

France

Permanent immigration to France has been falling since 2004, when a long trend towards higher immigration reversed. Between 2006 and 2007, this trend continued, with new permits issued falling from 135 000 to 128 900, largely because of a decline in family reunification (-12 300) which was not compensated by a rise in labour migration (+ 6 800).

The decline in family reunion (100 400 to 88 000) is largely due to fewer arrivals of spouses of French citizens (- 7 590) and a drop in those coming through “personal and family ties” (-3 883), although such permits in 2006 were inflated by the regularisation of parents of children who attended school in France. A new law on immigration, integration and asylum came into force on 20 November 2007, imposing stricter conditions for family reunification. Family reunification is still the main category (68.4%) of permanent residence permits issued in France, followed by employment (13.7%) and refugees (6.8%).

Immigration for employment has been growing increasingly fast since 2004. It rose 19% annually between 2004 and 2006 and 62% in 2007, with 17 640 permits issued for employment. The two most recent changes to immigration law in France (24 July 2006 and 20 November 2007) opened new opportunities for labour migration to France for occupations on the shortage lists.

Favourable policies for foreign students helped increase the number of students arriving from outside the EU more than 3-fold between 1995 and 2004, and this increase continued through 2006 before declining in 2007, from 47 300 to 43 100.

Asylum applications fell between 2005 and 2006 by 38.3% and again in 2007 by 9.4%, but rose sharply from 29 400 in 2007 to 42 600 in 2008. The acceptance rate also rose from 30% in 2007 to 36% in 2008.

Most immigrants come from Africa, followed by Asia. Overall, one in three new immigrants arrives from Algeria or Morocco, followed by Tunisia and Turkey (6% each).

The number of people receiving French citizenship has been falling since 2005, and there were 131 700 naturalisations in 2007. To speed up the process, the Ministry of Immigration, Integration, National Identity and Solidarity Development introduced a new evaluation procedure, transferring processing to the Departments, following a pilot phase in 20 Departments starting in January 2010.

France passed a decree creating the long-term residence visa on 27 April 2009, with issuance starting in September 2009. This simplification, contained in the 20 November 2007 law, replaces the previous requirement of an initial permit of stay to be issued following the entry visa. The long-term visa is now sufficient for stay, and permits are only necessary when the initial visa expires.

A new 10-year long-term permit of stay was introduced on 15 September 2009, with a residence card for “exceptional economic contribution”. This card will be granted to foreigners who, individually or through an enterprise of which they own at least 30%, create or protect at least 50 jobs, or invest at least EUR 10 million, in France. No other permit of stay has such a long duration.

For more information:

<http://www.immigration.gouv.fr>

<http://www.anaem.fr>

<http://www.ofpra.fr>