

Latest Updates on Portugal's Golden Visa

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By **Catarina Sardinha**, 18th March 2026

Please note that the information below was prepared on 10 March 2026 and may not reflect any changes introduced after this date.

Since its introduction in 2012, Portugal's Golden Visa programme has undergone various changes. Staying abreast on the latest developments and requirements is important for investors planning long-term residency or permanent residence in Portugal.

Below is a summary of the current status of Portugal's Golden Visa programme, along with a timeline of updates over the past year.

Current Status of Portugal's Golden Visa Programme

- The Golden Visa programme remains open to investors – see [here](#) for options currently available.
- Applicants may apply for permanent residence five years after the issuance of the first residence card. For citizenship purposes, the relevant period of legal residency starts counting from the date of submission of the application.
- A new Law approved by Parliament and declared unconstitutional by the Constitutional Court, included changes to the method of counting the relevant residency time for a citizenship application. Instead of counting from the submission of the application, time would start counting from the issuance of the first card. Also, the necessary time of legal residency would increase from 5 years to 10 years (7 years for applicants from Portuguese speaking countries).
- As the Law was declared unconstitutional, it is still uncertain how a new Citizenship Law will impact applicants, as it is not clear what will be politically possible to approve.
- Should a new law be approved and successfully pass constitutional review, applicants may wish to consider applying for permanent residence once eligible. Permanent residence is available 5 years after issuance of the first residence card and removes the need for renewals every 2 or 3 years, depending on the investment route.
- Applicants are encouraged to ensure ongoing compliance with the programme requirements, including the completion of the Portuguese A2 level exam or

certification, and to submit citizenship application as soon as legally permitted.

- Applicants who invest in a venture capital fund or other similar fund(s) may be notified by the fund managers on exits and withdrawals considering any changes to legislation that impact the programme. It is a requirement to maintain this investment at least until whichever of the following occur first:
 - permanent residency is obtained, or
 - citizenship is granted.

It is worth noting that these funds were typically established for Golden Visa investors, and fund managers are expected to accommodate investors so that the investment continues to meet the Golden Visa requirements leading to permanent residence or citizenship

Timeline of Recent Developments

February 2026: Renewals become Fully Digital

Residence permit renewals can now be processed digitally, removing the need for in-person appointments where biometric data remains valid.

28 October 2025: Parliament Approves Citizenship Law Changes

In October 2025, Portugal's Parliament approved major amendments to the nationality law, impacting future Golden Visa holders.

Key changes were:

- **Residency requirement for citizenship increased from 5 to 10 years** for most applicants.
- The relevant time of legal residency for a citizenship application changed from the date of submission of the application to the date of issuance of the first residency permit.
- Additional integration criteria were reinforced, including Portuguese language proficiency and civic knowledge requirements.

Although separate from the Golden Visa framework itself, these changes would have had a direct impact on long-term planning. The law was subsequently declared unconstitutional by the Constitutional Court and did not enter into force.

1 August 2025: Confirmation of Full Digital Transition

Authorities confirmed that:

- Ongoing cases would remain on the existing platform to avoid disruption.
- A **fully modernised ARI application portal** would launch in early 2026.
- The objective was to eliminate historic backlogs by the end of 2025.

This announcement provided reassurance to investors concerned about extended processing times following the transition from SEF to AIMA.

22 July 2025: New Online ARI Portal Announced

In July 2025, officials formally tendered a new **fully digital Golden Visa platform**, scheduled for implementation in January 2026.

The new system is designed to allow:

- Complete online submission of applications
- Digital document uploads
- Integrated payment systems
- Automated biometric scheduling

The goal is to improve processing and restore confidence in the programme after years of administrative bottlenecks.

January – June 2025: Backlog Reduction Strategy

At the beginning of 2025, authorities were facing an estimated **50,000+ pending applications**.

Between January and mid-2025:

- Additional resources were allocated to immigration services.
- Validity of many residence permits was temporarily extended.

This period was primarily about stabilisation and clearing inherited delays.

15 January 2025: Mandatory Digital Processing Begins

From 15 January 2025, all pending Golden Visa applications were formally migrated to a digital processing environment, requiring clients to provide updated documentation and schedule biometric appointments (marking a shift away from fully paper-based procedures). This change confirmed the operational transition from the former SEF framework to the new immigration authority.

Get in Touch

Portugal remains an attractive destination for internationally mobile individuals seeking EU residency and a strong quality of life. Managing the evolving Golden Visa framework requires clear guidance and up-to-date insight.

For further information or personalised advice, please contact [Dixcart Portugal Lda](mailto:advice.portugal@dixcart.com) at advice.portugal@dixcart.com.

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