign nationals who possess expertise and skill in 12 industry fields with a significant shortage of workers. Holders of SSW-1 status can work in Japan for a total of up to five years and receive access to a dedicated support system which provides assistance with settling in Japan (e.g., finding accommodation, opening a bank account), but cannot bring in dependents. Eligible individuals working in the construction or shipbuilding and ship machinery industries can apply for SSW-2 status. SSW-2 status holders can work in Japan for an indefinite period provided they continue to be employed in an eligible industry, and they can bring in qualifying dependents as well as apply for permanent residence.

Key developments

On 9 June 2023, the Japanese Cabinet decided to expand the SSW-2 status to nine additional industries: building cleaning management; industrial machinery, electric, electronics and information; automobile repair and maintenance; aviation; accommodation; agriculture; fishery and aquaculture; food and beverage manufacturing; and food service. It is not yet known when SSW-2 applications will open for individuals working in these industries. The immigration authorities are expected to release further details in the upcoming months.

The SSW-2 status will not be available to foreign nationals working in the nursing care industry. These individuals will continue to be able to apply for the "Nursing Care" status of residence, which allows them to obtain permanent residence authorization provided they meet all requirements.

Impact on employers

Japanese employers that hire impacted individuals may benefit from enhanced access to skilled foreign talent and reduced administrative requirements.

Key steps

EY will continue to monitor these developments. Should you have any questions, we encourage you to contact one of our immigration professionals.

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