

Coming to Work in France

French work visas streamlined

Haywood M. WISE, Avocat – Attorney at Law*

France has recently streamlined various professional and employment visas, making it easier for the foreign, non-EU national to engage in professional activities in France. The most significant advance is the new “Skills and Talents” (I) permit, valid for an initial three year period for performance of a professional or artistic project in France. However, provisions for employment have also been streamlined, for “Salaried” and “Temporary Workers” (II), “Employees on Assignment” (III), “Senior Managers” or “High Level Executives” (IV), “Seasonable Workers” (V) and “Scientists” (VI). These provisions make professional establishment considerably easier than was previously the case. Certain of these work visas require both Consular and Municipal (Préfecture) approval, but recent reforms to streamline the process, requiring only Consular approval and limiting prior procedures in France and following visa approval.

I. The New “Skills and Talents” permit

You have a project that is professional, artistic, not-for profit, or even an employment-related project. The “Skills and Talents” permit, valid for an initial period of three years and renewable thereafter, allows you to carry out any professional activity of your choice in connection with your project.

This new visa is a significant advance for entrepreneurs, who can apply directly for such a visa at the Consulate and hereby bypass French labor office (DDTEFP) and French Immigration Office (ANAEM) formalities and receive a visa that is valid for three years instead of the standard one year, renewable term and related administrative hurdles at the Préfecture

It has been established as a manner to give the Consulates the discretion to choose persons and projects which are favorable to the economic and cultural development of France.

Furthermore, under this status, the family will receive the *Private and Family Life* permit, which will enable them to accompany you to France and seek employment themselves.

II. The “Salaried” and “Temporary Worker” permit

A “salaried” or “temporary worker permit is provided for specific professions in France, or for direct hires of foreign employees in France, which can be done subject to a prior job search. These permits generally require initial submission to the French labor office (DDTEFP) and French Immigration Office (ANAEM) by the French employer. However many options exist to allow the French employer to expedite work permits, primarily under options III and IV discussed below.

III. The “Employee on Assignment” permit

If you have been employed for at least three months by a company based outside of France, and that company has an assignment to be performed in France, then you are eligible to apply for this permit, valid for an initial period of three years and renewable thereafter.

This permit applies to you if you are (a) seconded to one of the company’s establishments in France or to another company within the same group, or (b) temporarily hired by a company based in France which is part of the same group as your employer.

* Haywood M. WISE is an American-born, French-American lawyer whose primary activity is French immigration law issues. See his website at www.parislawyer.fr for more details on his services.

In both cases, evidence must be shown that the employee receives a gross salary equal to 1.5 times the minimum wage. After a continuous secondment of 6 months in France, your family members will be entitled to a *Private and Family Life* permit allowing them to seek employment in France.

A similar permit exists for secondment, or transfer (*détachement*), to the French client of your employer for a period generally not exceeding one year, allowing you to work on assignment under your foreign employment contract (for instance for performing services under a services agreement with your employer's French client/customer).

IV. The “Employee on Assignment” card for senior managers or high-level executives

Special, expedited status is reserved to managers and high-level executives of an international group, permitting their immediate hire in France, provided that such persons receive a gross monthly salary greater than or equal to 5,000 euros. In this case your French employer will not be required to demonstrate that a job search for an equivalent candidate has been sought and you will be issued with a residence permit valid for a period of three years.

Family members can accompany you, with a residence permit which will allow your spouse to work.

V. The “Seasonal Worker” permit

You are employed under a seasonal employment contract with a period of more than three months.

A temporary residence permit, valid for three years and renewable thereafter, allows you to carry out seasonal work for a maximum of 6 months over a period of 12 consecutive months.

You can cumulate several contracts in succession, provided that your commit to spending no more than six months per year in France and to maintain your usual residence outside France.

This permit does not allow your family to join you.

VI. The “Scientific” permit

If you have a master's degree or equivalent, you can come to France to carry out research or teaching activities.

You must prove your status as a researcher and the planned duration of your research work, and present a *convention d'accueil* (hosting agreement) from an accredited French research institution or teaching facility.

The permit will be issued to you by the Préfecture on presentation of the required long-stay visa and your hosting agreement, endorsed by the French Consulate in your country of origin.