



EU Blue Card adopted by European Commission

The European Commission has officially adopted new legislation designed to create a fast-track procedures for the issue of EU special residence and working permits to be called the **EU Blue Card.**

The new system, first proposed by the European Commission in the autumn of 2007 will help highly-skilled Non-European migrants gain access to the EU labour market and entitle them to a number of socio-economic rights and favourable terms for the re-unification of family members and movement within the EU.

There are currently 27 separate visa regimes operating across the EU member states and by introducing the 'Blue Card' it aims to harmonise these existing processes and simply the attracting and retaining of highly skilled workers from third countries.

Following the publication of the directive in the Official Journal member states will have two years to implement the new provisions into national legislation.

Highlights of the EU Blue Card:

The object of the EU Blue Card is to improve the EU's ability to attract highly qualified workers from Non-EU Member Countries and to enhance competitiveness as laid out by the Lisbon Strategy.

EU 'Blue Card' holders will enjoy equal treatment with nationals of the relevant member state issuing the Blue Card, as regards:

- **Working conditions, including pay and dismissal**
- **Freedom of association**
- **Education, training and recognition of qualifications**
- **Provisions in national law regarding social security and pensions**
- **Access to goods and services, including procedures for obtaining housing, information and counselling services; and**
- **Free access to the entire territory of the member state concerned within the limits provided for by national law.**

An EU 'Blue Card' will carry a validity period of one to four years with the possibility of renewal. A Blue Card may also be issued or renewed in order to cover the contract period plus three months.

Provided certain conditions are met relating to the use of the 'EU Blue Card' for the purpose of highly-skilled/qualified employment, an individual in possession of a Blue Card may, after 18 months continued employment and residence in the first EU member state, move to another member state along with his or her family.

