



PORTUGAL CITIZENSHIP FOR DESCENDANTS OF SEPHARDIC JEWS - IN 2021

Persecution and Expulsion of Sephardic Jews from Portugal

King Manuel, who had initially issued a law that guaranteed their protection, ordered the expulsion of all Sephardic Jews that did not apply to the Catholic baptism. Thus, many Sephardic Jews were expelled from Portugal in the late fifteenth century and early sixteenth century.

In general, these peninsular Jews settled in countries like the Netherlands, the United Kingdom and Turkey as well as in parts of North Africa and later in American territories, including Brazil, Argentina , Mexico and the United States of America (USA).

Despite the persecution and expulsion of their ancestral territory have, many Sephardic Jews of origin Portuguese and their descendants kept not only the Portuguese language, but also the traditional rites of the ancient Jewish worship in Portugal, saving over generations their surnames, objects and documents proving their Portuguese origin, along with a strong memorial relationship that leads them to qualify themselves to themselves as “Portuguese Jews ‘or’ Jews of the Portuguese Nation”.

Ladino Language Spoken by Descendants of Portuguese Sephardic Jews

In addition to the familiar nicknames and the use of Portuguese, particularly in the rites, there are descendants of Portuguese Sephardic Jews who, even today, talk to each other Ladino, the language used by Sephardim expelled from Spain and Portugal in the fifteenth century, derived from cas telhano and Portuguese and currently spoken by about 150,000 people in existing communities in Israel, Turkey, the former Yugoslavia, Greece, Morocco and in America, among many other places.

Right of Return for Sephardic Jews Descendants

This law authorizes the exercise of the right of return for Sephardic Jews descendants of Portuguese origin that so wish, through the acquisition of Portuguese nationality by naturalization, with its attendant rights and obligations.

Eligibility Criteria for Foreign Naturalization as a Descendant of Portuguese Sephardic Jews

The Government of Portugal may grant citizenship through naturalization to the descendants of Sephardic Jews, when they fulfill the following requirements:

1. They are Adult or Emancipated under the law.

2. Not Committed Serious Crime - not been convicted, with final judgment of sentence for committing a crime punishable with a maximum prison sentence equal to or exceeding three years, under Portuguese law.

3. Evidence of belonging to a Sephardic Community of Portuguese Origin - Evidence includes family surnames, familiar language, direct descendants or family relationship in the collateral line of common parent from the Sephardic community of Portuguese origin.

Portugal Sephardic Citizenship - Evidentiary Conditions

The Sephardic Jews Law requires that the applicant meet the following conditions to obtain Portuguese Nationality:

Certificate issued by the Portuguese Jewish Community

The applicant for Portuguese Nationality must first obtain a Certificate from the Portuguese Jewish Community which attests to his/her ties to a Sephardic Jewish Community of Portuguese origin. A request for this Certificate must be addressed to the Jewish Community of Porto or to the Jewish Community of Lisbon.

Evidence of the applicant's family history of connection to a Sephardic Community of Portuguese origin, by means of family names, language, direct or collateral descentance, or other elements which are indicative of this connection, may be direct and circumstantial.

Proof of Descendants of Sephardic Jews of Portugal

The following means of proof are acceptable:

1. Documented evidence - For example, family records, family tree, community archives of births, marriages and deaths (such as those in Amsterdam, Bordeaux, Curacao, St. Thomas and Sofia), cemeteries and lists of tombs (like those found in Surinam, Thessaloniki, Amsterdam, Hamburg, Curacao, Bayonne, Paris and Vienna), brit milah records, general Government archives that show arrivals from Portugal, lists of ships and passengers arriving from Portugal.

2. Testimonial evidence - Reputable witnesses who can attest to a family's oral tradition. Testimonial evidence must be submitted in writing.

3. Expert evidence - Support of an expert on Portuguese Jewish diaspora. Expert evidence must be submitted in writing.

Portuguese Citizenship is Granted to Descendants of Sephardic Jews

Processing time: - the processing time until Portuguese citizenship is granted is 18 - 24 months.

After Portuguese citizenship is granted, the applicant has the following rights:

- Obtain a Portugal citizen card
- Apply for a Portuguese Passport. Portugal Passport is Ranked 5th in the World - The 2019 Passport Index ranks the Portugal Passport as 5th most powerful passport in the world, and it allows visa free access to 185 countries world-wide
- The Portuguese passport allows visa-free travel to the 25 Schengen countries and UK
- Access to residence permits to other European countries
- Dual Citizenship - You do not need to renounce your previous nationality to become a Portuguese citizen
- Freedom to Live, Work, manage a Business and Study in Portugal

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