



**COUNCIL OF
THE EUROPEAN UNION**



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Council adopts the "EU Blue Card": more advantages for high-skilled foreign workers

The Council today¹ adopted a directive aimed at facilitating conditions of entry and residence in the EU of third-country citizens for the purpose of highly qualified employment ([17426/08](#) and [9057/09](#)).

The directive establishes more attractive conditions for third-country workers to take up highly qualified employment in the member states of the Union, by creating a fast-track procedure for issuing a special residence and work permit called the "EU Blue Card".

The Blue Card will facilitate access to the labour market to their holders and will entitle them to a series of socio-economic rights and favourable conditions for family reunification and movement across the EU.

¹ The decision was taken without discussion at the Agriculture and Fisheries Council meeting. The European Parliament delivered its opinion in November 2008.

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The directive determines the common criteria to be set by the EU member states for applicants of the Blue Card without prejudice to more advantageous conditions provided for by national laws.

The period of validity of the EU Blue Card will be comprised between one and four years, with possibility of renewal. A Blue Card may also be issued or renewed for smaller periods in order to cover the work contract period plus three months.

After eighteen months of legal residence in the first member state as an EU Blue Card holder, the person concerned and his family members may move, under certain conditions, to a member state other than the first member state for the purpose of highly qualified employment.

Under the rules set by the directive, EU Blue Card holders will enjoy equal treatment with nationals of the member state issuing the Blue Card, as regards:

- working conditions, including pay and dismissal;
- freedom of association;
- education, training and recognition of qualifications;
- a number of provisions in national law regarding social security and pensions;
- access to goods and services, including procedures for obtaining housing, information and counseling services; and
- free access to the entire territory of the member state concerned within the limits provided for by national law.

Following its publication in the Official Journal of the EU, the member states will have two years to incorporate the new provisions into their domestic legislation.