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IMMIGRATION CONSULTANT

IRELAND WORK PERMIT

The Complete Master Guide to Every Work Permit Pathway

All Nine Employment Permit Types • Every No-Permit Route • The Atypical Working Scheme • CSEP vs GEP • The Full 12-Step Process

Prepared by VisaHelperz Immigration Consultant

Immigration rules change frequently. This guide is an educational roadmap — always confirm current eligibility with the Visa Helperz Team before applying.

Part I — The 9 Employment Permit Pathways

Every statutory permit type currently issued under the Employment Permits Act 2024, in the order most overseas applicants should consider them.

1 Critical Skills Employment Permit CSEP · THE FLAGSHIP ROUTE

Ireland's main high-skilled route, built for occupations on the Critical Skills Occupations List — designed to lead to long-term residence.

- Salary: €40,904 (€36,848 recent grads) or €68,911 for Route B
- No Labour Market Needs Test
- Requires a 2-year job offer
- Leads toward Stamp 4 after a qualifying period

2 General Employment Permit GEP · THE BROADEST ROUTE

Covers most occupations unless specifically excluded — the opposite logic to CSEP, which names only eligible roles.

- Salary: €36,605 general (€32,691 / €34,009 for specific roles)
- Labour Market Needs Test usually required (28-day EURES ad)
- Granted up to 2 years, extendable by up to 3 more
- 5 years of employment can lead to Stamp 4

3 Dependant / Partner / Spouse Permit FAMILY-BASED ROUTE

For qualifying dependants, spouses or partners of CSEP holders, certain researchers, or qualifying former Green Card/CSEP holders.

- No application fee
- Most occupations eligible; domestic operative excluded
- Minimum pay: National Minimum Wage
- No Labour Market Needs Test

4 Intra-Company Transfer Permit ICT · FOR MULTINATIONAL STAFF

For senior management, key personnel or trainees transferring from an overseas branch to its connected Irish operation.

- Applied for by the Irish connected entity
- Employee can remain on the foreign payroll
- Designed as a temporary assignment, not permanent settlement

5 Contract for Services Permit FOR FOREIGN CONTRACTORS

Where a foreign company wins a contract with an Irish company and needs to send its own non-EEA employees to deliver it.

- Employee must have ≥6 months' service with the foreign contractor
- Initially up to 24 months, extendable to a maximum of 5 years
- Cannot be used where work is subcontracted onward

6 Reactivation Employment Permit A RESCUE ROUTE, NOT AN ENTRY ROUTE

For people who previously held a valid Irish permit but fell out of the system through no fault of their own, including exploitation cases.

- Requires a genuine new Irish job offer
- Not available to students, visitors or tourists who never held a permit
- Worker or employer can apply

7 Internship Employment Permit
FOR OVERSEAS STUDENTS

For a full-time student enrolled at a third-level institution outside Ireland, offered a qualifying internship with an Irish employer.

- Maximum 12 months
- Non-renewable
- No Labour Market Needs Test

8 Sport & Cultural Employment Permit
ATHLETES, COACHES, PERFORMERS

A specialist permit for qualifying employment in sport and culture — professional athletes, coaches and performers among others.

- Applicant must meet role-specific qualifications/experience
- Pay must meet at least National Minimum Wage
- No Labour Market Needs Test

9 Exchange Agreement Employment Permit
RECIPROCAL AGREEMENTS ONLY

For employment under prescribed exchange agreements or other qualifying international reciprocal arrangements Ireland is party to.

- Applicant must fall within an applicable agreement
- Worker or employer can apply depending on circumstances
- Duration depends on the agreement, up to 2 years



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Part II — Routes Where No Employment Permit Is Required

The right to work here comes from EU treaty rights, family status, a Stamp 4, or a separate scheme — not from one of the nine permits above.

01 EU / EEA / Swiss nationals

If you're an EU, EEA or Swiss national, you generally don't need an Irish Employment Permit at all — the permit system is primarily aimed at non-EEA nationals, subject to specific exceptions.

02 Irish citizens

Irish citizens obviously never need an Employment Permit to work in their own country.

03 Family members of EU/EEA/Swiss nationals

Certain non-EEA family members can obtain residence and work rights under EU Treaty Rights — a fundamentally different legal basis from an ordinary employment permit.

04 Spouse/partner of an Irish citizen

Certain spouses, civil partners or de-facto partners of Irish citizens can receive an immigration permission — often Stamp 4 — that permits employment without any Employment Permit.

05 Certain other Stamp 4 holders

Stamp 4 can carry the right to work without an Employment Permit depending on the basis on which it was granted. Stamp 4 is an immigration permission, not an employment permit.

06 Graduates in Ireland — Stamp 1G

International students who complete qualifying Irish studies can receive Stamp 1G under the Third Level Graduate Programme, letting them work while they seek longer-term employment — often transitioning later into CSEP or GEP.

07 Researchers under a Hosting Agreement

Researchers who qualify under Ireland's Hosting Agreement framework can have employment and residence rights through that system rather than the standard Employment Permit route.

08 Atypical Working Scheme (AWS)

A separate permission administered by Immigration Service Delivery for specialised or short-term work not properly covered by the Employment Permits system — locum doctors, certain nurse assessments, and qualifying paid internships among the examples. Normally up to 90 days; apply online with a €250 fee, and allow at least 20 working days for processing.

09 Short-term work & business activities

Separate arrangements exist for short-stay business visas, unpaid internships, performance and tournament visas, training visas, conference and event visas, and examination visas — each activity-specific, not a general work-permit substitute.

10 Van der Elst route

For someone already legally employed in another EU/EEA country or Switzerland by a non-EEA employer and temporarily sent to Ireland — in qualifying circumstances, no Irish Employment Permit may be needed, though a visa can still apply depending on nationality.

Part III — Job Offer to Stamp 1: The 12-Step Process

The route most overseas applicants will actually follow.

- 1 Confirm you actually need a permit**
As a non-EEA national, assume you need an Employment Permit unless you clearly fall into one of the exemption or alternative routes above.
- 2 Check your occupation against both lists**
Look up the Critical Skills Occupations List and the Ineligible List of Occupations — not generic "Ireland jobs with sponsorship" search results.
- 3 Pick the right permit type**
Usually CSEP for a qualifying skilled role, GEP for broader eligible jobs, ICT if transferring within a multinational, or one of the specialist permits.
- 4 Secure the Irish job offer**
Ireland doesn't issue a general work visa first and let you job-hunt after — for the main routes, the employer and offer come before the permit application.
- 5 Employer or worker prepares the application**
Submitted through Employment Permits Online. Who applies depends on the permit — e.g. the Irish connected entity for ICT, the contractor for Contract for Services.
- 6 Clear the Labour Market Needs Test, if required**
For most GEP roles: the employer advertises via DSP/EURES and an additional platform, generally for at least 28 days, before the application can go in.
- 7 Submit the application**
DETE recommends applying at least 12 weeks before your proposed start date. It's then processed, may draw requests for more information, and is approved, refused, or reviewed.
- 8 Receive the Employment Permit**
This is a major milestone — but it is not yet permission to enter or live in Ireland.
- 9 Apply for the entry visa, if required**
Visa-required nationalities generally apply for a Long Stay "D" Employment Visa after the permit is granted — the permit and the visa are two separate approvals.
- 10 Travel to Ireland**
Border control still applies. Holding a permit and visa does not remove the immigration officer's discretion at entry.
- 11 Register your immigration permission**
Required if staying more than 90 days. Most employment-permit holders register as Stamp 1, which sets out what you're permitted to do.
- 12 Start work**
Only once the appropriate permissions are actually in place — you cannot enter as a tourist and begin working.

Critical Skills vs. General Employment Permit

Factor	CSEP	GEP
Eligible occupations	Critical Skills Occupations List (or high-salary route)	Most occupations unless on the Ineligible List
Minimum salary	€40,904 (€36,848 recent grads) / €68,911 Route B	€36,605 general (€32,691–€34,009 for specific roles)
Labour Market Needs Test	Not required	Usually required (28-day EURES ad)
Job offer length	2-year contract required	Up to 2 years, extendable by up to 3 more
Path to Stamp 4	Relatively direct	After 5 years of qualifying employment

This document summarises publicly available Irish immigration rules as of August 2026 for general information only and is not legal advice. Occupation lists, salary thresholds and processing times change — always confirm current requirements with DETE, Immigration Service Delivery, or with the VisaHelperz Team before acting. © VisaHelperz Immigration Consultant.

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