

Portugal keeps the door open for Sephardic Jews, even as Spain closes it

Sephardic Jews around the world can get quick access to Portuguese citizenship. Spain is no longer an option.

SITGES, BARCELONA, SPAIN, October 2, 2020 /EINPresswire.com/ -- Thousands of Sephardic Jews from around the globe have taken up the offer of Spanish and Portuguese citizenship. But, after four years Spain has failed to extend their program. This change makes Portugal the only option for anyone with Sephardi heritage to have easy access to a European Union passport.



The Portugal Citizenship offer for Sephardic Jews is welcoming. There are no language requirements or exams. And, you don't have to spend any time in Portugal to get citizenship and a passport."

Alison Johnson

In 2015 both Spain and Portugal launched programs to address the wrongs of the past. Starting in 1492 Jewish communities were persecuted and exiled from the Iberian Peninsula or Sepharad (the area made up of modern-day Spain and Portugal). The persecution forced tens of thousands to flee the area, settling in Europe, North Africa,

the Middle East and the Americas. The programs offered a quick pathway to citizenship and a passport for anyone who could show ancestors impacted by this persecution.

The Sephardi Diaspora in Argentina, Brazil, Morocco, Turkey, the USA, and other countries enthusiastically reclaimed their birthright. Spain alone processed more than 130,000 applications. Many successful applicants have remained in their home countries, but a significant portion has moved to the European Union.

Spain's program expired in October of 2018 but was extended for one additional year. The offer was not extended in 2019, and currently, there is no indication that it will start up again any time soon. But Portugal's offer still is a pathway for those with Portuguese or Spanish heritage.

Advantages of the Portugal Citizenship Program

- You can apply from your home country without visiting Portugal.
- There is no Portuguese language requirement.
- There are no exams in the process. The Spanish process required exams on culture and constitution.

- You do not have to show that you have current links to Portugal.
- The Jewish communities of Lisbon and Porto have experience in proving Sephardic heritage. They will be able to assist with your heritage claim.
- The Portuguese government recognizes that there was significant interaction throughout the Sephardad (modern-day Portugal and Spain). Because of this any historical links, either Spanish or Portuguese, will qualify you for citizenship and a passport.
- There is no deadline for the [Portuguese Sephardic citizenship program](#). Portugal's immigration department is currently accepting and processing applications.
- Portugal allows dual citizenship. You do not have to give up your current citizenships and passports when you are naturalized.
- You can pass Portuguese citizenship onto your children. They will have all the rights and opportunities of European Union citizenship.
- Portugal's passport is one of the most powerful in the world. It is ranked in the top 10 of most passport rankings with visa-free access to 186 countries and territories.

The Portuguese Sephardic Citizenship program only has two stated requirements.

- You can show that you are a Sephardi Jew with links to the Sepharad.
- You are of good character.

So how do you prove your links to the exiled Jewish population? The Portuguese government looks to the Jewish communities of Porto and Lisbon for advice. The organizations are experts in Sephardic heritage and diaspora and will assess and certify applicants. Other recognized Jewish organizations can also assist, but the Portuguese based organizations are expert in the exact requirements.

The Portuguese government recognizes that the Sephardi communities of Spain and Portugal overlapped considerably. This recognition means that as long as you can show links to the Sepharad, it does not matter if those links are to Spain or Portugal. Both will be acceptable for your application.

Alison Johnson of [Where Can I Live](#) says, "The Portugal Citizenship offer for Sephardic Jews is superior in many ways to the expired Spanish offering. There are no Portuguese language requirements and no cultural exams, unlike the old Spanish program. There are also no residency requirements; you don't have to spend any time at all in Portugal to be eligible for citizenship."

She continues, "Portuguese citizenship and passport are highly sought after. They offer full European Union rights to live and work in any of the 31 European Economic Area countries. The Portuguese passport offers visa-free travel to more than 160 countries and territories. Importantly, you can pass on Portuguese citizenship to future generations. And, Portugal allows dual citizenships, so you don't have to give up your current nationalities and passports."

The Portuguese government has given no indication that the program will end, but the experience of those who missed out on Spanish citizenship stands as a lesson.

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