

Latest Updates on Portugal's Golden Visa

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By **Catarina Sardinha**, 19th May 2026

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 permanent residence or citizenship 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

Portugal's Golden Visa programme remains open to eligible investors, with a number of qualifying investment routes continuing to be available (see [here](#)).

Under the current legal framework, applicants may apply for permanent residency five years after the issuance of their first residence permit card, provided the qualifying investment has been maintained and the applicable residency requirements have been met.

Recent amendments to the Portuguese Nationality Law in May 2026 have significantly changed the citizenship timeline. Citizenship eligibility now arises after 10 years of legal residency for most nationalities (7 years for nationals of Portuguese-speaking countries), with the qualifying residency period counted from the date of issuance of the first residence permit card rather than from the submission of the application.

In light of these changes, many applicants are increasingly viewing permanent residency as an important intermediate milestone. Permanent residency removes the need for continued Golden Visa renewals and may allow investors greater flexibility in relation to their qualifying investments, while maintaining long-term legal residency status in Portugal and the European Union.

Applicants are encouraged to continue maintaining full compliance with all programme requirements, including the applicable minimum stay obligations and completion of the Portuguese A2 language examination or equivalent certification where relevant. Citizenship applications should be submitted as soon as applicants become legally

eligible under the rules in force at the relevant time.

Applicants invested through venture capital or similar qualifying investment funds should continue coordinating closely with their fund managers regarding exits, redemptions, or restructuring events that may impact Golden Visa compliance. In general, qualifying investments should be maintained at least until permanent residency is obtained or citizenship is granted, depending on the applicant's long-term objectives and immigration strategy.

It is also worth noting that many qualifying funds were specifically structured for Golden Visa investors, and fund managers are generally expected to assist investors in maintaining ongoing compliance with the programme requirements throughout the residency process.

Timeline of Recent Developments

19 May 2026: Citizenship Law in Effect

Law published as per summary provided on 5 May 2026 below.

5 May 2026: Revised Citizenship Law Promulgated

The President of Portugal officially promulgated the revised Citizenship Law on 3 May 2026. The law is expected to be published in the coming days and will enter into force on the day following its publication.

As previously communicated, this legislative amendment introduces several significant changes that may affect ongoing and future citizenship applications. The main updates include:

- Citizenship applications will only be possible after **7 years of legal residency** for nationals of Portuguese-speaking countries, and **10 years of legal residency** for nationals of all other countries.
- The relevant residence period will now be calculated from the **date of issuance** of the first residency permit card.
- The previous rule allowing the time elapsed between the submission of a residency application and the issuance of the residency permit to count toward citizenship eligibility has been revoked. This means that, for citizenship purposes, legal residency time begins strictly from the issuance of the first residency card.

It is important to highlight that no transitional or grandfathering provisions have been included for Golden Visa holders.

Considering these changes, golden visa holders who are still in the process of gathering the required documentation for citizenship submission are strongly advised to finalize their applications as soon as possible, as only a very limited window remains before the new rules take effect.

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, please contact [Dixcart Portugal Lda](#) at advice.portugal@dixcart.com.

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