

duration of the employment contract plus three months. During the first two years of employment, the written consent of the competent immigration authority is required for any change of job. The validity of the EU Blue Card may be extended once it has expired, and a settlement permit may be issued under certain conditions.

## The advantages of the new residence title

### What are the advantages of the EU Blue Card?

Holders of the EU Blue Card in Germany may be issued with a permanent national residence title (settlement permit) once they have been in highly qualified employment for 33 months during which they have paid into a retirement scheme. Holders of the EU Blue Card who can prove adequate German language skills at level B1 (Common European Framework of Reference for Languages) can apply for a settlement permit for Germany after only 21 months. People who have been in possession of an EU Blue Card from another Member State of the EU for at least 18 months may enter another Member State without a visa for the purpose of highly qualified employment and must apply for the EU Blue Card for this Member State within a period of one month. The same applies to the entry of family members (section 39 No. 7 of the Residence Ordinance).

The EU Blue Card has further advantages for family members. In accordance with section 30 subs. 1 sentence 1 No. 3g and sentence 3 No. 5 of the Residence Act, spouses are entitled to be granted a residence permit even if they do not possess any knowledge of German prior to entering the country. In addition, spouses are immediately entitled to take up dependent and independent employment without any restrictions (section 27 subs. 5 of the Residence Act). Moreover, relaxed conditions for mobility apply. Holders of an EU Blue Card are permitted to stay in non-EU countries

for up to 12 consecutive months without their residence title expiring. This provision also includes family members.

## Exceptions

### In which countries is the EU Blue Card valid, and which countries do not fall within the scope of the EU Blue Card?

The EU Blue Card has been created for third-country nationals in the Member States of the EU. The only countries where the Directive on Highly Qualified Employment does not apply are the United Kingdom, Ireland and Denmark.

**FURTHER INFORMATION** online [www.bamf.de/bluecard](http://www.bamf.de/bluecard). Or get in contact with our hotline „Working and Living in Germany“.



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## EU Blue Card

Information on the residence title pursuant to Section 19a of the German Residence Act





# The legal framework

## What is the legal basis for the EU Blue Card?

The Act Transposing the Highly Qualified Employment Directive (Directive 2009/50/EC) came into force on 1 August 2012. Among other things, this Act has resulted in the introduction of the EU Blue Card, a new residence title as outlined in section 19a of the German Residence Act (Aufenthaltsgesetz).



# The target group and preconditions

## Who can use the EU Blue Card, and what preconditions have to be met?

The EU Blue Card targets third-country nationals who enter Germany directly from a non-EU state (section 19a subs. 1 of the Residence Act), or who already have an EU Blue Card as a resident in another EU Member State (section 39 No. 7 of the German Residence Ordinance (Aufenthaltsverordnung – AufenthV) and who come to Germany for the purpose of taking up highly qualified employment. Third-country nationals already living in Germany under a different type of residence permit may also apply for an EU Blue Card. The following preconditions must be met in order to obtain the new EU Blue Card:

- » Applicants must provide proof that they have graduated from university-level studies. If their higher education qualification was not obtained in Germany, it must either be recognised, or it must be comparable to a German higher education qualification (section 19a subs. 1 No. 1a of the Residence Act).
- » Applicants must also present an employment contract or a binding job offer with a specified minimum salary. The minimum annual gross salary is set at 48,400 Euros for 2015. It will be adjusted annually based on develop-

ments in national salaries. If applicants can prove this level of income, the consent of the Federal Employment Agency is not required for granting the EU Blue Card (section 2 subs. 1 No. 2a of the German Employment Ordinance [Beschäftigungsverordnung]).

For occupations in which there is a shortage of applicants, such as information and communication specialists, engineers, mathematicians or doctors of medicine, the minimum salary for the 2015 calendar year is 37,752 Euros. In these cases, the EU Blue Card may only be issued to this group of individuals with the consent of the Federal Employment Agency, unless they graduated in Germany (section 2 subs. 1 No. 2b and subs. 2 of the Employment Ordinance).

# Competent authorities

## Who should I contact to obtain the EU Blue Card or for more information?

- » Applicants who are already residents of Germany under a different residence title and would like to apply for an EU Blue Card should contact the immigration authority responsible for their place of residence.
- » As a rule, people living in non-European countries must first apply for a visa for the purpose of employment from the competent German diplomatic mission (in their home country) before they enter Germany in order to submit an application for an EU Blue Card.

- » They must then apply for an EU Blue Card from the competent immigration authority responsible for their place of residence before their visa expires. Exceptions apply to nationals of such countries as Australia, Canada, Israel, Japan, the Republic of Korea, New Zealand and the United States. These candidates may apply for an EU Blue Card from the competent immigration authority responsible for their future place of residence within three months of having entered Germany visa free.

Third-country nationals who have been in possession of an EU Blue Card issued by another EU Member State for at least 18 months and who wish to migrate from that country to Germany may also apply for an EU Blue Card in Germany. The application must be submitted within one month of entry into Germany.

# The validity of the EU Blue Card

## How long is the EU Blue Card valid, and what happens when it expires?

The EU Blue Card residence title is initially of limited duration and is valid for a maximum period of four years if the employment contract runs for a corresponding or longer duration. If the term of the employment contract is less than four years, the EU Blue Card will be issued for the