

Greek Citizenship

A Pathway to One of the World's
Most Powerful Passports



KOUTALIDIS | LAW FIRM

NEWSLETTER

Greek Citizenship: A Pathway to One of the World's Most Powerful Passports (Global Mobility Department – January 2026)

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I. Introduction - New Era for Greek Citizenship

Greek citizenship has increasingly attracted international attention, not only as a means of establishing a strong legal and personal connection with Greece, but also because of the global mobility advantages it offers. The **Greek passport** consistently ranks among the most powerful in the world, granting visa-free or visa-on-arrival access to **185 countries**, including (among others) all EU Member States, Australia, Canada, China and Japan. For 2026, according to the Henley Passport Index – Global Ranking, the Greek passport is **4th** in the ranking of the **most powerful passports worldwide**, reaffirming its exceptional value in terms of global mobility and international recognition.

In this context, acquiring Greek citizenship is not merely an administrative process but also a meaningful expansion of one's legal and personal identity, an opportunity to become part of the European Union and to connect with a nation that combines rich cultural heritage with modern dynamism. The rising number of applications by both expatriates of Greek descent and long-term residents of Greece underscores this growing interest.

In an era marked by global uncertainty and geopolitical turbulence, obtaining Greek citizenship also stands out as a secure and stable option for individuals seeking greater predictability and “*calmer waters*” for their personal and professional lives. Paradoxically—yet perhaps tellingly—Greek citizenship has come to be viewed as a form of refuge and stability in an increasingly unsettled world.

II. How Greek Citizenship is Acquired

Citizenship constitutes the legal bond between an individual and the State to which they belong, thereby creating the status of citizen of that State. For this reason, citizenship law is an area of fundamental public interest and is governed predominantly by national law. A careful assessment of the appropriate legal basis, strict compliance with the statutory prerequisites, and the

identification and submission of all required supporting documentation are essential conditions for the success of any application to acquire Greek citizenship.

The Code of Greek Citizenship (Law 3284/2004, as amended and currently in force) provides a variety of legal grounds for the attribution of Greek citizenship, including acquisition at birth (*ius sanguinis*), recognition procedures, and naturalisation paths.

Recently, amendments introduced by Law 5143/2024 (Government Gazette A' 161/11.10.2024) and by Law 5225/2025 (Government Gazette A' 152/02.09.2025) have sought to streamline aspects of these procedures, reflecting the Greek State's ongoing effort to accelerate processing times and reduce bureaucratic complexity.

a. Persons of Greek Descent: Restoring a Lost Link

A fundamental principle of Greek citizenship law is the automatic acquisition of citizenship at birth by a Greek parent (*ius sanguinis*).

However, within the global Greek diaspora, particularly in the case of those whose families left Greece in the 19th and early 20th centuries, administrative gaps often interrupted this transmission of nationality.

Common issues include:

- non-registration in municipal records,
- missing or incomplete civil or church records,
- registration of the parents in municipal records *after* a child's birth.

Article 56 of Law 5143/2024, replacing article 26 par. 1 of the Greek Citizenship Code, recently simplified the process of obtaining Greek Citizenship for adult children of Greek citizens who were registered as Greek citizens after their children's birth.

Additionally, for applicants whose connection to the Greek nation derives from previous generations (such as a grandparent) there is a specific naturalisation procedure under which certain requirements that would otherwise be applicable to foreign nationals of non-Greek origin are waived. This favourable legal framework allows individuals of Greek descent to acquire Greek citizenship through simplified procedures, without having to undergo the examinations required in the case of non-Greek origin applicants, regardless of whether they reside in Greece or abroad.

The main challenge that many persons of Greek descent wishing to acquire Greek Citizenship face is evidentiary: identifying and gathering vital records, some of which may date back over a century. Our team routinely supports clients in local and international archival searches, document verification, and historical tracing that would otherwise be overwhelming.

b. Non-Greek Foreign Nationals: The Naturalisation Route

The Nationality Code provides that foreign nationals of non-Greek origin who have lawfully resided in Greece for at least seven (7) continuous years, or who are related to a Greek citizen (e.g. spouse) and have resided in Greece for at least three (3) years, may apply for Greek citizenship by naturalisation. Through this procedure, the applicant must demonstrate that they have integrated into Greek society. To that end, applicants are required to take examinations assessing their level of proficiency in the Greek language and their knowledge of Greek history, geography, culture, customs and institutions.

The type of residence permit held by the applicant is also a decisive factor, since certain categories of residence permit facilitate the path to acquiring Greek citizenship. Recent legislative amendments introduced by article 96 of Law 5225/2025 have also enhanced flexibility for older applicants: individuals over the age of 62 now have the option to sit the standardized written examinations instead of being obliged to undergo the previously mandatory oral examination before a committee.

Determining the correct strategy, from securing the appropriate type of residence permit, to collecting the necessary documents (which often requires cooperation with the applicant's country of origin), to ensuring the applicant's familiarity with Greek society and culture, are all critical factors for the successful processing of a naturalisation application.

c. Honorary Naturalisation: A Fast-Track Pathway

Granted by the **President of the Hellenic Republic**, honorary naturalisation is reserved for individuals who have made exceptional contributions to Greece, or whose naturalisation serves a significant national interest.

This route often applies to:

- internationally recognised figures,
- artists, philanthropists, and cultural contributors,
- major investors or corporate leaders,
- athletes,
- individuals enhancing Greece's humanitarian, economic or global profile.

Because of its honorary nature, the procedure is greatly simplified and does not involve ordinary naturalisation requirements. While this remains an exceptional and discretionary process of obtaining Greek citizenship, there have been recent honorary naturalisations which may serve as guidance on the applicable criteria.

III. Concluding Remarks

Acquiring Greek citizenship represents not only a legal process but also an act of belonging, a reconnection with Greece's cultural and historical identity and a conscious choice to join its

modern European community. Whether through recognition of citizenship via a declaratory administrative act, naturalisation or honorary naturalisation, each route requires strategic legal planning, procedural precision, and in-depth understanding of the relevant statutory framework. In light of the continuous legislative amendments shaping the Code of Greek Citizenship, staying informed and receiving accurate legal guidance has become more essential than ever for applicants navigating this evolving landscape.

Our dedicated **Global Mobility Department** is well-positioned to assess, advise and represent clients across the full spectrum of citizenship and residency matters. With extensive experience before Greek administrative authorities and a deep understanding of the citizenship law complexities, our team provides end-to-end support, from eligibility assessment, document research and verification to application submission and follow-up before the competent authorities.

Important Notice

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