

Council Directive 2003/109/EC of 25 November 2003 concerning  
the status of third-country nationals who are long-term residents

COUNCIL DIRECTIVE 2003/109/EC

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concerning the status of third-country nationals who are long-term residents

THE COUNCIL OF THE EUROPEAN UNION,

Having regard to the Treaty establishing the European Community, and in particular Article 63(3) and (4) thereof,

Having regard to the proposal from the Commission<sup>(1)</sup>,

Having regard to the opinion of the European Parliament<sup>(2)</sup>,

Having regard to the opinion of the European Economic and Social Committee<sup>(3)</sup>,

Having regard to the opinion of the Committee of the Regions<sup>(4)</sup>,

Whereas:

- (1) With a view to the progressive establishment of an area of freedom, security and justice, the Treaty establishing the European Community provides both for the adoption of measures aimed at ensuring the free movement of persons, in conjunction with flanking measures relating to external border controls, asylum and immigration, and for the adoption of measures relating to asylum, immigration and safeguarding the rights of third-country nationals.
- (2) The European Council, at its special meeting in Tampere on 15 and 16 October 1999, stated that the legal status of third-country nationals should be approximated to that of Member States' nationals and that a person who has resided legally in a Member State for a period of time to be determined and who holds a long-term residence permit should be granted in that Member State a set of uniform rights which are as near as possible to those enjoyed by citizens of the European Union.
- (3) This Directive respects the fundamental rights and observes the principles recognised in particular by the European Convention for the Protection of Human Rights and Fundamental Freedoms and by the Charter of Fundamental Rights of the European Union.
- (4) The integration of third-country nationals who are long-term residents in the Member States is a key element in promoting economic and social cohesion, a fundamental objective of the Community stated in the Treaty.
- (5) Member States should give effect to the provisions of this Directive without discrimination on the basis of sex, race, colour, ethnic or social origin, genetic characteristics, language, religion or beliefs, political or other opinions, membership of a national minority, fortune, birth, disabilities, age or sexual orientation.

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- (6) The main criterion for acquiring the status of long-term resident should be the duration of residence in the territory of a Member State. Residence should be both legal and continuous in order to show that the person has put down roots in the country. Provision should be made for a degree of flexibility so that account can be taken of circumstances in which a person might have to leave the territory on a temporary basis.
- (7) To acquire long-term resident status, third-country nationals should prove that they have adequate resources and sickness insurance, to avoid becoming a burden for the Member State. Member States, when making an assessment of the possession of stable and regular resources may take into account factors such as contributions to the pension system and fulfilment of tax obligations.
- (8) Moreover, third-country nationals who wish to acquire and maintain long-term resident status should not constitute a threat to public policy or public security. The notion of public policy may cover a conviction for committing a serious crime.
- (9) Economic considerations should not be a ground for refusing to grant long-term resident status and shall not be considered as interfering with the relevant conditions.
- (10) A set of rules governing the procedures for the examination of application for long-term resident status should be laid down. Those procedures should be effective and manageable, taking account of the normal workload of the Member States' administrations, as well as being transparent and fair, in order to offer appropriate legal certainty to those concerned. They should not constitute a means of hindering the exercise of the right of residence.
- (11) The acquisition of long-term resident status should be certified by residence permits enabling those concerned to prove their legal status easily and immediately. Such residence permits should also satisfy high-level technical standards, notably as regards protection against falsification and counterfeiting, in order to avoid abuses in the Member State in which the status is acquired and in Member States in which the right of residence is exercised.
- (12) In order to constitute a genuine instrument for the integration of long-term residents into society in which they live, long-term residents should enjoy equality of treatment with citizens of the Member State in a wide range of economic and social matters, under the relevant conditions defined by this Directive.
- (13) With regard to social assistance, the possibility of limiting the benefits for long-term residents to core benefits is to be understood in the sense that this notion covers at least minimum income support, assistance in case of illness, pregnancy, parental assistance and long-term care. The modalities for granting such benefits should be determined by national law.
- (14) The Member States should remain subject to the obligation to afford access for minors to the educational system under conditions similar to those laid down for their nationals.
- (15) The notion of study grants in the field of vocational training does not cover measures which are financed under social assistance schemes. Moreover, access to study grants may be dependent on the fact that the person who applies for such grants fulfils on his/

her own the conditions for acquiring long-term resident status. As regards the issuing of study grants, Member States may take into account the fact that Union citizens may benefit from this same advantage in the country of origin.

- (16) Long-term residents should enjoy reinforced protection against expulsion. This protection is based on the criteria determined by the decisions of the European Court of Human Rights. In order to ensure protection against expulsion Member States should provide for effective legal redress.
- (17) Harmonisation of the terms for acquisition of long-term resident status promotes mutual confidence between Member States. Certain Member States issue permits with a permanent or unlimited validity on conditions that are more favourable than those provided for by this Directive. The possibility of applying more favourable national provisions is not excluded by the Treaty. However, for the purposes of this Directive, it should be provided that permits issued on more favourable terms do not confer the right to reside in other Member States.
- (18) Establishing the conditions subject to which the right to reside in another Member State may be acquired by third-country nationals who are long-term residents should contribute to the effective attainment of an internal market as an area in which the free movement of persons is ensured. It could also constitute a major factor of mobility, notably on the Union's employment market.
- (19) Provision should be made that the right of residence in another Member State may be exercised in order to work in an employed or self-employed capacity, to study or even to settle without exercising any form of economic activity.
- (20) Family members should also be able to settle in another Member State with a long-term resident in order to preserve family unity and to avoid hindering the exercise of the long-term resident's right of residence. With regard to the family members who may be authorised to accompany or to join the long-term residents, Member States should pay special attention to the situation of disabled adult children and of first-degree relatives in the direct ascending line who are dependent on them.
- (21) The Member State in which a long-term resident intends to exercise his/her right of residence should be able to check that the person concerned meets the conditions for residing in its territory. It should also be able to check that the person concerned does not constitute a threat to public policy, public security or public health.
- (22) To avoid rendering the right of residence nugatory, long-term residents should enjoy in the second Member State the same treatment, under the conditions defined by this Directive, they enjoy in the Member State in which they acquired the status. The granting of benefits under social assistance is without prejudice to the possibility for the Member States to withdraw the residence permit if the person concerned no longer fulfils the requirements set by this Directive.
- (23) Third-country nationals should be granted the possibility of acquiring long-term resident status in the Member State where they have moved and have decided to settle under comparable conditions to those required for its acquisition in the first Member State.

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- (24) Since the objectives of the proposed action, namely the determination of terms for granting and withdrawing long-term resident status and the rights pertaining thereto and terms for the exercise of rights of residence by long-term residents in other Member States, cannot be sufficiently achieved by the Member States and can therefore, by reason of the scale and effects of the action, be better achieved by the Community, the Community may adopt measures, in accordance with the principle of subsidiarity as set out in Article 5 of the Treaty. In accordance with the principle of proportionality, as set out in that Article, this Directive does not go beyond what is necessary to achieve those objectives.
- (25) In accordance with Articles 1 and 2 of the Protocol on the position of the United Kingdom and Ireland, annexed to the Treaty on European Union and to the Treaty establishing the European Community, and without prejudice to Article 4 of the said Protocol, these Member States are not participating in the adoption of this Directive and are not bound by or subject to its application.
- (26) In accordance with Articles 1 and 2 of the Protocol on the position of Denmark, annexed to the Treaty on European Union and the Treaty establishing the European Community, Denmark does not take part in the adoption of this Directive, and is not bound by it or subject to its application,

HAS ADOPTED THIS DIRECTIVE:

- (1) OJ C 240 E, 28.8.2001, p. 79.
- (2) OJ C 284 E, 21.11.2002, p. 102.
- (3) OJ C 36, 8.2.2002, p. 59.
- (4) OJ C 19, 22.1.2002, p. 18.