

New "Green Card" Policy

China will update its "green card" policy this year to make life easier for foreign residents, a source at the Ministry of Public Security confirmed on February 6, 2017.

With improved security features, the permanent resident permit is expected to guarantee more rights equal to those of Chinese citizens, which will affect everything from buying railway tickets to checking in at hotels, and purchasing property.

Also on February 6, a meeting of the Central Leading Group for Comprehensively Deepening Reforms called for further efforts to make sure "green card" holders could enjoy all rights related to residency.

"The current green card is designed for entry and exit at the borders," said a Ministry of Public Security division chief who requested anonymity. "However, the new card will be more commonly accepted in daily life. A foreign permanent resident could, for example, apply for a driver's license using only his or her green card."

China began issuing permanent resident permits in 2004. The Chinese "green card" is among the most difficult to obtain in the world due to the high requirements involved. From 2004 to 2013, only 7,356 foreigners were granted the card.

However, China has been easing its residence and entry policies for foreigners since September 2015. Last year, 1,576 foreigners became permanent Chinese residents, an increase of 163 percent over 2015, according to the ministry.