

Global Immigration alert

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Portugal

Portugal introduces significant changes to its Nationality Law

Executive summary

On 18 May 2026, Portugal introduced significant changes to its Nationality Law. The changes apply to nationality applications submitted from 19 May 2026 onwards. Applications submitted prior to this date remain subject to the previous legal framework.

The changes extend the residence period required for nationality, introduce a more restrictive approach to calculating this period and reinforce integration requirements. Together, these developments are expected to have a direct impact on nationality eligibility timelines.

Background

The amendments follow a legislative process initiated in 2025 which included parliamentary approval and constitutional review. The publication of the law brings clarity to a period of uncertainty regarding the future framework for the acquisition of Portuguese nationality.

Key developments

Key changes include the following:

- **Residence requirement for nationality:**
 - Seven years for citizens of EU Member States and Portuguese-speaking countries (CPLP)
 - 10 years for citizens of all other countries

This replaces the previous uniform requirement of five years and significantly extends the timeline for acquisition of nationality.
- **The rules for calculating the residence period have been revised as follows:**
 - It is calculated from the date the residence permit is issued, not the application date.
 - Only periods of lawful residence are counted for nationality purposes.

Legal residence must be supported by valid residence permits or other recognized legal residence statuses, in

line with the applicable immigration framework. Periods of residence may be combined on a non-continuous basis, depending on the specific circumstances of the applicant.

- **Children born in Portugal to foreign parents:** At least one parent must have completed five years of legal residence in Portugal at the time of the child's birth, replacing the previous, more flexible rule based on shorter residence periods.
- **Great-grandchildren of Portuguese citizens:** Eligibility is now extended to great-grandchildren, provided they have completed at least five years of legal residence in Portugal and demonstrate an effective connection to the Portuguese community.
- **Integration requirement:** The new framework reinforces integration requirements for all applicants, including:
 - Knowledge of the Portuguese culture, history and national symbols
 - Understanding of fundamental rights and duties, and the political organization of the State
 - A formal declaration of adherence to the principles of the democratic rule of law

These requirements apply cumulatively and represent a strengthening of the previous framework.

Impact on employers

The revised framework is not expected to have a direct impact on employers managing international employees in Portugal. Employers should, however, closely monitor related developments, as they may influence employees' interest in relocating to Portugal.

Key steps

EY will continue to monitor these developments. Should you have any questions, we encourage you to contact one of our immigration professionals.

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