

New Balkans Law Office

Bulgarian Citizenship on the basis of Residence Brochure

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 Residence: 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 fast economic growth, making it even more attractive for individuals 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, Bulgarians 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, in all of the EEA countries.

As of 2011, 17 EEA countries have fully opened their labour markets to Bulgarian citizens seeking employment. 12 further countries will do so by the 1 January 2012, with the remaining 2 by the end of 2013.

In all cases, self-employment or establishment for business, retirement, as a student or as a person of independent means are fully possible as of present date.

Acquiring Bulgarian citizenship on the basis of residence requires establishing connections with Bulgaria and the passage of time.

This brochure deals with the law and practice of acquiring Bulgarian nationality on the basis of investment, residence or marriage. Please see our separate brochure – 'Bulgarian Nationality on the Basis of Origin' – for information on an alternative route.

Requirements

To naturalise, an applicant with no relevant Bulgarian family connections must meet requirements (a) - (d) below:

(a) Residence:

(i) She or he received a permanent residence permit in Bulgaria no less than 5 years before the date of the application and is in possession of such a permit at the time of the application; or

(ii) She or he received a permanent residence permit in Bulgaria no less than 3 years before the date of the application and either:

- has been married to a Bulgarian citizen for 3 years or more (not necessarily the same 3 years as the period of residence in Bulgaria);
- was born in Bulgaria; or
- received a permanent residence permit for Bulgaria before reaching the age of majority.

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

(b) Character:

The applicant has not been convicted in a Bulgarian court following a public prosecution and is not subject to an ongoing prosecution.

(c) Financial circumstances:

The person has an income or profession that provides sufficiently for living in Bulgaria.

(d) Knowledge of Bulgarian:

Conversational Bulgarian is required of applicants for naturalisation of non-Bulgarian origin. Proof can be provided by passing a standard test set by the Bulgarian Ministry of Education

Bulgarian Citizenship on the basis of Residence: Documents and Process

What documents are required?

New Balkans Law Office will advise further in detail on the required documents. The list for an application on the basis of marriage, residence or investment includes:

- a completed application form
- a (certified copy of a) birth certificate
- copy national ID from the applicant's current country of citizenship
- certificate of good character from the countries of nationalities of the applicant and the country or countries of current residence
- evidence of conversational ability in Bulgarian
- evidence of available financial means
- evidence of the relevant circumstances of residence, marriage, or birth unless contained elsewhere in the documentation.

Timescale

The Ministry of Justice is required to issue an Opinion within 18 months of submitting a formal application (although may in practice take longer).

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 more information, 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.