

Is Permanent Residency in Portugal Becoming the New Strategic Priority?

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By **Lionel de Freitas**, 18th May 2026

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Since its introduction in 2012, Portugal's Golden Visa framework has undergone several legislative and political developments. These have affected both the Immigration Law governing the programme itself and the Permanent Residency legal regime, as well as the Nationality Law regulating the path toward Portuguese citizenship.

For existing investors and internationally mobile families, this has resulted in an increasing focus on predictability, continuity, and ultimately, long-term planning.

In response, many applicants are now adopting a more cautious and strategic "de-risking" approach, prioritising residency milestones that may provide greater long-term legal stability within the EU through practical and achievable steps. For those ultimately seeking Portuguese citizenship, the focus is gradually shifting away from short-term programme access and toward long-term integration, and residency continuity.

More broadly, the role of the Golden Visa continues to evolve. In an era marked by geopolitical uncertainty, regulatory tightening, and heightened scrutiny of investment migration programmes are no longer viewed solely as an immigration product. Increasingly, relocation options are being used as part of a broader mobility, family planning, succession, and jurisdictional diversification strategy by globally mobile families.

Portugal's recent nationality reforms appear to reflect a broader European trend toward prioritising long-term connection and effective integration over passive capital investment alone.

Portugal's President has formally approved the revised Citizenship Law, which will come into force once published in the official Gazette. The changes introduce several important updates to citizenship eligibility, including:

- **Extended Residency Requirements:** Citizenship applications are possible only after 10 years of legal residency for most nationalities (7 years for nationals of Portuguese-speaking countries).
- **Strict Residency Calculation:** The qualifying residency period is now calculated strictly from the issuance date of the first physical residence permit card.
- **Removal of Previous Waiting-Time Credit:** The previous rule allowing the period elapsed between submission of the residency application and issuance of the residence permit to count toward citizenship eligibility has been eliminated.
- **Absence of Transitional Provisions:** At present, no specific grandfathering or transitional protections appear to have been introduced for existing Golden Visa holders in relation to the revised citizenship timelines.

Understanding the “New Normal” for Residency

While the pathway toward Portuguese citizenship has become longer and potentially more complex, permanent residency may now represent the more immediate and strategically relevant milestone for many Golden Visa holders.

Under the current framework, applicants can apply for permanent residency five years after the issuance of their first residence permit card. Once permanent residency is granted, investors may be able to liquidate their qualifying investment and are no longer subject to the ongoing Golden Visa renewal process. This can reduce administrative burden and limit continued interaction with Portuguese Immigration Authorities.

Golden Visa holders may then choose either to maintain permanent residency indefinitely or continue toward Portuguese citizenship after completing the additional residency period required under the revised nationality framework.

By treating permanent residency as the primary five-year objective, investors may be able to reduce exposure to future programme changes, unlock liquidity from qualifying investments, and maintain a stable long-term foothold within the EU.

Importantly, the core benefits of the Golden Visa, including visa free travel within the Schengen Area, continue to follow the grant of permanent residency. While the legislation does not specifically clarify minimum stay requirements at this stage, maintaining compliance with existing thresholds remains the most prudent approach. This currently means an average stay of seven days per year in Portugal for Golden Visa holders.

Navigating the Transition with Confidence

We understand that these developments may create uncertainty and frustration for many existing and prospective visa holders, particularly for families who have made

significant long-term personal, educational, and financial commitments based on previous legal frameworks and timelines. As Portugal's immigration and nationality landscape continues to evolve, careful planning and proactive legal strategy have become increasingly important.

If you would like tailored advice on your residency position, permanent residency eligibility or long-term citizenship planning in Portugal, please contact [our team](#) at: advice.portugal@dixcart.com.