SUR LA BONNE VOIE - PRACTICAL GUIDE

Your residence permit - your real options.

What exists, what works, and what nobody tells you.

There are many ways to obtain a residence permit in France. This guide covers the most important and most commonly used ones - but the list is not exhaustive. Laws change, new pathways appear, and some depend on your nationality or specific situation. We update this guide regularly.

LIVING DOCUMENT

This guide will be expanded over time with new pathways and updates. If you know of an option not listed here - contact us.

STRATEGIC ADVICE - READ THIS FIRST

If you are not yet in France and your life is not in direct danger - do not start with asylum. Asylum is a protection for those who cannot return to their country. If you have other options - work visa, student visa, residence permit from your home country - explore those first. The asylum process is long, exhausting, and the chances of success are limited. Use it if it is your only option. Not as a default starting point.

FROM ABROAD

The work visa

If you are still in your home country, a French employer can hire you and apply for a work visa on your behalf. Both temporary and long-stay visas exist. This is the most direct and cleanest route - but it requires finding an employer willing to go through the process.

WHAT NOBODY TELLS YOU

This route is underused because immigrants do not know it exists before arriving. If you have contacts in France, in-demand skills, or already speak French - **explore this option before getting on the plane.**

FROM ABROAD OR ALREADY IN FRANCE

The student visa

If you are accepted into a French higher education institution, you can apply for a student visa. It is a legal, stable route that opens doors - including the ability to work part-time during your studies and apply for a professional residence permit afterward.

WHAT NOBODY TELLS YOU

The student visa is often underestimated as an integration strategy. **Studying in France gives you legal status, time to learn the language, a network, and a recognized French qualification.** If you have the means and the academic profile - it is one of the strongest pathways available.

DEPENDING ON YOUR NATIONALITY

Bilateral agreements and specific programs

Some countries have specific agreements with France that open particular pathways. For example, nationals of certain countries can obtain a one-year work authorization directly from their home country - without going through standard routes. These programs vary by nationality and change regularly.

WHAT NOBODY TELLS YOU

Before doing anything, **check whether a bilateral agreement exists between France and your home country.** The French embassy in your country or the Ministry of Foreign Affairs website can inform you. Some doors are open only for you - and no one will show them to you if you do not look.

FROM FRANCE

Family reunification

If you are the partner of a French citizen or a legal resident, you can apply for a residence permit through the family route. It is one of the most widely used pathways - and one of the most legally regulated.

WATCH OUT FOR RECENT CHANGES

The conditions for family reunification change regularly. **Always verify the current requirements on service-public.fr** before starting the process.

NEW - 2024 LAW

Shortage occupations

The 2024 immigration law created a new route: if you work in a sector with a severe labour shortage, you can apply for a residence permit even without legal papers. The government publishes an **official list of shortage occupations** - hospitality, construction, healthcare, transport, agriculture, and many more.

-> Have been present in France for at least 3 years

-> Work in an occupation on the official list

-> The employer must prove they found no French or European candidate

-> The employer must follow a specific administrative process

WHAT NOBODY TELLS YOU

This route is still little known - even among associations. **If you have been working in hospitality, construction, or personal care for more than 3 years, you may be eligible right now.** Check the shortage occupations list on the Ministry of Labour website and act without delay.

OUR CURRENT PATH

The exceptional residence permit

This is the route for exceptional profiles - those who do not fit any standard category but whose presence in France represents an obvious value. There are no rigid criteria: the prefecture evaluates on a case-by-case basis.

-> Strong professional profile - qualifications, rare skills, experience

-> Demonstrated integration - language, local network, community involvement

-> Support letters - elected officials, employers, associations, community members

-> Evidence of active effort - training, volunteering, visible contribution

-> Clean criminal record and irreproachable conduct

CONCRETE EXAMPLE - OUR OWN FILE

Our file includes: **a dentist in a department with a severe shortage of dentists, a multilingual engineer, a B2+ level of French obtained in under two years as self-taught learners, support letters from the mayor of Aubenas, the deputy of Ardeche, and more than 30 members of the local community, as well as job offers.** Nothing guarantees approval - but we have made rejection very hard to justify.

WHAT NOBODY TELLS YOU

Start building your exceptional file from the very first day you arrive in France - not when you need it. Your daily life in France is your file.

The most important lesson.

Whatever route you choose: **the time you spend waiting must be active time.** Learning French. Building a network. Documenting everything. The prefecture does not see a file - it sees a person. Make sure it sees someone it would find very hard to send back.

LAWS CHANGE - ALWAYS CHECK

This guide reflects our experience and knowledge of the system in 2026. **Always verify current requirements at service-public.fr.** And if you have a question or experience to share - contact us.

Sur la bonne voie - Aubenas, Ardeche - 2026

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