



CRISTÓVÃO & FRAGA
ADVOGADOS

Global Lawyer's Network

PORTUGUESE CITIZENSHIP FOR DESCENDANTS OF SEPHARDIC JEWS

RIGHT TO CITIZENSHIP



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During the 15th and 16th centuries a large number of Sephardic Jews were expelled from the Portugal. However, many of the Sephardic Jews of Portuguese origin kept the language, the rites of the oldest Jewish cult in Portugal, the family names, objects and documents which demonstrate their Portuguese origin and a strong historic relationship with Portugal.

Decree-Law 30-A/2015 approved on 27 February, amends the Portuguese Regulation on Citizenship establishing the requirements for the descendants of Sephardic Jews of Portuguese origin to obtain Portuguese citizenship¹.

In general, a foreign citizen must fulfil four requirements to acquire Portuguese nationality:

- (i)** Be of age or emancipated under Portuguese law;
- (ii)** Have resided lawfully in Portugal for a minimum of six years;
- (iii)** Have sufficient knowledge of the Portuguese language;
- (iv)** Not have been convicted of a crime punishable under Portuguese law with imprisonment of three years or more.

With the amendment made to the Citizenship Act in 2013, a foreign citizen descended from Sephardic Jews that intended to obtain Portuguese citizenship by naturalisation just need to fulfil the above mentioned requirements (i) and (iv).

Nevertheless, he had to demonstrate the tradition of belonging to a Sephardic community of Portuguese origin, based on objective requirements of a connection to Portugal.

The concern law establish the following requirements and documents that must be presented with the application for Portuguese nationality:

¹ Portuguese State may refuse to grant Portuguese citizenship to certain people (even in cases where all the required documents and elements of proof have been formally submitted), due to safety reasons.

1. Certificate issued by the Jewish Community of Lisbon that attests to the applicants ties to a Jewish Sephardic Community of Portuguese origin².
2. Power of attorney granting specific powers to C&F lawyers, who will provide the respective Portuguese text.
3. Applicant's birth certificate issued within the previous six months and certified by the Portuguese Consulate of the country of origin of the document in question.
4. Translation into Portuguese of the above mentioned birth certificate certified by the Portuguese Consulate of the country of origin of the document in question.
5. Criminal Record from the applicant's country of birth and country of which he/she is a citizen, as well as from those countries where the applicant has resided, issued within the previous ninety days, certified by the Portuguese Consulate of the country of origin of the documents in question.
6. Translation into Portuguese of the above mentioned criminal records certified by the Portuguese Consulate of the country of origin of the document in question.
7. Portuguese Criminal Record (which the applicant's Lawyers may obtain for applicant in Portugal).
8. Full copy of applicant's Passport certified by a Portuguese Consulate.
9. Indication of the circumstances which establish the connection to a Portuguese community of Sephardic origin and some evidence of such

² The request for the above mentions certificate should be address by an attorney of C&F acting for the applicant together with the contact details and the following documents:

a) Copy of passport; **b)** Birth certificate or similar document that contains applicant's date of birth, place of birth and names of parents; **c)** Proof of residence; **d)** All of the supporting documentary evidence as may required for a proper evaluation of the matter and decision. Evidence of the applicant's family history of connection to a Sephardic Community of Portuguese origin may be direct and circumstantial.

circumstances, not only by means of the Certificate issued by the Jewish Community of Portugal³.

Although the true country of return of the Jews is Israel, Portugal is perhaps the best "safe harbour" for Jews in Europe.



³ C&F has technical assistance provided by an accomplished genealogist and historian.