



# NAVIGATING DANISH CITIZENSHIP – PART 1

TRYING TO UNDERSTAND THE CITIZENSHIP PROCESS IN DENMARK CAN BE A CHALLENGE. OUR LEGAL EXPERT HAYEL CELIK-GRAVERSEN TACKLES THE CRITICAL QUESTIONS OVER THIS TWO-PART SERIES.

PHOTOGRAPHS UNSPLASH / ISTOCK TEXT HAYEL CELIK-GRAVERSEN

**THE MEDIA CURRENTLY** covers headlines about Danes or foreigners who have lived here for many years and established an everyday life as someone who contributes to Danish society as a taxpayer, worker, and deeply emersed themselves in Danish culture. Sadly, some still find themselves struggling for years with the authorities to obtain Danish citizenship.

We go into more detail this issue about what it takes to become a Danish citizen. The quote "*Med lov skal man land bygge*" (With law, you shall build a country) as it stands on the pillars of the city courthouse of Copenhagen is very expressive that the Danish state is based on the rule of law. What does this mean for both residents and people coming from abroad? It is fundamental in Denmark that government bodies and authorities must always comply with the law in accordance with democratic values and fundamental rights. Like all courts, they always must be free and independent.

However, Denmark has acceded to several international conventions relevant to the handling of citizenship cases. The government and The Danish Parliament indicate that the international obligations are assumed to be met in this area. Meaning, both the general rules and the specific decisions on granting citizenship must take place within the legal framework required by the European Convention on Nationality. Denmark has recognised that the interests of States and individuals must be considered in matters relating to citizenship. It emphasises, among other things, the principle of non-discrimination and the obligation to avoid statelessness as far as possible.

## WHAT ARE THE CONDITIONS FOR APPLYING?

To obtain Danish citizenship, you must meet several conditions, e.g., regarding self-support, employment, residence in Denmark, and learn Denmark's language and cultural knowledge.

## DECLARATION OF ALLEGIANCE AND LOYALTY

You must pledge allegiance and loyalty to Denmark and Danish society and declare (electronically via 'NemID') that you will comply with Danish law, including '*Grundloven*' (the Constitution), and respect fundamental Danish values, legal principles, including Danish democracy.

## PERMANENT/INDEFINITE RESIDENCE PERMIT AND RESIDENCE IN DENMARK

An indefinite residence permit is issued at the request of the Danish Agency for International Recruitment and Integration (SIRI). A previously issued EU registration certificate under the EU Residence Order does not constitute proof that you have acquired the right to permanent residence in Denmark. *Modification:* Certain groups of applicants do not have to meet one or both conditions, including other Nordic citizens, former Danish citizens, persons of Danish descent, Danish-minded South Schleswigers, or, e.g. applicants who are resident abroad because of their Danish spouse's work promoting Danish interests. You must be a resident in Denmark. This means that you live permanently in Denmark and registered at a Danish address in the Central Person Register ('CPR register').



## RESIDENCE

It is usually a condition for obtaining Danish citizenship that you have had 9 years of continuous residence in Denmark. However, special conditions for the length of the period of residence apply to specific groups of applicants:

*Refugees and stateless persons, etc.:* After 8 years of uninterrupted residence.

*Nordic citizens:* After 2 years of uninterrupted residence.

*Spouses of Danish citizens:* Persons who are married to a Danish citizen can obtain Danish citizenship after 6-8 years of continuous residence depending on the duration of the marriage:

1. If the marriage has lasted > 3 years and the Danish spouse has been a Danish citizen for at least 3 years, you can obtain Danish citizenship after 6 years of continuous residence.
2. If the marriage has lasted for > 2 years and the Danish spouse has been a Danish citizen for at least 3 years, you can obtain Danish citizenship after 7 years of continuous residence.
3. If the marriage has lasted for > 1 year and the Danish spouse has been a Danish citizen for at least 3 years, you can obtain Danish citizenship after 8 years of continuous residence.

*Please note:* People who have entered Denmark before the age of 15 can obtain Danish citizenship when they reach 18. It is a condition that any education during your stay in Denmark has been of a Danish nature (e.g. Danish primary school, upper secondary education and alike). Likewise, if you are educated in Denmark or have taken a significant part of your education in Denmark, you can obtain Danish citizenship after 5 years of continuous residence in Denmark if the programme is of a Danish nature and has lasted for at least 3 years, including examinations.





For Part 2 of Navigating Danish citizenship, remember to read our August issue. **THE-INTL**



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Danish born and a true islander from Amager, Copenhagen, Hayel is a descendent from East Mediterranean, Caucasus-Asia and Native America backgrounds, so being an expert in international matters was an easy career choice. After more than 10 years of experience, she founded her own legal hub, which offers support within cross-border legal issues for internationals working in Denmark and Danes moving abroad. Hayel is committed to supporting gender equality and making conscious life priorities such as being successful and breaking our time's challenges, keeping an active lifestyle, and basically living the so-called norm of a Nordic work-life balance.

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