

Global Immigration alert

May 2024

Estonia

Estonia simplifies EU Blue Card requirements

Executive summary

Effective 15 April 2024, Estonia amended its laws governing EU Blue Cards, including simplifying educational and professional requirements for applicants.

Key developments

The following changes went into effect on 15 April 2024, in line with the [revised EU Blue Card Directive](#):

- ▶ **Educational and professional requirements:** Applicants must have a higher education degree obtained after completing a course lasting at least three years, or at least five years of relevant professional experience. Previously, applicants were required to have a qualifying higher education degree and could not submit proof of professional experience in lieu of educational qualifications.
- ▶ **Employment contract:** Applicants must have an employment contract with an Estonian company that is valid for at least six months (down from one year previously).
- ▶ **Permitted period of unemployment:** Individuals who have held Blue Cards for less than two years can remain unemployed for up to three months cumulatively, and those who have held Blue Cards for two years or more can remain unemployed for up to six months cumulatively, without losing their Blue Card. Previously, Blue Cards were revoked if holders remained unemployed for more than three months.
- ▶ **Change of employer.** Employers that hire individuals who have held a valid Blue Card for less than 12 months and previously worked for another Estonian company are no longer required to request consent from the Estonian Unemployment Insurance Fund prior to hiring them. Previously,

employers were required to obtain consent if they hired such individuals in the first 24 months of them holding a Blue Card. Blue Card holders are still required to obtain a new Card if they change employers.

- ▶ **Blue Card application in other EU countries:** The new laws clarify that holders of Blue Cards issued by Estonia who apply for a Blue Card in another EU Member State will continue to hold their Estonian Blue Cards until their application in the other EU Member State is adjudicated. In addition, holders of Estonian Blue Cards and their qualifying dependents may return to Estonia immediately in the following cases:
 - ▶ The other EU country rejects their Blue Card application.
 - ▶ The Estonian Blue Card has expired or been revoked during the processing of their Blue Card application in the other EU Member State.
- ▶ **Holders of other Blue Cards.** Individuals who hold international protection status in Estonia and a Blue Card issued by another EU Member State (as well as their qualifying dependents) may return to Estonia if the other EU Member State refuses to extend the validity of their Blue Card or revokes it.

Impact on employers

These changes are expected to benefit employers by simplifying Blue Card application requirements and providing enhanced benefits to Blue Card holders. In general, the changes aim to harmonize the conditions of entry and residence of highly qualified workers from third countries and increase the attractiveness of EU Blue Cards.

Key steps

EY will continue to monitor these developments. Should you have any questions, we encourage you to contact one of our immigration professionals.

EY | Building a better working world

EY exists to build a better working world, helping create long-term value for clients, people and society and build trust in the capital markets.

Enabled by data and technology, diverse EY teams in over 150 countries provide trust through assurance and help clients grow, transform and operate.

Working across assurance, consulting, law, strategy, tax and transactions, EY teams ask better questions to find new answers for the complex issues facing our world today.

EY refers to the global organization, and may refer to one or more, of the member firms of Ernst & Young Global Limited, each of which is a separate legal entity. Ernst & Young Global Limited, a UK company limited by guarantee, does not provide services to clients. Information about how EY collects and uses personal data and a description of the rights individuals have under data protection legislation are available via ey.com/privacy. EY member firms do not practice law where prohibited by local laws. For more information about our organization, please visit ey.com.

Ernst & Young LLP is a client-serving member firm of Ernst & Young Global Limited operating in the US.

© 2024 Ernst & Young LLP.
All Rights Reserved.

EYG no. 004632-24Gbl

2101-3682263
ED None

ey.com

Ranno Tingas

Partner - People Advisory Services, Global Immigration
Tel: +372 5 111 848
Email: ranno.tingas@ee.ey.com

Hedi Wahtramäe

Director - People Advisory Services, Global Immigration
Tel: + 372 5 092 665
Email: hedi.wahtramae@ee.ey.com

Ben Willis

Partner - People Advisory Services, EMEA Immigration Leader
Tel: +44 20 7951 9589
Email: ben.willis@uk.ey.com

Seema Farazi

Partner - People Advisory Services, EMEA Immigration Leader
Tel: +44 20 7951 7122
Email: seema.farazi@uk.ey.com