



Tax & Business Lawyers

NEWSLETTER

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PERMANENT RESIDENCE VERSUS EU LONG-TERM RESIDENT STATUS UNDERSTANDING THE KEY DIFFERENCES

After five years of legal residence in Portugal, foreign nationals reach a key milestone that opens the door to two main long-term residence options: Permanent Residence and EU Long-Term Resident Status.

The focus shifts from temporary immigration pathways to more stable and strategic residence solutions, designed to support long-term life plans in Portugal and, in some cases, across the European Union.

Both regimes offer security and continuity, reducing dependence on temporary renewals and providing a more predictable legal framework for living, working, and planning in Portugal.

Private Clients



PERMANENT RESIDENCE IN PORTUGAL: WHAT YOU NEED TO KNOW

Permanent Residence represents an important milestone in the immigration journey, offering a more secure and stable basis for residing in Portugal on a long-term basis. It grants holders broad rights to live, work and study in the country, while eliminating the need to rely on successive temporary residence permit renewals.

Although the residence card must be renewed periodically (currently every five years, or whenever personal details change), the right of residence is not subject to a fixed validity period.

From a practical perspective, Permanent Residence reduces the administrative obligations associated with maintaining legal status in Portugal and provides greater certainty regarding an individual's long-term residence rights.

Another noteworthy advantage is the greater flexibility regarding time spent outside Portugal, as it allows for longer periods of absence, (within the limits established by law), which may be particularly beneficial for internationally mobile individuals and families.

ELIGIBILITY: THE REQUIREMENTS FOR “STANDARD” PERMANENT RESIDENCE

To qualify for standard Permanent Residence, applicants must cumulatively:

- ✓ Have held a temporary residence permit for at least five years
- ✓ Have no criminal convictions in the previous five years resulting in a sentence exceeding one year (with heightened scrutiny for serious offences)
- ✓ Present means of subsistence
- ✓ Show adequate accommodation in Portugal, and
- ✓ Prove basic Portuguese language knowledge

Once granted, the Permanent Residence card is valid for five years and renewal is streamlined documents already in AIMA's electronic systems are not requested again, which reduces time and friction.

EU LONG-TERM RESIDENT STATUS: WHAT YOU NEED TO KNOW

Alongside Permanent Residence, and after five years of legal residence in Portugal, foreign nationals may also be eligible to apply for EU Long-Term Resident Status.

EU Long-Term Resident Status is a European immigration status designed to strengthen the integration of third-country nationals who have established long-term ties within a Member State of the European Union.

In Portugal, it ensures a stable and Long-Term Residence framework, while also granting EU rights, including facilitated mobility across Member States.

Although this residence card must be renewed periodically in accordance with applicable regulations, the underlying status is not subject to a fixed validity period.

For individuals seeking greater mobility within the European Union and a residence status grounded in a harmonized EU legal framework, EU Long-Term Resident Status represents a meaningful step in consolidating long-term residence rights in Europe.

ELIGIBILITY: THE REQUIREMENTS FOR “E.U. LONG-TERM RESIDENT STATUS”

To qualify for EU long-term resident status, applicants must cumulatively:

- ✓ Have held five years of legal and continuous residence in Portugal
- ✓ Have no criminal convictions in the previous five years resulting in a sentence exceeding one year (with heightened scrutiny for serious offences)
- ✓ Present means of subsistence
- ✓ Show adequate accommodation in Portugal
- ✓ Prove basic Portuguese language knowledge, and
- ✓ Proof of health insurance or equivalent healthcare coverage

Once granted, EU Long-Term Resident Status is evidenced by the issuance of an EU long-term residence permit, valid for five years and renewable upon application.

In practice, renewal is simplified, as information already held by the authorities is generally not requested again, reducing significantly administrative burden and processing time.

LONG-TERM RESIDENT STATUS: ANYONE CAN APPLY?

EU Long-Term Resident Status is not available to all categories of residence permit holders. The regime is limited to individuals holding residence permits that reflect stable and long-term residence in Portugal, and excludes situations based on temporary, protection-related, or short-term mobility grounds.

PERMANENT RESIDENCE *VERSUS* THE LONG-TERM RESIDENT STATUS: WHAT IS THE PRACTICAL DIFFERENCE?

Permanent Residence and EU Long-Term Resident Status are often accessed at the same stage of an individual's immigration journey in Portugal, following five years of legal residence. While they share this common starting point, they serve different purposes and offer distinct practical advantages.

Permanent Residence is primarily designed to secure long-term stability in Portugal, granting individuals the right to live and work in the country without the need for further temporary residence renewals. It is a national status governed exclusively by Portuguese law and is focused on consolidating residence rights within Portugal.

*Permanent Residence
secures your life in Portugal
— EU Long-Term Resident
Status expands your
possibilities across the
European Union*

EU Long-Term Resident Status, by contrast, is a harmonized European status that not only provides long-term residence in Portugal but also enables facilitated mobility within the European Union, allowing residence in other Member States under certain conditions.

In both regimes, maintaining genuine ties with the country remains essential — prolonged absence may affect permanent residence in Portugal, while EU Long-Term Resident Status applies stricter EU-wide absence rules.

In practice, Permanent Residence focuses on certainty in Portugal, whereas EU Long-Term Resident Status extends that stability into a broader European framework.

The two statuses are therefore complementary and may be pursued in parallel once eligibility requirements are met.

CONCLUSION

Ultimately, both regimes represent different expressions of long-term residence stability. The most appropriate choice will depend on whether the focus is on consolidating life in Portugal or maintaining broader mobility within the European Union.

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