

Turquoise Card Program in Turkey

Introduction

Turquoise Card has been introduced for the first time with the enactment of International Workforce Law (Law No. 6735) and shortly afterwards Turquoise Card Regulation (“Regulation”) has come into force on March 14, 2017. Most of the developed countries have been striving to attract qualified foreign workforce to their countries under programs such as the Green Card in the USA and the Blue Card in the EU. Similarly, Turquoise Card offers highly qualified individuals a comprehensive opportunity to work and stay in Turkey.

Pursuant to the Law, Turquoise Card can be defined as a special form of work permit for an unlimited duration which grants foreigners the right to reside and work permanently in Turkey and automatically allows their spouse and children to stay in Turkey.

Eligibility for Turquoise Card

Turquoise Card is not an option for all foreigners who are willing to reside and work in Turkey. Only the ones who have special qualifications can be eligible for the card. Accordingly, Turquoise Card can be granted to foreigners who;

- a) are evaluated as highly qualified workforce in terms of their education, salary, professional knowledge and experience, contribution in science and technology or similar qualifications,

- b) are evaluated as highly qualified investor in terms of level of investment or export level, employment capacity, contribution in scientific and technological development and similar qualifications,
- c) contribute in scientific and technological development or scientists or researchers who study for the benefit of the country at international level in the fields of science, industry and technology,
- d) are successful at international level in cultural, sportive and artistic activities,
- e) contribute to the recognition and promotion of Turkey or Turkish culture in international platforms or involve in international activities regarding the national interests of Turkey.

Application Procedure

Turquoise Card applications can be made in Turkey through the system of the Ministry of Labour and Social Security (“Ministry”).

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Applicants can also make their application from their home country or country of residence to a Turkish Foreign Representative Office.

Following the application made from applicant’s home country or country of residence through the system, the information and the documents shall be electronically transferred to the Ministry.

Applications can also be made by a third person who is authorized by applicant.

Assessment of the Application

In accordance with the international workforce policy of the government, a point-based system within the scope of criteria determined by Directorate General of International Workforce is used in the assessment of the applications. Applicants who receive sufficient points become eligible to obtain Turquoise Card.

Transition period

Turquoise Card is initially issued for a transitional period of 3 years. Within this period, General Directorate assigns a specialist in order to supervise the activities and commitments of the Turquoise Card holder.

Follow up reports are prepared by the specialist and as per these reports additional documents and information may be requested from the card holder. If any deficiency occurs, it will be notified to the card holder and a period of three months will be granted to eliminate the deficiencies otherwise, the Turquoise Card may be cancelled.

Permanent Card

Application for the permanent Turquoise Card must be filed within 180 days prior to the expiry date of the initial card. If the application is not made on time, it will be rejected, and the card will be cancelled. Once all the conditions are met and the application is found appropriate, Turquoise Card becomes permanent.

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Rights and Obligation of Turquoise Card Holders

Turquoise Card holders benefit the rights granted by a work permit for an indefinite time period.

Card holders are exempt from compulsory military service and they have no right to vote and to stand for an election and to serve as a civil servant.

Card holder's acquired rights regarding the social security are reserved however, when using such rights, they are subject to the provisions determined by law.

Card holder's transactions related to work, residency, travel, investment, commercial activities, heritage, acquiring and transferring movable and immovable property are conducted in accordance with the law that apply to Turkish citizens.

Cancelation of the Card

Apart from the request of card holder, the card may be cancelled under the following circumstances;

- a) If the card holder does not come to Turkey within 6 months after the effective date of the Turquoise Card or stay outside the country for more than 2 years continuously without a force majeure,
- b) If the passport or travel document of the card holder is not extended except for cases where there is an assent of Ministry of Interior or Ministry of Foreign Affairs,
- c) If it is detected that card holder is employed in contradiction with the provisions of law or illegally,
- d) If it is detected that the card holder does not work continuously for at least a year,
- e) If it is detected that the information and the documents provided by the card holder through the application process and transition period are false and misleading,
- f) If the requested information and the documents in transition period are not provided or if it is determined that the foreigner is no longer eligible to be a card holder pursuant to the follow up report,
- g) If it is reported by the Ministry of Interior that the card holder is included among the foreigners who are not allowed to enter Turkey, not qualified for a visa or included to the decision list to be deported,
- h) If it is notified by the public organizations and institutions that there is a concern about the card holder with regards to the public order, public security and public health.

GURULKAN ÇAKIR AVUKATLIK ORTAKLIĞI

Polat İş Merkezi, Offices 28-29
Mecidiyeköy 34387
Istanbul, TURKEY

T +90 212 215 30 00
M info@gurulkan.com
W www.gurulkan.com



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