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BRNews - Portuguese Nationality Law Update in 2026

Key Developments

What May Change and How the Political Context Impacts Citizenship Applicants?

Portugal's nationality framework is currently undergoing a period of significant legal and political reassessment, with proposed reforms pointing toward stricter requirements for citizenship in the near future.

In late 2025, Parliament approved a bill introducing substantial changes to the nationality regime. The proposed amendments included increasing the minimum residency requirement from 5 to 10 years (or 7 years for EU and CPLP nationals), as well as changing the starting point of the residency period to begin only upon the issuance of a residence permit, rather than from the date of application.

However, these changes have not entered into force.

Following a review by the Constitutional Court, key provisions of the bill were declared unconstitutional, particularly those affecting legal certainty and the protection of applicants already within the system. Consequently, the diploma (Decree No. 17/XVII) was returned to Parliament.

A new parliamentary discussion has been scheduled for 1 April 2026, where the Assembly is expected to reassess and potentially approve a revised version of the law.



What happens next?

Even if the revised bill is approved by Parliament, several formal steps remain before it becomes law:

- The diploma is sent to the President of the Republic for promulgation
- The President may approve, veto, or request further constitutional review
- Once promulgated, the law must be published in the Official Gazette
- Only after publication does the law enter into force (typically within a few days, unless otherwise specified)

Until all these steps are completed, the current legal framework remains fully in force, including the 5-year residency requirement for citizenship.

Practical Implications

From a strategic perspective, this creates a relevant window of opportunity.

Applicants who initiate their process under the current regime are placed in a stronger legal position, particularly in light of potential transitional protections and the general principle of non-retroactivity.

That said, the broader political trend clearly indicates a move toward tightening nationality and immigration rules throughout 2026, including stricter residence requirements and more regulated entry mechanisms.

Conclusion

While legislative changes are likely, they are not yet in force. The period between parliamentary approval and the law's effective entry into force remains a critical window.

For investors and residency-based applicants (including Golden Visa holders), timing is now a decisive factor in securing access to the current, more favourable regime.