



# Emiratisation and the Nafis Programme

MENA

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# Introduction

**Emiratisation is more than a legal requirement; it's a strategic opportunity.**

As part of the UAE Vision 2031, the government aims to build a competitive, knowledge-based economy where Emirati citizens play a central role in private-sector growth. This guide outlines what you need to know about Emiratisation, what's changing, and how your business can act now to stay compliant and ahead of the curve.

## 1. What is Emiratisation?

Emiratisation is the UAE government's national initiative to increase the number of Emiratis working in the private sector. It reflects a long-term vision to create a sustainable workforce and ensure UAE nationals play a key role in the country's economic development.

**Key programme: Nafis**

Launched in 2021, Nafis is a federal programme under the Emirates Talent Competitiveness Council (ETCC) designed to incentivise and accelerate Emirati participation in private-sector employment. It includes financial support for both jobseekers and employers.

## 2. Legal framework and authorities

**Key authorities:**

- Ministry of Human Resources and Emiratisation (MoHRE)
- Emirates Talent Competitiveness Council (ETCC)

**Governing laws and policies:**

- Federal Law No. 33 of 2021 (regulates labour relations)
- Cabinet Decisions on Emiratisation quotas and penalties

**Applicable sectors:**

- All mainland private-sector companies registered with MoHRE (free zones currently excluded)



### 3. Why it matters now

**Compliance is time-sensitive.**

The Nafis programme concludes in 2026. Companies with 50 or more employees are required to increase their Emirati workforce by 2% annually in skilled roles, reaching 10% by the end of 2026.

**Incentives are attractive, but penalties are steep.**

Benefits include pension contributions, training grants, monthly wage support (up to one year), and significant reductions in MoHRE service fees. However, companies that fail to meet the quotas may face:

- Up to AED 96,000 per unmet Emirati role in 2024
- AED 108,000 per unmet role in 2025 (estimated)
- Additional penalties for non-compliance, including ghost hiring and work permit suspensions

**MoHRE is actively monitoring.**

Audits are carried out regularly. Failing to report employment data transparently or misclassifying roles can lead to penalties and downgraded tier status.

### 4. Who must comply

- All mainland UAE private-sector companies with 50+ employees
- Selected sectors with 20–49 employees (as defined by Cabinet Resolutions)

**Roles in scope — Emiratization quotas apply to skilled job categories:**

- Managerial roles (Level 1)
- Professional roles (Level 2)
- Technical roles (Level 3)





## 5. Emiratisation targets and penalties

- All mainland UAE private-sector companies with 50+ employees
- Selected sectors with 20–49 employees (as defined by Cabinet Resolutions)

Year	Emiratisation Quota	Penalty per Unmet Role (Annual)
2023	4%	AED 84,000
2024	6%	AED 96,000
2025	8%	AED 108,000 (est.)
2026	10%	AED 120,000 (est.)

### Employer obligations:

1. Register with the Nafis platform: <https://nafis.gov.ae>
2. Hire through MoHRE-approved contracts and channels
3. Avoid ghost Emiratisation or fake placements
4. Register Emiratis for pensions within 30 days of hiring
5. Update workforce data accurately and on time



## 6. Strategic value of Emiratisation

- Reinforces UAE Vision 2031 and long-term sustainability
- Unlocks government incentives (salary, training, pension support)
- Improves Tier status and reduces MoHRE service fees
- Builds a loyal, long-term national workforce
- Strengthens reputation and eligibility for public/private contracts

## 7. Best practices for employers

- Proactively forecast Emiratisation quotas for 2025 and 2026
- Build internal Emirati talent development pathways
- Create an inclusive, purpose-driven work culture
- Ensure transparent pay structures and equal opportunities
- Align HR policies to support Emirati integration and retention

### Useful contacts:

- MoHRE Call Centre: 600 590 000
- Nafis Helpdesk: <https://nafis.gov.ae/faq>

## 8. The road to 2026

Your 2025 actions will determine your 2026 outcomes.

Treat Emiratisation as a board-level priority. Integrate it into your workforce strategy, set quarterly targets, and invest in meaningful development for your Emirati team members.

## Want help implementing this?

Read the companion guide: "How Salt supports your Emiratisation success" for actionable steps on workforce planning, recruitment, onboarding, and compliance.





## Emiratisation made easy with Salt

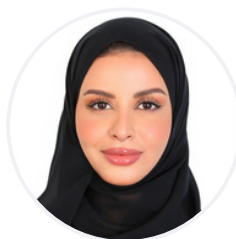
Salt can help you stay compliant, competitive, and future-ready.

Reach out to our specialist digital recruitment team to find out how we can help you.

**Let's Create Futures™, together.**



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