

NPR Marketplace

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“Blue Card: Don’t Leave Home Without It?”

TEXT OF STORY

KAI RYSSDAL: Maybe you knew this already, but the green card that U.S. permanent residents get? It's not really green. It's more pinkish, actually. But color aside today the European Union proposed its own version. With a couple of twists. First of all, theirs will be called a Blue Card...after the blue flag of the E.U.. Also it's not about permanent residency. It's about the next generation of computer programmers and engineers. And that has American businesses worried. Marketplace's Dan Grech reports.

DAN GRECH: The European Union faces a shortage of 20 million skilled workers over the next 20 years. So it's streamlining its immigration process. Under the proposal, foreign workers would fill out a single application for any of E.U.'s 27 member nations. Workers will get their blue card in one to three months.

Tamar Jacoby is an immigration expert at the Manhattan Institute.

TAMAR JACOBY: A European blue card is bad news for the U.S. because it means that Europe is going to start to do a better job at competing for these skilled workers.

Blue cards would require employers to offer a one-year contract, a salary three times minimum wage and health coverage. Countries would set their own blue card quotas.

Robert Hoffman is co-chair of the Compete America coalition.

ROBERT HOFFMAN: The E.U.'s blue card really should be a red flag to the U.S. Congress. It's time to wake up and change our policies in recognition of this growing competition for talent.

The U.S. faces a massive backlog in H1-B visas for skilled workers. This year's quota of 65,000 was surpassed on its first day. Stuart Anderson is with **National Foundation for American Policy**.

STUART ANDERSON: Currently, if an international student graduates from a U.S. university, they may have to wait a year before they could work in the United States. That's just too long for people who are ambitious and have many other options.

Critics of U.S. immigration policy say the blue card may have a silver lining. It may spur Congress to action.

I'm Dan Grech for Marketplace.

You can hear the story, titled "Blue Card: Don't leave home without it?", on the Marketplace website, at < http://marketplace.publicradio.org/display/web/2007/10/23/blue_card/ .