

# China launches reform of Chinese 'green cards'



China has begun a series of changes to the rules regarding permanent residence for foreigners. [File Photo]

China has begun a series of changes to the rules regarding permanent residence for foreigners, according to a plan issued by the Ministry of Public Security (MPS).

The “foreigner’s permanent residence card” will be renamed as the “foreigner’s permanent residence identity card.”

Similar to the identity cards used by Chinese citizens, foreigners’ identity information will be embedded in the chips on the machine-readable cards, to be shared by railways, airlines, insurance agencies, hotels and banks.

The old version cannot be recognized by machines, and foreigners often face difficulties in identity authentication, said an official at the MPS.

“The card makes everything easier,” said Jonathan, an American who has been in China for over 20 years and received his Chinese green card three years ago.

“What’s inconvenient is that so few foreigners have them, and people don’t know how to deal with it,” he admitted. “I hope that staff at both government departments and service sectors will be more familiar with its functions.”

Foreigners can apply for the new version of permanent residence identity card

at the original registration authority, while people can still use the old version until the expiration date.

Approved by the Central Leading Group for Deepening Overall Reform, the reform plan serves the nation's talent development strategy, which is to attract more innovative and entrepreneurial talent, and responds to social concerns, said the MPS official.

The reform will also provide foreigners with easier access to public services.

The related technical work is expected to be finished by June, and then foreigners can apply for new cards.

In 2016, 1,576 foreigners became permanent residents in China, an increase of 163 percent over the previous year, according to the MPS.

China has made huge progress in easing its residence and entry policies for foreigners since September 2015, which has helped attract more talent from overseas and boosted international exchanges.