



## **France allows family members to work during an expatriate assignment**

### **- Permits Foundation wants more countries to do the same**

France is the latest country to allow family members of skilled international staff to work during an assignment. The changes, which apply to intra-group transfers and a new category for 'competences and talents', were part of the 2006 Immigration and Integration Law, implemented in May 2007.

The change is applauded by Permits Foundation, which promotes open work permits for the spouses and partners of international staff worldwide.

"Concerns about dual careers and partner employment are the main reason why staff turn down an international assignment," says Gill Gordon, chairman of the board of Permits Foundation and HR director with Schlumberger.

Being uncertain of a work permit is part of the problem. Permits Foundation is tackling this successfully worldwide.

"This is a global issue affecting men and women of all nationalities," continues Gill Gordon. "Our strategy is to raise awareness of best practice and approach countries that are important to international business. Governments increasingly recognize that allowing partners to work helps to create an attractive climate for international trade and investment and highly skilled, mobile employees."

### **USA**

In 2001, the foundation supported a US employers' coalition, led by the American Council on International Personnel and the US Chamber of Commerce, which successfully lobbied for work authorization for spouses of L and E visa holders. While this was a great step forward, other countries have continued to move ahead. In the USA, employment authorization applies only to married spouses and takes up to three months to get. The inability of H-1B spouses to work is a growing concern to many US employers. A number of other countries allow spouses, partners or family members to work as soon as their temporary resident visa is issued.

### **Europe**

Within Europe, the UK, The Netherlands, Belgium, Denmark, Finland, France, Germany and Sweden allow family members of non-EU citizens to work, with variations in criteria and procedure. The foundation has also advocated Europe-wide change via the European Commission, which will publish proposals on highly skilled migrants in September 2007.

### **Other countries**

In 2006, Hong Kong introduced regulations allowing spouses of professional staff and capital investors to work without prior approval of the Immigration Department. Other countries with favorable arrangements include Argentina, Australia, Canada and New Zealand.

With the growing importance of Asia and Russia as business destinations, Permits Foundation now wants to promote change in China, India, Indonesia, Japan, Malaysia and Russia.

### **Support**

More than 40 international companies and organisations support the foundation, including Schlumberger, Shell, PwC, Unilever and GlaxoSmithKline.

Peter Hawthorne, Global Mobility Director of GSK explains. "Being a sponsor shows staff that we care about an issue that affects their career and family life. It supports our policies of social responsibility, equal opportunity and diversity."

The foundation advocates change to governments directly and through local employer networks.

**More information:** [www.permitsfoundation.com](http://www.permitsfoundation.com).

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