

Long-term D visa will expedite entry into the country for students and researchers who have been issued with residence permits

Amendments to the Aliens Act will extend the use of a long-term visa known as a D visa. The amendments will contribute to promoting education-based and labour-based immigration and streamline entry procedures. The President of the Republic approved the amendments on 20 December.

In future, D visas can be issued to students, researchers, persons in managerial positions in companies and family members of the above-mentioned individuals. The original idea of the legislative proposal drafted by the Ministry of the Interior was that a D visa could also be issued to employees of certified employers. However, the regulation concerning this group has since been compiled in a proposal for the certification of employers prepared by the Ministry of Economic Affairs and Employment, which is scheduled to enter into force in February.

The Finnish Immigration Service will issue a D visa in connection with a favourable decision on a residence permit. This will allow people who have been granted a residence permit to travel to Finland sooner than at present, as they will not need to wait for a residence permit card abroad; instead, a visa sticker attached to the travel document at a Finnish mission will prove their right of entry. This will make it easier for them to start their studies, research and work on time, facilitate the recruitment of experts and enhance Finland's attractiveness.

A D visa could also be issued for entry to a residence permit holder residing abroad whose residence permit card has been lost, stolen or expired.

The approved proposal also includes an amendment to the Aliens Act which will enable the Ministry for Foreign Affairs to grant a temporary residence permit to young people from diplomatic families arriving in Finland until they reach the age of 20. This is in line with the international practice. To date, after turning 18, young people from diplomatic families have had to apply to the Finnish Immigration Service for extension of their residence permit.

Amendments will become applicable gradually

A D visa was introduced in Finland in June this year. At that time, legislative amendments prepared by the Ministry for Foreign Affairs entered into force. Under these amendments, a D visa can be issued to specialists, high-growth startup entrepreneurs and their family members.

The Government Programme of Prime Minister **Sanna Marin's** Government aims to increase education-based and work-based immigration. The Government Programme pays particular attention to improving and speeding up permit procedures. The amendments now approved support these objectives.

The amendments will enter into force on 22 December. Some of the changes to information systems that are needed for the use of a D visa will not, however, be completed until spring 2023. This is why the application of the amendments will begin in two stages: A D visa may be issued to persons in managerial positions in companies and their family members as of the entry into force of the Act. They can also apply for a residence permit on the fast track, which enables them to receive a decision on a residence permit application submitted electronically within 14 days.* Starting from 1 April, a D visa may be issued to students, researchers and their family members as well as to persons who have lost their residence permit card.

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