

13 June 2017

Members of the Committee on Civil Liberties, Justice and Home Affairs
European Parliament
60 rue Wiertz
1047 Brussels

Employer Priorities on the Revision of EU Blue Card Directive

Dear Members of the Committee on Civil Liberties, Justice and Home Affairs,

The Council for Global Immigration (CFG I) and Trans-Atlantic Business Council (TABC) are like-minded trade associations that uniquely understand how access to skills and talent helps employers compete.¹ We urge the European Parliament and the EU Council of Ministers to sustain momentum toward an ambitious revision of the EU Blue Card Directive. An enhanced EU Blue Card scheme has potential to better attract talent and mitigate skills shortages. It can spur growth for employers and economies while generating new opportunities for EU workers. The ability of the EU Blue Card scheme to achieve this potential depends on the revision.

The European Commission's proposal for a revised Directive introduces several improvements to the EU Blue Card scheme and provides a solid basis for reform. As a guiding principle, the revision should establish a more efficient and harmonized system for attracting and retaining highly skilled migrants. Specifically, the following elements should be addressed:

- **Parallel National Schemes:** In principle, we support the European Commission's proposal to curtail parallel national schemes. They offer employers more options to manage their talent needs, but can also create confusion for employers. That said, we can understand the desire for Member States to maintain parallel schemes. A Directive that permits parallel national schemes should also ensure that EU Blue Card scheme is uniformly implemented across Member States and promote intra-EU mobility (more below). By providing clarity and consistency, reducing red tape, and decreasing compliance costs for employers, a

¹About CFG I

Founded in 1972, CFG I is a U.S.-based employer association that advances employment-based migration of highly skilled professionals around the world. Our membership consists of over 240 leading multinational corporations, universities, and research institutions, including many with operations in the EU. We are a strategic affiliate of the Society for Human Resource Management (SHRM), the world's largest HR membership organization devoted to HR management with more than 285,000 members in over 165 countries. Together, CFG I and SHRM comprise a global network of employers with practical knowledge of how migration policies impact business. Learn more at CFG I.org.

About TABC

The Trans-Atlantic Business Council (TABC) is a cross-sectorial business association representing companies headquartered in the EU and U.S. which serves as the main business interlocutor to both the U.S. government and the EU institutions on issues impacting the transatlantic economy. TABC provides the only platform for European and American companies to work jointly to improve transatlantic collaboration in areas such as ICT, skills, energy, innovation, and intellectual property through the development of and advocacy for constructive recommendations and transatlantic solutions. Learn more at transatlanticbusiness.org.

harmonized EU Blue Card scheme would enjoy a competitive advantage over parallel schemes.

- **Intra-EU Mobility:** The Commission’s proposal to facilitate mobility within the EU would significantly enhance the EU Blue Card scheme. Employers benefit from intra-EU mobility because they can approach the EU as a unified labor market and more efficiently manage compliance. It also bolsters the EU Blue Card scheme’s competitive advantage over parallel national schemes.
- **Recognition of Qualifications:** When hiring, employers rigorously evaluate a pool of candidates and are best equipped to determine who is most qualified for a position. The revised EU Blue Card scheme should defer to employer’s assessment of a candidate’s education and professional experience. Accordingly, we endorse the Commission’s proposal to recognize higher education qualifications or professional experience as admission criteria. Granting equal weight to experience gives employers greater flexibility to hire the most qualified candidate. The revised Directive should also institute a more harmonized framework for validating and recognizing qualifications and ensure more transparent national procedures.
- **Salary Thresholds:** The Commission’s proposal to lower salary thresholds is a step in the right direction, particularly for workers in shortage occupations and recent graduates. While we understand the need to prevent wage undercutting, thresholds should not impose a barrier to entry. Mechanisms should exist for employers to demonstrate that a below-threshold salary is calibrated to the market rate for the position. Moreover, a salary above the threshold should permit an EU Blue Card application to proceed with minimal paperwork.
- **Application Procedures and Trusted Employers:** We applaud the Commission’s proposal to reduce maximum processing times and introduce a “trusted employer” scheme, which can create efficiencies for compliant employers and conserve resources for other Member State priorities. The revised Directive should also harmonize application procedures and validity periods. This would allow employers to more efficiently manage migration compliance, rather than struggling to navigate confusing variations in national-level frameworks.

The revision of the Directive presents an opportunity to better attract global talent and boost the competitiveness of the EU market. A more harmonized and efficient EU Blue Card scheme that fosters intra-EU mobility would be a tremendous benefit for employers. We encourage the Parliament and the Council to move forward with an ambitious revision.

Sincerely,



Lynn Shotwell
Executive Director
Council for Global Immigration



Tim Bennett
Director General/CEO
Trans-Atlantic Business Council