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**Ireland – New Joint  
British-Irish Visa Scheme  
Announced**

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## *flash* International Executive Alert

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The joint British-Irish Visa Scheme was formally launched on 6 October 2014, by Irish Minister for Justice and Equality Frances Fitzgerald together with U.K. Home Secretary Theresa May.<sup>1</sup> The scheme will facilitate smoother travel between Ireland and the U.K. by individuals requiring a short-stay visa – they will be issued with a single visa by either Ireland or the United Kingdom.

Nationals from the People's Republic of China and India will be the first to benefit from the scheme. The scheme is expected to commence later this month.

### Why This Matters

The current policy requiring the submission of separate visa applications when travelling between Ireland and the U.K. has proven to be labor intensive and the new policy removes a barrier to travel, as stated by Minister Fitzgerald.

The new policy will yield advantages for employers needing to send employees to the U.K. **and** Ireland for business purposes – less administration and less time tied to information gathering, application completion, submission, and processing timeframes will be involved.

The new regime also allows Irish visa applicants access to the U.K. worldwide network of Visa Application Centres, which will provide wider access for visa services.

The operation and success of the scheme will be reviewed in early 2015 with a view to finalizing a timetable for the roll-out of the scheme to other “visa required” nationals by the end of 2015.

### Background

Chinese and Indian nationals require a visa to enter Ireland.<sup>2</sup> Currently Chinese and Indian nationals also require a separate visa to enter the United Kingdom. This is a requirement regardless of the duration of the visit or whether the visit is for business or holiday purposes.

### KPMG Note

Due to the nature of business conducted by “visa required” nationals who enter Ireland and/or the U.K., frequent travel between both jurisdictions is not uncommon. The need to make applications for two separate visas can be an onerous process particularly where frequent trips are made between Ireland and the United Kingdom.

## Changes Announced

According to the announcement, the requirement for two separate visas will be abolished for Chinese and Indian nationals in the first instance. A single short-stay visa will instead be issued by either the Irish or U.K. immigration authorities allowing travel between both jurisdictions. The exact details have yet to be made public, but they are anticipated shortly.

It is expected that "visa required" nationals from other locations will be included as part of this scheme in the near future.

As part of the new agreement, the Irish and U.K. immigration authorities will share immigration data. Ireland will also share the U.K.'s network of Visa Application Centres – there are over 200 such centres around the world, and going forward, they will now also provide services to Irish visa applicants.

### *Footnotes:*

1 For a news release on this development, see:

<http://www.merrionstreet.ie/index.php/2014/10/minister-fitzgerald-and-uk-home-secretary-launch-landmark-british-irish-visa-scheme-2/?cat=3> .

2 For a list of countries whose nationals do not require a visa to enter Ireland, please see Schedule 1 of the following document:

<http://www.inis.gov.ie/en/INIS/SINo417.pdf/Files/SINo417.pdf>.

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*For additional information or assistance, please contact your local GMS or People Services professional, or one of the following professionals with the KPMG International member firm in Ireland:*

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