

BUREAUCRACY IN PORTUGAL

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I'm not a fan of bureaucracy & bureaucrats (to say the least) & I learned many years ago that the best way to deal with it is to beat the bureaucrats at their own game & know the criteria & processes better than they do & to always be ready for any curveball that might come your way & as Portugal is renown for it's acute variable bureaucracy syndrome & as you're a stranger in a strange land when you arrive this is especially important.

The Portuguese Government is well aware of how confusing some processes are & they regularly launch new stages of their Simplex Program & these changes are (obviously) aimed at making life easier for people & you'll find a separate info piece in the files on Simplex & also a website & page directory also in the files section that will help you with the correct information you need.

Portugal is at least trying to improve the bureaucracy issues for it's citizens & residents alike & the Loja do Cidadao (Citizen's Shop) & Espacao do Cidadao (Citizen's Space) are part of the eportugal.gov.pt department & are a nationwide one stop shop for pretty much all bureaucratic processes & are open to all residents of Portugal no matter what passport the resident has & pretty much every town will have either a Loja do Cidadao or an Espacao do Cidadao & all are marked on Apple & Google maps.

<https://eportugal.gov.pt/en/locais-de-atendimento-de-servicos-publicos>

There is also the CLAIM offices which is also part of the eportugal network & offer support on bureaucratic & other processes specifically to immigrants & are also magnificently helpful to us.

<https://eportugal.gov.pt/en/servicos/centros-locais-de-apoio-a-integracao-de-migrantes-claim->

Be aware that many documents are required to be less than a certain age..... In many (but not all cases) they need to be less than either **THREE or SIX MONTHS** old however, in some cases, older documents such as marriage certificates can sometimes be updated with an Apostille by either the Government or Embassy of the issuing country.

The quote below from the files section of this group.

As the subject of date expiration of documents & Apostilles regularly comes up on the groups, I thought I'd consult my Embassy contacts on the issue & their reply is below..... and yes. I do appreciate that might make life difficult for some & I also find myself questioning the logic of requiring documents such as birth & marriage certificates that could easily/often relate to an event that happened many years ago needing to be no older than 3/6 months old?
"Official documents in Portugal generally have limited validity - some 3 months, others 6 months. This is because they are subject to change over time - for example, birth certificates, criminal records, property registrations, etc. therefore, the validity rule applies to the actual document and not the apostille. That said, the validity of both the document and the apostille should go hand-in-hand in that the document should be issued first, followed by the apostille."

These time restriction often change and whilst many of the info pieces in this files section will give you the time limits (as much as we can) you also need to check the links contained in the articles just to be 110% sure they haven't changed since they were written & always remember it's better to have a document & not need it than to need it & not have it & also to work on what I call the Scalia Principle which is that 'it says what it says & does not say what it does not say' which means that if the required documents list says something is needed then it is needed & if it does say it is needed then it is not needed. (Justice Scalia was a US Supreme Court Judge who gave that definition to the 2nd amendment of the US Constitution & I've always admired that piece of deductive logical logic. 😊)

It really doesn't matter whether you're dealing with SEF (border agency/home affairs), IMT (traffic dept), Camara (town hall) or anyone else the first thing to do is check ALL criteria for the process you're trying to achieve, ask for a list of required documents when you book the appointment & then take not only those documents with you but also any & all other documentation that might relate in any way to your application & if claiming something like a reunification of family visa then even proof of monetary transactions between each other's accounts and/or proof of shared holidays etc can all add to the pile of proving the relationship is genuine & long term.

On the subject of required or specific documents you need to ensure you have the absolutely correct version & good examples of that are the UK Police Criminal Report where a variety of different ones are available & whilst it's not uncommon for a DBS report to be presented & accepted the correct PCR for the purposes of residency & citizenship applications is the ACRO report which is obtained from & **note the first para on that website that states "Police Certificates are for people who wish to emigrate or require a visa to live and work abroad."**

The certificate details whether or not you have a criminal record in the United Kingdom and is required as part of the visa process by the respective high commission or embassy."

<https://www.acro.police.uk/police-certificates>

Note that Scotland have their own version at <https://www.mygov.scot/police-record>

Another good example is the Apostille attached to a document from South Africa where the Hague agreement says Apostilles can be issued by DIRCO who are at <http://www.dirco.gov.za/> or the SA High Court however the immigration dept here (SEF) often decline the High Court version & only accept the DIRCO version so bear that in mind before you go for the simpler route as SA is a long way from Portugal if you need to correct your error at short notice & whatever you do, don't even try to 'wing it' SA style as that won't ever work when it comes to any bureaucratic process here in Portugal.

Also bear in mind that a degree of understanding of & respect for the culture of our host country goes a very long way when dealing with anyone but especially bureaucrats. Many/most cultures are taught that everyone is always busy so get in, get what you want & get out so you don't waste anyone's time but in Portugal a few kind words at the start very often goes a very long way & an initial statement such as

'Ola, como esta? Não esta um belo dia? Pergunto-me se pode ajuda-lo, pois preciso de fazer ABC e não tenho a certeza de como o fazer?'

Or if you can't do it in Portuguese then the English version is 'Hello, how are you? Isn't it a lovely day. I wonder if you can help you as I need to do ABC and am not sure how to do it?' and such a start to the conversation achieves a whole lot more than going in like a bull in a china shop.

Another tip if you struggle with the language (as most of us do) is to install a good translator app such as DeepL on your smartphone & then you can select the microphone, camera or text option to communicate & yet another option is to ask the person who lives your smartphone what the words you need are & if an Apple Iphone it's 'Hey Siri, how do I say (whatever phrase) in Portuguese & Siri will speak the words. – That method tends to mean a somewhat one way conversation but it's way better than nothing & more detail on that is to be found in "How To Beat The Language Barrier" in the files section of the group.

Yet another tip is to try to learn the language if what I call "Diplospeek" which relates to how legislation, bureaucrats, politicians & diplomats say & do not say & you very often learn at least as much (if not more) by what they do not say as you do by what they say & as part of that it often helps if you apply the Scalia Principle as mentioned earlier in this info piece.

Also, you can sometimes “reverse engineer” the Diplospeak principle if you are struggling to get a reply from Gvt agencies such as SEF who at the time of writing have been in dispute with Gvt for something in the region of 3 years & end an email with a statement such as “If I do not hear from you to the contrary by ABC time on XYZ date then I shall assume” etc. I do appreciate the issues that might relate to that but it will at the very least often give you a degree of wriggle room & it certainly beats the heck out of being in limbo where no-one is willing or able to tell you what is or is not permitted.

Also don’t forget, there’s no point in wailing on Facebook that you’re in a Government office and haven’t got ABC document and asking for urgent help because at that point, it’s almost certainly going to be too late to correct your omissions and/or errors.

Also remember that when dealing with any bureaucrat or bureaucratic process in any country, it is often VERY important to ask the right question or questions if you want to get the answer you need & a good example of that is to be found on the link below.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ahgjEjJkZks>

SO DO YOUR HOMEWORK ABSOLUTELY THOROUGHLY BEFOREHAND!

Good luck!