

New Balkans Law Office

Bulgarian Citizenship on the basis of Origin

ABOUT US

New Balkans Law Office is a Bulgarian legal services provider, specialising in corporate and commercial law, with a particular emphasis on advisory and cross-border work and an interest in the technology and venture capital and private equity sectors. Founded in 2005, the firm has gone from strength to strength, providing advice primarily to international clients and diversifying its portfolio of practice areas. It also has a strong private client practice.

The firm is distinguished by its modern approach and international reach, with offices in both Sofia and London. A number of our lawyers are dual-qualified, particularly helpful when dealing with cross-border issues.

With lawyers experienced in the conduct of both local Bulgarian and international legal business, we are able to strike a balance between local and international demands. Our lawyers' professional experience and academic excellence set us apart from our peers.

CLIENT BACKGROUNDS

Our clients originate from a range of countries and industries. We serve large corporate and private clients alike. Since the firm's founding in 2005, we have acted for private investors, international think-tanks, multi-national venture capitalists and government bodies.

We advise both investors new to Bulgaria and those with previous experience. Our work includes the structuring of region-wide and international transactions which frequently makes use of Bulgaria's advantageous corporate and tax infrastructure.

FAST

We understand our clients' needs for a prompt and responsive service and the urgency for document production that can arise. At the same time, we remain committed to professionalism and attention to detail.

EFFICIENT

We provide specialist teams which rapidly respond to transactional demands. These small, flexible teams deal with your client matters efficiently.

INNOVATIVE

We supervise and train our junior and senior lawyers extensively and value international experience.

FLEXIBLE

We discuss at length each client's budgeting schedule, their prior experience of Bulgaria and manages the engagement in a way advantageous to the client.

AFFORDABLE

Our rates are very competitive and we strive to offer cost structures that are closely aligned with clients' internal budgeting processes and with what is of highest value to them.

Bulgarian Citizenship on the basis of Origin: Benefits and Requirements

Introduction

Since 1 January 2007, Bulgaria has been a member state of the European Union (EU) and thereby of the 30-state European Economic Area (EEA). This has coincided with a rise in economic growth, making it even more attractive for individuals and businesses from around the world to establish in Bulgaria, invest and work locally and benefit from the country's freer and deeper connections with the rest of the European continent.

As EU citizens, Bulgarian citizens now have the right to freely offer services, set up in business or relocate for the sake of employment, retirement, studies or simply as persons of independent means, throughout the EEA.

As of 2011, 16 European EEA countries have fully opened their labour markets to Bulgarian citizens seeking employment. 12 further countries will do so by the end of 2012, with the remainder (Liechtenstein and Switzerland) by the end of 2014. In all cases, self-employment or establishment for business, retirement, as a student or as a person of independent means are possible even now.

This brochure deals with the law and practice of acquiring Bulgarian nationality on the basis of Bulgarian origin. Please see our separate brochures on acquiring citizenship

through residence, investment or marriage for more information.

Requirements

There are two main conditions Bulgarian Citizenship on the basis of origin:

- a) One of the applicant's ancestors is or was a Bulgarian
- b) The applicant has not been convicted of a criminal offence by a Bulgarian Court in a public prosecution, nor is there a pending prosecution.

The definition of 'Bulgarian' is ethnic as well as cultural. Any written evidence that an ancestor who identified as Bulgarian in any documented form in the past can provide the necessary nexus for claiming Bulgarian origin. Naturally, where the predecessor did not live on the territory of Bulgaria at the time of identifying, proof will be more difficult but by no means impossible. At the same time, an ancestor who would have identified themselves differently (eg, as an Armenian, a Russian or a Jew) but was in fact a Bulgarian national, is sufficient to establish the necessary Bulgarian origin, too.

In contrast to other nationality laws (for example, those of Spain and Italy), it does not matter for the purposes of acquiring nationality on the basis of origin generation to that of the applicant, the last Bulgarian ancestor lived.

Why Bulgarian citizenship?

Some benefits Bulgarian citizenship offers:

- Right to establishment and employment in Bulgaria itself
- Right to establishment and employment in the EU
- Visa-free travel to Europe, Latin America and much of Asia
- Access to Bulgarian and EU public services which encourage and fund education, enterprise and culture

Crucially also, there is no requirement for the applicant in this category to speak Bulgarian or to have lived in the country for a period of time before applying.

Bulgarian Citizenship on the basis of Origin: Documents and Process

Documents

New Balkans Law Office will advise further in detail on the required documents. The list includes:

- a completed application form
- a Power of Attorney, authorising an application by a representative
- a birth certificate
- a copy of the national ID from the applicant's current country of nationality
- an original certificate/letter/document from a foreign or Bulgarian authority, certifying the applicant's predecessors' Bulgarian origin
- a certificate of good character from the countries of nationality of the applicant and from the country or countries of current residence
- a compliant photograph

In the absence of an official document proving Bulgarian origin, the Bulgarian government's Agency for Bulgarians Abroad is the competent body to certify the applicant's origin. An application to this agency is made in advance of the full application and permits a relatively free range of possible proofs of Bulgarian national awareness of the applicant's predecessor. The applicant is required to have a Bulgarian national awareness (based on their ancestry), too.

Timescale

By comparison to its equivalent in Italy, Spain or Greece, the Bulgarian procedure can be quick. The Ministry of Justice is required to issue an Opinion within 12 months (but may in practice take up to 24 months). A passport can then be issued immediately.

New Balkans Law Office Approach

The process of obtaining citizenship and collating the necessary documents can appear daunting. New Balkans Law Office will advise on the best solution for a client's needs, and offer support throughout the process ensuring that the correct and full set is filed from the start. Our in-depth knowledge and experience with citizenship applications ensures that clients acquire citizenship quickly and easily.

For further information on the citizenship requirements, the mechanics of the application and the concrete circumstances of your case, or for other immigration and nationality law questions, please contact us. Contacts of our London and Sofia offices can be found overleaf.

Where to find us

Our offices

CONTACT US

We are always available for consultations on recent developments in Bulgarian law.

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NBLO is the legal business of New Balkans Law Office EOOD, a company registered in Bulgaria. Please see further www.newbalkanslawoffice.com/legal.php for the terms on which NBLO's services, including this brochure, are provided.

The main NBLO office is in central Sofia. It is fully capable of supporting the needs of the services that NBLO offers.

Our office located in London is a representative office which undertakes client liaison and allows the firm to serve all the needs of clients directly. You are always able to contact or meet us in London to discuss any issue which require an immediate conference or demand immediate attention in Europe's pre-eminent financial centre.

All types of work performed by our Bulgarian lawyers are supported and liaised on from London.