

Global BRIEF Immigration Alert | January, 13 2012



## Global BRIEF



### FINLAND | Issuance of New Biometric Residence Permit Cards

As of January 1st, 2012, Finland is issuing new, biometric identity cards (eAT) in lieu of the traditional Finnish residence permits (affixed as a sticker in a foreign national's passport).

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#### Requirement for eAT Card

Pursuant to Council Regulations (EC) nos. 1030/2002 and 380/2008 all 27 European Union (EU)-member states are required to introduce the electronic residence permit ("e-residence permit"). This is designed to standardize all EU-member country residence permits by providing the permit holder's biographic and biometric information and reducing incidence of fraudulent documentation.

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#### What's Changed?

As of January 1<sup>st</sup>, the new eAT cards are being issued for long-term residence authorizations (i.e., stays exceeding 90 cumulative days in a 180-day period). Qualified dependents are also issued an eAT card.

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#### What are eAT Cards?

The new eAT cards are an electronic, credit-card format that will serve as a foreign national's "e-residence permit". Persons with a valid residence permit sticker affixed to their passports will not need to change the sticker for a card. A residence permit card must nevertheless be applied for without delay as soon as the passport expires.

All residence permit applicants and asylum seekers who are older than 6 years will have prints taken of all their fingers to be recorded in the Register of Aliens. Fingerprints will be taken again when applying for permit extensions and permanent

residence permits, and a new card will be issued each time.

Biometric identifiers stored on the residence permit card chip include a facial image and two fingerprints. The residence permit card is not an official identity card.

The validity of the eAT is determined according to the category of residence authorization. In cases of permanent residence, a new card will be issued every 10 years.

Nevertheless, the card remains a fully valid proof of the right of residence until its date of expiry.

A sample Finnish eAT Card can be viewed below:



### Action Items For Employers

Because of technical delays in the introduction of fingerprint scanning, fingerprints will be stored on card chips gradually. If technical problems prevent the scanning of a residence permit applicant's fingerprints, the fact will be recorded on the residence permit card chip. Obtaining appointments for registration and receiving cards may require some flexibility and patience over the next couple of months.

**Applications for a first residence permit:** The amendments to the Aliens Act mean that, from the beginning of 2012, residence permit applications must be submitted in person. An employer or a family member resident in Finland (sponsor) will no longer be able to submit an application on behalf of the applicant.

**Residence Permit Renewals:** After January 1, 2012, applications for residence permit extensions and permanent residence permits can only be submitted at a Finnish police station. Similarly, if a residence permit card is lost or stolen, a new card can be applied for at the Finnish police. The police will also make decisions on all permit extensions and re-applications.

Because of the current, lengthy processing times for eAT cards, Pro-Link GLOBAL is

advising clients to initiate renewal of an assignee's and family's residence permit renewal applications three months prior to expiration of status.

This transition period will expire on May 20<sup>th</sup> 2012.

This news alert was provided in coordination with our Finnish KGNM- Finland Relocation Services Oy/FRS.

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**Caveat Lector | Warning to Reader**

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