Immigration Law Briefing: Special Edition

Greek Citizenship: A Guide for EU and Non-EU Citizens

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A. Introduction

1. Greece has always been an attractive destination to individuals from all over the world looking to relocate and has a framework in place for EU and third country nationals to apply for a residence permit.
2. Many choose to remain long-term and apply for naturalization to secure a permanent residency status and benefit from the privileges afforded by Greek citizenship.
3. This guide outlines the key requirements and procedures involved in the naturalization process.

B. Privileges of Naturalization

1. Naturalized individuals are entitled to a Greek passport and national identity card, have full legal parity with native-born Greek nationals and have the complete range of rights, privileges and benefits afforded to citizens under Greek law. They also:
   a. acquire the right to vote in national and local elections, stand for public office and participate in democratic governance;
   b. become eligible to receive state allowances and social welfare benefits and to participate in government-administered programs, including housing assistance and employment initiatives;
   c. have unrestricted access to the Greek labor market, encompassing dependent employment and self-employment across all sectors and categories (full-time, part-time, seasonal and

highly skilled positions);

d. can establish business enterprises, cooperatives, joint ventures and other legal entities without the sectoral restrictions imposed under residence permits; and
e. become eligible for employment in public administration and service in the Hellenic Armed Forces.

2. The minor children of naturalized individuals acquire Greek citizenship automatically, without the need for additional formalities or administrative procedures.
3. Acquisition of Greek citizenship simultaneously confers European Union citizenship[1], entitling the naturalized citizen to:
   a. freedom of movement and residence throughout all Member States of the European Union;
   b. the right to seek and obtain employment in any EU Member State;
   c. visa-free travel within the Schengen Area and to numerous third countries; and
   d. the right to vote and stand as a candidate in European Parliament elections.

C. Who Can Apply?

1. Resident Permit holders who can demonstrate that they have been living in Greece for 7 years are eligible to apply for naturalization.
2. Depending on the type of residence permit held and the applicant's family status, the 7 years requirement may be reduced to three years or extended to 12.

D. Naturalization Examination

1. Applicants must obtain a Certificate of Adequacy of Knowledge for Naturalization (*Π.Ε.Γ.Π.*) by completing a written examination held twice a year covering the Greek language, history, geography and political and cultural topics.
2. An overall score of 70/100, with a minimum of 40/60 in Greek language and 20/40 in the remaining sections, is needed to pass the exam.
3. The following categories of applicants are exempt from this examination:
   a. graduates of Greek schools who have completed 9 years in primary and secondary education, or 6 years in secondary education;
   b. graduates of Greek language programs at Higher Education Institutions; and
   c. individuals who have completed a doctoral dissertation in Greek at a Higher Education Institution.

[1] pursuant to Article 20 of the Treaty on the Functioning of the European Union.

E. Evidence of Integration

1. Applications must be accompanied by documentation demonstrating the applicant's economic and social integration in Greece.
2. In practice, this requires evidence of adequate annual income, the threshold for which is established annually by a Ministerial Decision, and of up to date tax and social insurance payments.

F. Conclusion

1. The naturalization process requires careful attention to detail and thorough preparation.
2. Engaging experienced legal counsel can significantly streamline the procedure and help avoid potential delays.



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