

Building Projects Over Strong Relationships



**LEGAL ALERT - Entry into Force
of the Portuguese Nationality
Law's amendments**

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On 18 May 2026, Organic Law No. 1/2026 was published by the Portuguese Parliament, approving the latest amendments to the Portuguese Nationality Law.

Following the Constitutional Court's rejection of the initial proposals and the subsequent legislative revisions, the long-awaited "New" Nationality Law will enter into force on 19 May 2026, introducing significant changes to the criteria for acquiring Portuguese nationality, with a direct impact on naturalization proceedings, nationality by birth, and special attribution regimes.

I. Key Amendments

1. Extension of Residency Periods' demands for Naturalization processes

The most significant amendment concerns the extension of the minimum legal residency period required for the acquisition of Portuguese nationality through naturalization.

The residency requirement, previously set at 5 years, is now increased to:

- 7 years for nationals of Portuguese-speaking countries (PALOP) and citizens of the European Union;
- 10 years for nationals of all other countries.

This amendment is further reinforced by a change to the method of calculating the residency period. Previously, the law allowed the counting of "the period elapsed since the submission of the temporary residence permit application, provided that such application was ultimately approved".

With the repeal of this provision, residency periods will now only begin to count from the date on which a valid residence permit is formally granted by the competent authorities.

2. New Requirements for Minors Born in Portugal

Minors born in Portuguese territory with foreign parents will no longer benefit from the previously broader framework for acquiring Portuguese nationality.

The acquisition of nationality will now cumulatively require that:

- one of the parents has been legally residing in Portugal for at least 5 years;
- the minor regularly attends compulsory education;
- additional suitability requirements are met if the minor has reached the age of criminal responsibility.

3. Reinforcement of the "Effective Connection" Requirement

As anticipated in the legislative proposals discussed throughout the approval process, the new wording of the law demonstrates a clear legislative intent to strengthen the requirement of integration into the Portuguese community, reintroducing a more restrictive framework than that established by previous amendments.

Nevertheless, the law maintains special regimes allowing for partial exemptions from certain requirements in specific cases, namely:

- third-degree descendants of original Portuguese nationals who have legally resided in Portugal for at least 5 years;
- former Portuguese nationals who never acquired another nationality and who maintain effective ties to the Portuguese community;
- individuals who have rendered, or are called upon to render, relevant services to the Portuguese State.

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4. Transitional Regime and Temporal Application of the Law

Although the Presidency of the Republic highlighted the need to ensure that pending applications would not be retroactively affected by the legislative amendment, in order to safeguard applicants' legitimate expectations, the new law — as already indicated in previous draft proposals — does not establish any transitional regime and will be immediately applicable to all new applications.

II. Practical Impact and Next Steps

The legislative amendment will have a substantial impact on immigration and relocation planning strategies, international mobility and investment structures, and naturalization processes currently being prepared.

Applicants who were previously approaching the completion of the legal residency periods required for the acquisition of Portuguese nationality may now face significant additional delays before becoming eligible.

- Sofia Vicente

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