On 11 June 2026, Iceland adopted amending Regulation No 724/2026 of the Regulation on Foreigners (No 540/2017), introducing changes to the processing of residence permit applications.

The amendment authorises the Directorate of Immigration to prioritise applications for residence permits based on employment, as well as applications within specific categories when time-sensitive circumstances apply, such as student permits linked to the academic year and residence permits for athletes during transfer windows. It also allows the concurrent processing of applications submitted by immediate family members of applicants for work-related residence permits and introduces an exemption from the continuous residence requirement for certain spouses or registered partners of Icelandic citizens employed abroad by the Icelandic state or international organisations.

The regulation further strengthens document verification procedures by requiring the Directorate of Immigration to assess the authenticity and reliability of documents submitted in support of residence permit applications. The Directorate may consult the police, other competent authorities, international databases and Nordic immigration authorities when verifying documents and may refuse to rely on evidence where there are reasonable doubts about its authenticity or credibility.

In addition, the amendment introduces the possibility of renewing residence permits for foreign nationals who have completed doctoral studies in Iceland for up to 12 months to enable them to seek employment based on their specialist qualifications.

In addition, with Regulation No 725/2026 amending the Regulation on Foreigners (No 540/2017), Iceland introduced a new legal framework governing short-term residence permits. The amendment establishes that foreign nationals may be granted a residence permit allowing a stay of up to 180 days, subject to an application and fulfilment of the conditions laid down in the Aliens Act and the Regulation. The amended law stipulates that that periods spent in other Schengen states count towards the maximum continuous stay of 180 days and provide that visa-exempt nationals may remain within the Schengen area for up to 90 days after the permit expires, provided they comply with applicable Schengen rules.

The regulation specifies that short-term residence permits are primarily available to immediate family members (spouses, parents, children and siblings) wishing to

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make extended visits in Iceland, as well as artists, scientists and athletes whose activities do not require a work permit. Applicants must generally be at least 18 years of age, although minors may be included in a parent's or guardian's application. Applicants are required to submit supporting documentation demonstrating the purpose of their stay, proof of sufficient financial means, valid health and accident insurance, evidence of onward or return travel, and a declaration of a clean criminal record. The Directorate of Immigration may verify criminal record information where necessary.

The amendment also establishes grounds for refusing applications, including where the applicant should instead apply for another type of residence or work permit, where public security or immigration policy considerations apply, where there is a risk that the applicant will overstay, where the application does not satisfy the regulatory requirements, or where false information regarding criminal history has been provided. In addition, the Directorate of Immigration is empowered to revoke a short-term residence permit where its conditions are breached or where the stay is no longer consistent with the purpose for which the permit was granted.

Both Regulations entered into force on 11 June 2026 and were published in the Official Journal on 26 June 2026.

Source(s)

- Official journal | Stjórnartíðindi (26 June, 2026), REGLUGERÐ Nr. 724/2026 um breytingu reglugerð um útlendinga nr. 540/2017. [Regulation No. 724/2026 amending Regulation on Foreigners No. 540/2017], https://island.is/stjornartidindi/nr/2fd242c9-9ff1-414a-8bc8-d9edd135cfad
- Official journal | Stjórnartíðindi (26 June, 2026), REGLUGERÐ Nr. 725/2026 um breytingu reglugerð um útlendinga nr. 540/2017. [Regulation No. 725/2026 amending Regulation on Foreigners No. 540/2017], https://island.is/stjornartidindi/nr/593aa681-35cf-49cc-a51b-6edacad616ac

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