

# FACTSHEET: THE EU BLUE CARD

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## WHAT IS A EU BLUE CARD?

The EU Blue Card is a work and residence permit for non-EEA nationals, which provides the holder with a pathway towards permanent residence and citizenship in a EU country.

The programme is designed to make Europe a more attractive destination for professionals from outside the EU. 25 out of the 27 EU countries currently issue the Blue Card. It does not apply in Denmark and Ireland – or the UK.

A Blue Card gives highly qualified workers from outside the EU the permission to live and work in a EU country, provided they have higher professional qualifications such as a university degree, and an employment contract or a binding job offer with a high salary compared to the average in the EU country where the job is located.

To a certain extent, the Blue Card is a merit-based system as it relies on individual education qualification or professional experience. The EU Blue Card is not points-based; either you have the education or skills, or you do not.

## ELIGIBILITY CRITERIA FOR A EU BLUE CARD

To be eligible for a Blue Card, you must meet the following criteria in order to be considered a ‘highly qualified worker’:

- You must prove that you have ‘higher professional qualifications’, by showing a higher education qualification (such as a university degree). Some Member States may also accept up to ten years of relevant professional experience.
- You must work as a paid employee. The EU Blue Card does not apply to self-employed work or entrepreneurs.
- Your annual gross salary must be high, at least one and a half times the average national salary, except when the lower salary threshold applies. For example, Regular Blue Card holders in Germany must be paid at least EUR 56,800 per year (up from EUR 55,200 in 2020).
- You must present a work contract or binding job offer in a EU country for at least one year.
- You must have the necessary travel documents. You must have health insurance for yourself and any relatives who come to the EU with you.
- You must prove that you fulfil the legal requirements to practice your profession, where this profession is regulated.

## WHERE CAN I APPLY?

The application for a EU Blue Card is made to the competent national authorities in the country where you wish to work.

## APPLICATION PROCESSING TIMES

Applications can take up to 90 days to be decided.

## RISK OF REFUSAL

The national authorities **will** reject your application if:

- You do not meet the conditions outlined above
- Your application was based on incorrect or false information
- You present a threat to public policy, public security or public health.

The national authorities **may** reject your application if:

- A national or EU worker, or an already legally present non-EU citizen could fill the vacancy
- Your employer has been found guilty of employing irregular migrants without the necessary documents
- Your home country lacks qualified workers in your sector.

## LENGTH OF STAY

Blue Cards are usually issued for between one and four years, and can be renewed. The card also allows the holder to travel between and visit other Blue Card scheme countries, but only for a combined period of 90 days in any six-month period.

## CHANGING JOBS OR EMPLOYERS

After 18 months on a Blue Card, employees can apply to another country for a new Blue Card. Applicants are also free to change jobs with their employer after two years on a Blue Card, or start working for a new employer in the same country. In relation to shifting occupations and employers, certain nations are more restrictive.

## FAMILY MEMBERS

The Blue Card allows applicants to include family members on their application, as long as you and they meet all the conditions.

## PERMANENT RESIDENCY AND CITIZENSHIP

The EU Blue Card provides a path towards permanent residence and EU citizenship. A permanent residency permit can be obtained after 33 months of working in the first hosting state, or 21 months if B1 language level knowledge is achieved. Blue card holders who have worked across multiple European states and gather up to five years of experience may also be able to explore permanent residency.

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