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Portuguese Citizenship

Synopsis

Portugal allows multiple citizenships, enabling new citizens to retain their previous citizenship(s) and enjoy the benefits of a European Union passport.

The Portuguese passport is one of the world's strongest travel documents in terms of visa-free access to other countries.

All successful applicants for Portuguese citizenship receive the same type of passport as native citizens and are entitled to the same rights.

This document covers the various paths to Portuguese citizenship.

Benefits of a Portuguese Passport

If you are thinking about obtaining a second passport, you may want to consider a Portuguese one.

A Portuguese passport is a top-tier travel document, allowing its holder to travel visa-free to 185 jurisdictions – including all members of the Schengen area. Portugal allows its citizens to have multiple citizenships. Therefore, you can still benefit from your current citizenship status.

Citizens have no minimum stay requirements, and Portugal does not levy taxes based on citizenship or wealth. It is also possible to marry in Portugal without any religious ceremony or implications.

Are there any citizenship by investment programs?

No, Portugal does not have a formal direct-to-citizenship program for investors.

Portuguese Ancestry & Marriage

Citizenship is granted to foreign citizens of Portuguese ancestry (1st and 2nd degree).

Children of Portuguese citizens are eligible for Portuguese citizenship at birth, with different requirements applying if delivery occurs in or outside of Portugal. Adopted children of Portuguese citizens are also entitled to apply for citizenship. Even if minors are born after the parent's citizenship is granted, they are eligible for Portuguese citizenship if further requirements are met.

Descendants in the 2nd degree of Portuguese citizens may apply for Portuguese citizenship provided evidence of an effective connection to Portugal is provided.

Spouses and registered civil partners of Portuguese nationals may apply for citizenship after three years of marriage or cohabitation if proof of connection to the Portuguese community is provided or six years of marriage waives the such requirement.

Residency

Residents of Portugal are eligible to apply for citizenship after five years, provided additional requirements are met, such as knowledge of the Portuguese language and connection to the Portuguese community.

Portuguese citizenship is granted to foreign citizens of Portuguese ancestry, by naturalization, by adoption, by marriage with a Portuguese citizen and to children born in Portugal if both parents are legal residents for five years.

Citizens of former Portuguese Overseas Territories

Individuals (and descendants and spouses) born in former Portuguese Territories under Portuguese rule are eligible to apply for citizenship. Territories and colonies include:

- Portuguese India – Goa, Daman (Damão), Diu, and Darda and Nagar-Haveli
- African Territories – Angola, Cabo-Verde (Cape-Verde), Guinea-Bissau (Guiné-Bissau), Mozambique (Moçambique), and São Tomé e Príncipe•Portuguese
- Macau (澳門)
- East-Timor (Timor-Leste)

Sephardic Jewish Ancestry

Portuguese Citizenship Law enables descendants of Sephardic Jews forced into exile centuries ago to apply for Portuguese citizenship.

Applicants must have their criminal record verified to apply for citizenship and produce evidence of their Sephardic ancestry.

Evidence may include Sephardic Jewish traditions, family names, objects and documents that enable the Portuguese Authorities to trace the applicant's ancestral origins back to a Portuguese Sephardic family, such as a comprehensive and documented genealogical tree.

Citizenship is granted to adult or emancipated foreigners that have not been convicted of a crime punishable, according to Portuguese Criminal Law, with imprisonment for a minimum of three years. Family members may apply for citizenship afterwards.

Besides the abovementioned requirements, the applicant must have inherited property in Portugal or a proven lifetime of regular travels to Portugal to benefit from this regime. Unfortunately, this path to citizenship may soon be discontinued.

Understanding Sephardic Ancestry

In 1492, Spain's Catholic monarchs passed the Edict of Expulsion of the Jews, forcing Spanish Jews to either convert (Anusim) or leave the dominion.

Most found shelter in Portugal, but the Portuguese King was later pressured to evict all Portuguese Jews.

Soon, all non-converts left for North Africa, Amsterdam, Thessaloniki, Constantinople, France, Morocco, Brazil, Curaçao or the Antilles, oftentimes keeping the ladino (Espanolit) language.

About GFDL

Gil Figueira & Devillet Lima Advogados is a Portuguese law firm.

We advise corporations and individuals with complex needs, attractive projects, and challenging requirements.

Our lawyers are often engaged to provide comprehensive legal advice for businesses and private clients across several industries.

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Insights

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