



## Frequently asked questions about citizenship in Greece

The questions below have been drawn up as part of the general effort to inform the public about terms and issues related to the procedures for the award of Hellenic citizenship to non-nationals. The questions have been selected on the basis of the most common misconceptions often faced by the Ombudsman while serving citizens.

**Is citizenship (“ithagenia”) different from nationality (the quality of being a subject of a country - “ypikootita”)?**

In their current legal and administrative use the two concepts are identical. In other words, Greek citizens have ‘Hellenic (Greek) citizenship’ or alternatively ‘Hellenic (Greek) nationality’. Among the two definitions citizenship is preferable because monarchies have subjects while democracies have citizens.

**What does it mean to be «of Greek descent» (“omogenis”)?**

It identifies the person who holds the citizenship of another country but is of Greek origin/descent and is linked with Greece by strong links. The term is regarded as distinct from an ‘alien’ who belongs to another national community.

**What does it mean to be a “national” (“imedapos”)?**

“A national” is a Greek citizen. The term is regarded as distinct from an alien who is a foreign citizen or a stateless person. Aliens are divided in ‘European citizens’ or EU-citizens, who have similar rights to those of Greek nationals, and third-country nationals (non-EU citizens) whose rights are governed by the Immigration Code.

**What does “statelessness” mean?**

A stateless person is someone whom no country recognises as a citizen. A UN special Treaty since 1961 calls on the Member States to take measures to reduce and eliminate the phenomenon of statelessness. To date, Greece has not acceded to the Treaty.

**What does “repatriated immigrant of Greek descent” mean (“palinoston”)?**

The term describes persons returning to their home country. In Greece, in recent decades, these terms have been used almost exclusively to designate the return to Greece of former Soviet Union citizens of Greek descent (Greek expatriates).

### **Who has direct access to Hellenic citizenship?**

You are a direct holder of Hellenic citizenship if you are born, recognized or adopted as minors by at least one parent who is a Greek citizen.

### **Who is entitled to receive Hellenic citizenship?**

In general, persons born in Greece by alien parents legally residing in Greece, but also descendants of foreign nationals legal residents who have completed a specific period of attendance in the Greek educational system, are entitled to the Hellenic citizenship. Other foreign nationals who are legal residents in Greece may, under certain conditions, submit applications for the award of Hellenic citizenship, which will be processed following the procedures of 'naturalisation' of aliens or persons of Greek descent. For more information go to: <https://www.svnigoros.gr/resources/20180212-aplopoiimenes-odigies-politografisis.pdf>

### **Where do you file an application to obtain the Hellenic citizenship?**

Those living in Greece can submit applications to the Citizenship Directorates (or Departments) operating in the area where they live. A detailed list is available on the relevant webpage of the Ministry of Interior (info: <https://www.ypes.gr/g-g-ithageneias/>). Persons having Greek citizens as ancestors or persons of Greek descent who live abroad can submit their requests to the Greek consulate in their area.

### **Are there any specific grounds accelerating the award of Hellenic citizenship?**

Approved grounds for acceleration of the procedures on citizenship award are those related to health and study abroad issues. For both reasons strong documentary evidence is required (info: [https://www.ypes.gr/UserFiles/f0ff9297-f516-40ff-a70e-eca84e2ec9b9/egk47491-10\\_092\\_018\\_I.pdf](https://www.ypes.gr/UserFiles/f0ff9297-f516-40ff-a70e-eca84e2ec9b9/egk47491-10_092_018_I.pdf).) Grounds such as moving abroad to work, acquisition of benefits, members of large families, kinship to a Greek citizen or common religion with the majority of the population of Greece, which are often invoked, are not valid grounds for acceleration of the procedure.

### **Why do the conditions for determining persons of Greek descent from Turkey, Albania, the former Soviet Union and other countries vary?**

This is because our country has been asked to extend its protection to each of these communities in different periods of time, when distinct historical and political conditions were in place. Specifically, Greece established a framework for the protection of communities of Greek descent from Turkey (Istanbul and Bosphorus Islands) in the 50s, for those coming from the former Soviet Union at the end of the 80s, while for Albania in the 90s.

### **Can someone apply to renounce the Hellenic citizenship?**

A citizen who has clearly lost his/her ties with Greece and has acquired the citizenship of another country can apply for the removal of Greek nationality (see paragraphs 1 & 2 of Article 16 and Article 18 of the HCC concerning the loss and renunciation of Hellenic citizenship, respectively).

### **Can the Greek State remove the citizenship from a Greek citizen?**

Yes, if the competent bodies (Ministry of the Interior and Citizenship Board) consider, after thorough justification, that the person concerned acts against Greek interests (no. 17 of the HCC for loss of Greek nationality due to revocation).

### **What is “hellenisation” (“ellinopiisi”)?**

It is an unsatisfactory term which is often used as a synonym to naturalisation (award of citizenship). Its use has been often linked to the irregular alteration of the country of origin for products (e.g. ‘the hellenisation of meat’). When used orally or in writing to declare award of Hellenic citizenship to aliens, it implies that Hellenic citizenship has been irregularly awarded.

### **What is the European Citizenship?**

The “European Citizenship” is established by Article 20 of the Treaty on the Functioning of the European Union (“Lisbon Treaty”) according to which “Every person holding the nationality of a Member State shall be a citizen of the Union”. This is not a primary citizenship since it is added to the already existing citizenship of a Member State, meaning that a “European citizen” is already a citizen of a Member State of the EU. As in the case of Member State citizenship, EU citizenship refers to the relationship between the citizen and the European Union, a relationship governed by rights, obligations and participation in political life, such as freedom of movement and residence in the EU, consular protection, etc.