Global Immigration alert

October 2025

Portugal

New border control measures and rules on family reunification and CPLP permits

Executive summary

Portugal implemented the Entry/Exit System (EES) on 12 October 2025. It also introduced new, stricter rules for holders of residence permits for Community of Portuguese Language Countries (CPLP) and individuals applying for residence authorization in Portugal on the basis of family reunification.

Background

Persistent challenges in managing immigration applications, family reunification requests, and border control prompted the Portuguese government to review the Foreigners Law. The revised framework aims to improve coordination between public authorities, strengthen legal certainty, and respond to constitutional concerns previously raised by the Constitutional Court.

Key developments

The following changes were recently introduced:

- *Entry/Exit system (EES):* On 12 October 2025, Portugal implemented the EES at its border checkpoints. The EES is now fully operational in Portugal. The EES is a new IT system designed to record the entry and exit of non-EU nationals at external Schengen borders. It replaces manual passport stamping with biometric data collection to enhance border security and streamline travel processes.
- *Family reunification:* The authorities are now processing family reunification applications within nine months, with a possible extension of up to nine additional months in complex cases. The previous processing time for these applications was 90 business days. Additionally, applicants must now prove that they have access to adequate housing (either owned or rented) that meets regional standards (e.g., rental agreements registered with the tax authorities, certified declarations of honor) and complies with safety and health regulations. This replaces the previous requirement which only required proof of accommodation. Finally, these applications may now only be submitted after two years of legal residence in Portugal. Previously, there was no such requirement. Exceptions apply in the following situations:
  - Spouses or partners who have cohabited with the permit holder for at least 18 months prior to entry may submit applications after 15 months of residence.
  - Spouses or partners who are parents or adoptive parents of a minor or dependent, as well as minor children or dependents under the holder's care, are exempt from the two-year residence requirement.
  - Family members of holders of highly qualified or Golden Visa residence permits are also exempt from the two-year residence requirement.
- *Job-seeker visas:* This visa category is now limited to highly qualified professionals. The general pathway for third-country nationals without a prior job offer was removed.
- *Residence permits for Community of Portuguese Language Countries (CPLP) nationals:* Nationals of CPLP member countries must obtain a residence visa in their country of origin. Previously, they could enter Portugal as tourists and later convert their stay into a residence permit.

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Impact on employers
Employers may reassess workforce planning and internal policies and processes to ensure compliance and minimize business delays and disruptions.

Key steps
EY will continue to monitor these developments. Should you have any questions, we encourage you to contact one of our immigration professionals.

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