

August 19, 2013

EU Blue Card gets green light in Sweden

Sweden is among the world's richest and most technologically advanced nations. As from 1 August 2013 Sweden is able to offer the EU Blue card. This is an excellent opportunity for non-EU nationals to tap into its main industrial sectors of forestry, telecoms, and the automotive and pharmaceutical industries.

As of the 1 August 2013, Sweden is offering an EU Blue Card to applicants who meet the requisite criteria (see below). Having failed to comply with the initial deadline date for implementation which was 19 June 2011, the European Commission sent a letter of formal notice (the first step of the infringement procedure) to Sweden (as well as 5 other EU Member States) on 18 July 2011. It has therefore taken some time for Sweden to comply with the directive.

What is the EU Blue Card scheme?

The aim of the EU Blue Card scheme is to help attract highly qualified people who are non-EU nationals to work and stay in the EU instead of migrating to the USA, Canada and Australia. In doing so, it is hoped Member States will narrow the deficit they find in their labour markets which cannot be otherwise filled. All 27 EU member states, except the U.K., Denmark and Ireland, participate in the EU Blue Card scheme.

As with many EU Directives, the Blue Card Directive promotes harmonisation and a more streamlined approach for potential migrants to know what they need to do if they are considering working in an EU Member State rather than having to deal with 24 different systems. In practice, however, meeting the requirements can often be challenging and processing times will vary accordingly to the EU member state.

The Requisite Criteria in Sweden

For an applicant to be granted a Blue Card in Sweden, the applicant:

- Must not be a EU or EEA citizen, including Switzerland with a valid passport
- Must be a highly-qualified employee i.e. must have a bachelor's/master's degree or five years professional experience
- Must have a valid employment contract in Sweden, or a binding job offer, for at least one year
- Must be offered a salary of at least 1.5 times the average gross annual salary in Sweden. For 2013 the salary threshold is SEK 44,700 per month (circa USD 6,800)
- Must have taken out or applied for comprehensive health insurance

Benefits of Having a Blue Card

A Blue Card will be valid for the duration of the applicant's employment contract or two years, whichever is shorter, however as stated above, the employment contract must be valid for a minimum 12 month period. Family members of the applicant can also be issued with residence permits.

Foreign nationals who have held another EU country's Blue Card for at least 18 months may enter Sweden without a visa and may qualify for the Swedish version of the Blue Card if they meet the country's eligibility requirements. They must file the Blue Card application within one month of entry into Sweden.