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RIGHT TO WORK IN FRANCE – GUIDE FOR REFUGEES



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| RIGHT TO WORK IN FRANCE – GUIDE FOR REFUGEES

Introduction

This guide explains who can work in France, which documents are required, how to confirm your rights, and what steps you should take before starting a job. It is designed for refugees, people with subsidiary protection, beneficiaries of temporary protection, asylum seekers and anyone who has recently arrived in France and needs reliable information about working legally and safely.

France offers several forms of protection for people fleeing conflict, persecution or humanitarian crisis. Each protection status comes with different rights and documents, and these differences affect when and how you can enter the labour market. Some people have immediate access to work, while others may face a short waiting period before they are authorised.

Your right to work will depend on the exact documents you hold, such as your residence permit, temporary protection certificate, asylum application document or work authorisation. Employers in France must verify these documents before hiring you, so it is important to understand what each document means and how it relates to your work rights.

By knowing your status and keeping your documents up to date, you can avoid delays, prepare for job applications more confidently and ensure that you begin employment legally. This guide provides straightforward explanations to help you understand the rules, your responsibilities and the steps you should follow when looking for work in France.

01

Understanding the different types of legal protection in France



| Understanding the different types of legal protection in France

To work legally in France, you must first understand which protection status you hold. Each status has different rights, documents and timelines.

Refugee status (statut de réfugié)

If the French authorities recognise you as a refugee, you have immediate and full access to the labour market. Your **Titre de Séjour (residence permit)** confirms your refugee status and includes the right to work. No additional authorisation is required.

Information from OFPRA: <https://www.ofpra.gouv.fr/>

Subsidiary protection (protection subsidiaire)

If you do not qualify for full refugee status but still need international protection, you may receive subsidiary protection. This also gives you the right to live and work in France without a separate work permit. Your residence permit confirms this right.

More information: <https://www.service-public.fr/particuliers/vosdroits/F21223>

Temporary protection (protection temporaire – including many people from Ukraine)

Temporary protection grants immediate permission to work. You will receive a **provisional residence permit** (autorisation provisoire de séjour) or a **temporary protection certificate**, which confirms your right to work and access services.

Details on temporary protection: <https://www.interieur.gouv.fr/>

Asylum seekers (demandeurs d'asile)

Asylum seekers receive an **asylum application certificate (attestation de demande d'asile)**.

- During the first **six months**, you cannot work.
- After six months, if no decision has been made, you can apply for a **work authorisation (autorisation de travail)**.

Once the authorisation is granted, you may work legally.

Information about asylum procedures: <https://www.service-public.fr/particuliers/vosdroits/N110>

| The documents needed to work legally

The documents you must show to an employer depend on the type of protection or immigration status you hold. Each category of protection has its own documents, and these determine whether you are authorised to work.

Recognised refugees and people with subsidiary protection

If you have refugee status or subsidiary protection, you must show your **Titre de Séjour**. This residence permit confirms your identity, your protection status and your right to work in France. Employers do not need to apply for any extra authorisation on your behalf, and you are allowed to work in any sector for which you are qualified.

Temporary protection holders

If you benefit from temporary protection, you will receive a **temporary protection certificate** or a **provisional residence**

permit (autorisation provisoire de séjour). These documents state that you are authorised to work. Employers simply need to check that your document is valid; no work permit request is required.

Asylum seekers after six months

Asylum seekers may work only after six months, and only if they receive formal authorisation. You must present both:

- your **asylum application certificate (attestation de demande d’asile)**
- your **work authorisation (autorisation de travail)** issued by the authorities

Without the work authorisation, you cannot legally work, even if you hold the asylum certificate.

General identification requirements

All workers in France must also provide proof of identity. You may be asked to show:

- your passport or recognised travel document
- your national identity card (if accepted)
- your residence permit or temporary protection document
-

Employers are required by law to confirm your identity and verify that you are authorised to work before hiring you.

Official guidance on residence permits: <https://www.service-public.fr/particuliers/vosdroits/N110>

| How to check if you have the right to work

If you are unsure whether you currently have permission to work in France, there are several simple ways to check your status. Your right to work depends on the type of protection you hold and the documents issued to you.

Check your residence permit (Titre de Séjour)

If you have refugee status, subsidiary protection or temporary protection, your residence permit includes your work authorisation automatically. Look for wording such as “*autorise son titulaire à travailler*” or similar. If this information appears on your permit, you can work without any additional permissions.

Check your asylum documents

If you are an asylum seeker, your situation depends on the stage of your application:

- With the **attestation de demande d’asile**, you cannot work during the first six months.
- After six months, if no decision has been made, you may apply for an **autorisation de travail**. Once the authorisation is granted, you are allowed to work legally.

Further information on asylum documents and work rights: <https://www.service-public.fr/particuliers/vosdroits/F2721>

Check the validity of your documents

Your right to work remains valid only if your documents are in date. An expired residence permit, temporary protection certificate or work authorisation may temporarily stop you from working. Check expiry dates regularly and begin renewals early to avoid interruptions.

Contact your local prefecture

If you remain unsure about your status or the meaning of your documents, you can visit or contact your **préfecture** or **sous-préfecture**. These offices manage residence permits, temporary protection documents and work authorisations. Staff can confirm whether you currently have the right to work and what you may need to renew.

List of prefectures across France: <https://www.prefectures-regions.gouv.fr/>

| What employers in France must do

Employers in France must verify that every worker has the legal right to work before offering a job. Their responsibilities vary depending on whether you are a refugee, have subsidiary or temporary protection, or are an asylum seeker with work authorisation. Understanding these responsibilities can help prevent misunderstandings during recruitment.

If you have refugee status or subsidiary protection

Employers must check your **Titre de Séjour**, which confirms both your protection status and your right to work. They are **not** required to apply for a work permit on your behalf. Once your identity and residence permit are verified, they can proceed with the standard hiring process.

If you have temporary protection

Your **temporary protection certificate** or **provisional residence permit** already authorises you to work. Employers simply need to confirm that the document is valid and in date.

No additional immigration procedures or work permit requests are required.

If you are an asylum seeker with a work authorisation

If you have received your **autorisation de travail**, the employer must check:

- your asylum application certificate (attestation), and
- your valid work authorisation

As long as both documents are in order, you can be hired. The employer does not need to make a further application to the authorities.

If you are still within the first six months of the asylum process

With only the **attestation de demande d'asile**, you are not permitted to work. Employers cannot legally hire you until you obtain formal work authorisation after six months.

General obligations for all employers

All employers in France must follow standard employment procedures for every worker, including those under protection.

This includes:

- issuing a written work contract
- registering you with the French social security system
- ensuring your salary meets legal minimum standards
- respecting rules on working hours and conditions
- providing a safe working environment

Further guidance on labour rights and employer duties: <https://travail-emploi.gouv.fr/>

If an employer is unsure about the rules

You can direct them to the official government pages of the Ministry of the Interior or Ministry of Labour. Employers can also contact their local **prefecture** for confirmation on work rights for protected persons.

02

Step-by-step guide to start working in France



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These steps explain what you should do before applying for work and what your employer must do before you begin your job. Following each step will help you avoid delays and ensure that your employment is fully legal.

Step 1 – Confirm your status

Check whether you are a refugee, have subsidiary protection, have temporary protection or are an asylum seeker. Only asylum seekers with a **work authorisation** issued after six months are allowed to work.

Step 2 – Prepare your documents

Gather your residence permit (Titre de Séjour), temporary protection document, asylum application certificate and work authorisation if needed. Also prepare your passport or travel document for identification.

Step 3 – Check that your documents are valid

Your documents must be in date. If your residence permit, temporary protection certificate or work authorisation is close to expiring, begin renewal early.

Step 4 – Ensure you have a social security number

All workers in France need a **numéro de sécurité sociale**. Your employer can help you apply, or you can request one through your local CPAM office.

Information: <https://www.ameli.fr/>

Step 5 – Keep copies of your documents

Employers often need copies of your residence permit, passport and social security number. Keep digital and paper copies ready.

Step 6 – Show your documents to the employer

Your employer must verify your identity and your right to work. People with refugee status, subsidiary protection, temporary protection and asylum seekers with a valid work authorisation do not need an additional permit.

Step 7 – Employer completes registration

Before you start work, your employer must declare you're hiring and register you with social security. This step is their responsibility.

Step 8 – Start working legally

Once your employer completes the required steps, you can begin work and will be covered by French labour law and social protections.

| Keeping your status valid

Your right to work in France depends on your documents staying valid at all times. If your residence permit, temporary protection certificate or work authorisation expires, your work rights may pause until renewal is completed. To avoid interruptions, check your documents regularly and take action early.

Check expiry dates regularly

Look at the expiry date on your **Titre de Séjour**, temporary protection document or work authorisation. Begin the renewal process well before the date runs out, as prefecture appointments can take time and delays may affect your ability to work.

Renewal rules for refugees, subsidiary protection holders and temporary protection holders

If you hold refugee status, subsidiary protection or temporary protection, you must renew your residence permit before it expires. The renewal maintains both your legal stay and your right to work. Employers may ask for proof that you have requested renewal if your card is being replaced.

Renewal rules for asylum seekers

If you are an asylum seeker with work authorisation, you must ensure both your **attestation** and your **work authorisation** remain valid. Your authorisation is usually linked to the validity of your asylum certificate. If either expires, your work rights may temporarily stop.

If your documents are lost or stolen

If your residence permit or protection document is lost or stolen, report it to the police and request a replacement at your prefecture as soon as possible. You may receive a temporary receipt confirming your legal stay and right to work while the new card is processed.

Keep digital and paper copies

Save clear photographs or scans of your residence permit, work authorisation and passport. These copies cannot replace your documents, but they help when reporting a loss or booking renewal appointments.

Update your address when you move

If you change address, inform your prefecture. Important letters about renewals, decisions or appointments may be sent by post, so keeping your address up to date helps you avoid missing essential information.

Official guidance on renewing or replacing documents: <https://www.service-public.fr/particuliers/vosdroits/N110>

| What to do if you change jobs

Changing jobs in France is usually straightforward for people under international protection. Your right to work is linked to your status and your documents, not to a specific employer, which means you can move into a new role without applying for a new work permit. If you are a recognised refugee, a person with subsidiary protection or someone benefiting from temporary protection, your **Titre de Séjour** already authorises you to work for any employer. When starting a new job, your only requirement is to show your new employer your valid residence permit and proof of identity, and they will complete the normal hiring procedures.

Asylum seekers who hold a work authorisation issued after six months may also change jobs freely as long as both their **attestation de demande d'asile** and their **autorisation de travail** remain valid. Employers will check the dates on these documents, so it is important to renew them in advance to avoid a pause in your work rights. If you are still within the first

six months of the asylum process and only hold the initial asylum certificate, you are not permitted to work and therefore cannot take up employment until you have received authorisation.

When you begin a new job, the employer must verify your right to work and then register you with social security, but they do not need to complete any additional immigration procedures if your documents are already in order. If your employer is unsure about the process or has questions about your status, they can consult the official guidance provided by the Ministry of Labour at <https://travail-emploi.gouv.fr/> or contact their local **préfecture**, which oversees residence permits and work documentation. A full list of prefectures is available at <https://www.prefectures-regions.gouv.fr/>.

If you change your address when moving for a new job, it is important to inform your prefecture, as all correspondence about renewals and appointments is sent to the address they have on file. Keeping your documents valid and your information up to date helps ensure that you can move between jobs smoothly and continue working legally in France.

| Common situations and how to handle them

Many people under international protection in France encounter similar situations when they begin looking for work or when they change employers. One common issue is when an employer mistakenly asks for a separate work permit, even though refugees, people with subsidiary protection, temporary protection holders and asylum seekers with a valid work authorisation do not need one. In this situation, it is usually enough to show your residence permit or authorisation, which clearly states your right to work. If the employer still has doubts, you can direct them to official information from the Ministry of Labour at <https://travail-emploi.gouv.fr/>, where the rules for hiring foreign workers are explained.

Another situation arises when documents expire during employment. If your residence permit, temporary protection certificate or work authorisation reaches its expiry date, your employer may pause your contract until you provide a renewed document or a renewal receipt. This is why renewing documents early is important. Prefectures often send renewal instructions or appointment reminders, so it is helpful to ensure your address is always up to date. You can find prefecture contact details at <https://www.prefectures-regions.gouv.fr/>.

People sometimes move to a different city or region for work. If you relocate, your right to work continues across all of France, but you may still need to inform your prefecture of your new address so that you continue receiving official correspondence. If you are unsure whether you are registered correctly or if your employer has not completed your social security registration, you can check your status through the French social security system by creating or accessing your Ameli account at <https://www.ameli.fr/>. This helps ensure that you remain covered for healthcare and other employment-related protections.

Some workers may experience unfair treatment, unsafe working conditions or discrimination. If this happens, you have the same rights as other workers in France, and support is available. You can contact the Labour Inspectorate through <https://travail-emploi.gouv.fr/> to receive guidance or report concerns. If you need broader support, organisations such as UNHCR France and the French Red Cross can also help confirm your rights and direct you to specialised services.

| Where to get help or more information

If you need support with work rights, documents or your protection status in France, there are several reliable organisations and public services that can provide clear guidance. Many offer free advice, multilingual information and practical help with appointments, renewals or employment concerns. The resources below are widely used by refugees, people with subsidiary protection, temporary protection holders and asylum seekers.

You can contact the following organisations for trusted help:

- **UNHCR France** provides accessible guidance on asylum procedures, protection documents and employment rights. Their website is updated regularly and available in multiple languages: <https://help.unhcr.org/france/>
- **OFPPA** (French Office for the Protection of Refugees and Stateless Persons) provides official information for people

with refugee status or subsidiary protection. You can find guidance on rights, documents and renewals at: <https://www.ofpra.gouv.fr/>

- **Service-Public.fr**, the main French government information portal, explains residence permits, asylum documents and work authorisation rules for foreign nationals in clear language: <https://www.service-public.fr/>
- **The Ministry of the Interior** provides official guidance on asylum procedures, temporary protection and documentation. This is useful if you need to understand the status of your case or the meaning of your documents: <https://www.interieur.gouv.fr/>
- **The Ministry of Labour** offers information about employment rights, workplace protections, complaints procedures and employer obligations. It can help if you experience difficulties at work or need to understand French labour law: <https://travail-emploi.gouv.fr/>
- **The French Red Cross (Croix-Rouge française)** supports refugees and asylum seekers with administrative procedures, social support and practical help, including employment-related advice: <https://www.croix-rouge.fr/>
- **Local prefectures** manage residence permits, temporary protection certificates, work authorisations and renewals. You can find your prefecture's contact details through: <https://www.prefectures-regions.gouv.fr/>

These services can help you understand your rights, resolve document issues and stay informed about any changes that affect your ability to work in France.

| Frequently asked questions

Many refugees and people under protection have similar questions about working in France. Below are answers to some of the most common concerns, explained in a simple and practical way.

1. Do I need a work permit if I am a recognised refugee?

No. Your Titre de Séjour already includes your right to work.

2. Do people with subsidiary protection need a work permit?

No. Your residence permit gives you the same access to work as refugees.

3. Can I work if I have temporary protection?

Yes. Temporary protection documents include work authorisation automatically.

4. When can asylum seekers work?

Asylum seekers may work after six months, but only if they receive a valid work authorisation (autorisation de travail).

5. Can I work with only the asylum application certificate (attestation)?

No. The attestation alone does not give the right to work.

6. Do I need to renew my work authorisation if I am an asylum seeker?

Yes. Your authorisation must remain valid, and it is linked to the validity of your asylum documents.

7. Can I change employers freely?

Yes. Anyone with valid work rights—refugees, subsidiary protection holders, temporary protection holders and authorised asylum seekers—can change jobs without a new permit.

8. Will I lose my right to work if my documents expire?

Your work rights may be paused until you renew your residence permit, temporary protection document or work authorisation.

9. What should I do if my residence permit is lost or stolen?

Report it to the police and request a replacement at your prefecture.

10. Do I need a social security number to work?

Yes. All workers in France must have a numéro de sécurité sociale.

11. Where can I find official information about my work rights?

You can consult the French government's guidance on foreign workers here: <https://www.service-public.fr/particuliers/vosdroits/F2721>

| Practical checklist for refugees preparing to work

This checklist helps you prepare for legal employment in France. You can use it before applying for jobs or starting a new role.

- Confirm your legal status and whether it includes the right to work.
- Check that your residence permit, temporary protection document or work authorisation is valid.
- Prepare your identity documents, such as your passport or travel document.
- Gather the documents that prove your work rights (Titre de Séjour, temporary protection certificate or authorisation de travail).
- Apply for a social security number if you do not already have one. Information: <https://www.ameli.fr/>
- Make digital and paper copies of all key documents.
- Keep your address updated with your prefecture to ensure you receive renewal letters.
- When applying for jobs, be ready to show employers your identity documents and proof of work authorisation.
- Contact official services or trusted organisations if you need help with documents or renewals.