

# inBrief



## Acquisition of UAE Nationality

By Charles Laubach and Dimple Soni | 1 February 2021

The Government of the UAE made another milestone announcement on 30 January 2021, announcing a procedure for the granting of citizenship to foreign nationals in a bid to retain talent in critical sectors and to expand and diversify the economy.

Nationality and citizenship in the UAE are governed by Federal Law No. 17 of 1972 Concerning Nationality and Passports, as amended by Federal Law No. 10 of 1975 and Federal Decree-Law No. 16 of 2017 (the **Nationality Law**), pursuant to which UAE nationality may be obtained by law, citizenship or naturalisation.

The recent announcement, as reported, would amend the Nationality Law to make the following categories of individuals eligible for UAE nationality by naturalisation:

- Leading artists and intellectuals;
- Authors;
- Doctors and specialists in unique scientific fields with significant contributions and experience of at least 10 years;
- Engineers;
- Investors who own property in the UAE;
- Inventors who have been granted at least one patent approved by the UAE Ministry of Economy;
- Scientists with at least 10 years of experience who are active researchers and have made substantial progress in science as recognised by prestigious scientific awards or funding; and
- Members of the immediate family (i.e., spouse and children) of a person who is naturalised under one of the foregoing provisions.

The process of naturalisation would begin with a nomination by the Federal Cabinet or by the Ruler's Office or Executive Council in an Emirate. Letters of recommendation are also required for nominations in most categories. The detailed criteria for each category have yet to be announced. Reports indicate that a person

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Dimple is a paralegal at Afridi & Angell's Dubai office. She assists lawyers on a wide range of corporate, commercial, and dispute resolution matters. Dimple supports the corporate team with the formation of new companies in the UAE, maintenance of existing companies, liaising with government departments, police departments, drafting memoranda, and conducting research.

who acquires nationality under the new rules will not be required to renounce his or her earlier citizenship, but instead may remain a dual national; this is a departure from the previous rules for acquiring nationality under the Nationality Law.

This is the latest in a series of recent measures that aim to attract and retain talent. Others include the introduction of the “golden visa,” the “retirement visa,” and the “remote working visa.” Another new visa category is the “student family visa,” whereby a foreign student in the UAE may obtain a residence visa while also sponsoring residence visas for family members. ■

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