Embassy of the United States of America
Athens, Greece
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GREEK CITIZENSHIP CODE

DISCLAIMER: The following information is presented so that you have a better understanding of the laws, which are presently in force. The information is provided as a convenience to American citizens in Greece and in no way constitutes an official recommendation by the U.S. Government or its representatives. For official and authoritative information, please consult the Greek Ministry of Interior, at 31 Stadiou Street, 105 59 Athens, tel. 210-324-9465,210-324-9314, the city hall or community office of the area of your residency.

WARNING: Americans who voluntarily apply for citizenship of a foreign nation may, under certain circumstances, lose their U.S. citizenship. Marriage does not constitute the acquisition or loss of Greek Citizenship. For further information, please consult the U.S. Embassy Consular Section or the Consulate General in Thessaloniki.

Chapter A

ACQUISITION OF GREEK CITIZENSHIP

By Birth
Article 1

1. The child of Greek parents acquires Greek citizenship by birth.
2. Greek citizenship is acquired upon the birth of a child in Greece in the event that the child does not acquire another foreign citizenship by birth or its citizenship is unknown at the time of birth.

By Recognition
Article 2

A foreign child born out of wedlock, who is legally recognized by a Greek national voluntarily or by full judicial acknowledgment, becomes a Greek citizen if during the acknowledgement the foreign child had been a minor (before reaching the age of 18).

By Adoption
Article 3

1. A person who has been adopted as a minor by a Greek national becomes Greek from the day of his/her adoption.

By enlistment in the Armed Services
Article 4

1. Aliens of Greek ethnic origin, admitted to military academies as officers or non-commissioned officers of the armed services or enlisted in the armed services as volunteers, in accordance with current regulations, lawfully acquire Greek citizenship from the time of their admittance to such institutions or from their enlistment.

2. Aliens of Greek ethnic origin who enlist as volunteers in time of mobilization or war, in accordance with the current regulations, may acquire Greek Citizenship by petition to the Secretary General of the Prefecture, and without any further formalities.

3. Those receiving promotion to officers, whether in the standing Armed Services or in the reserves, acquire the Greek Citizenship without any further formalities.

4. The military oath taken by the persons mentioned in paragraphs 1, 2, and 3, substitutes for the oath of the Greek citizen.

5. The children of aliens of Greek ethnic origin, who acquire Greek Citizenship, in accordance with the previous paragraphs, become Greek citizens at the same time their parents acquire Greek citizenship provided that at the time of their parents' petition to the Secretary General of the Prefecture they are minors.

By Naturalization

Article 5
Conditions of Naturalization

1. An alien may acquire Greek citizenship by naturalization provided that:

a. he/she has reached the age of eighteen

b. he/she has no appeal pending for prior convictions during the last ten years before the submission of the naturalization petition to a sentence of deprivation of freedom of at least one year, or regardless of the sentence and the time the conviction was issued, for crimes involving: insulting the constitution, treason, homicide or intentional severe bodily injuries, crimes involving trade and trafficking of narcotics, money-laundering, international financial crimes, crimes involving means of high technology, monetary crimes, resisting authorities, kidnapping a minor, crimes involving sexual bondage or financial sexual exploitation, theft, fraud, embezzlement, extortion, usury, law regarding intermediaries, forgery, false statements, defamation, smuggling, crimes involving weapons or antiquities, direct importation of illegal aliens to the interior of the country or the facilitation of their transport, or accommodation in hiding them or for violating legislation for their establishment and movement in Greece.

c. there is no pending deportation

2. An alien who is born in another country is required to:

a. Reside legally in Greece for ten of the last twelve years before he/she can apply for naturalization. For the alien who is recognized as a refugee, residency of five years for the past twelve years would be enough before the application. Under the above circumstances the time that the alien resided in Greece as a diplomat or an officer of another country would not count. The ten-year residency requirement does not apply to a spouse of a Greek citizen; or for an alien who has been a resident of Greece for at least three years and has a child; and also for aliens who were born and reside continuously in Greece. For spouses of Greek diplomats, who have completed, at any time, one year of residency in Greece, and are posted abroad, the time spent at the overseas post counts for the above mentioned required period.

b. Sufficient knowledge of the Greek language, Greek history and Greek culture in general.

3. Athletes of Olympic games who have completed five years of legal residence in Greece in the last twelve-year period can get Greek citizenship according to the provisions of articles 5 through 9 of the present code, as long as they have the right to compete with the Greek national team, in accordance with the international rules of the game after the recommendation of the national committee and the agreement of the Greek Olympic Committee.

Article 6
Supporting Documents

The alien who wishes to be naturalized as a Greek citizen, submits to the city or the community hall of his/her place of residence a request for naturalization, which is addressed to the Ministry of Interior, Public Administration & Decentralization with the following attachments:

a. Naturalization statement. This statement is submitted to the Mayor or the President of the Community and in the presence of two Greek citizen witnesses.

b. Deposit fee defined by the effective, current legislation. Greek descendants are not obligated for the deposit fee.

c. Copy of the passport or other travel documents.

d. Residence permit or other documents establishing legal residence in the country.

e. Birth certificate or if it's not possible to obtain such, a baptismal certificate. If the alien is a refugee and he/she is unable to produce the birth certificate, he/she can present the political asylum decision, and

f. Tax return or a copy of the tax declaration for the last fiscal year.

Article 7
Naturalization procedure

1. The city or the community examines the fullness of the supporting documents and forwards them together with the application to the appropriate department for naturalization issues of the prefecture. The prefecture examines if the conditions of paragraphs 1a and 2a of article 5 are met for further examination of the application by the Minister of Interior, Public Administration & Decentralization. If the conditions are not met the General Secretary of the Prefecture rejects the application.

2. If the conditions are met, the appropriate office of the Prefecture requests that the applicant submit his/her criminal record, a non deportation statement and furthermore all evidence that can form an opinion for the knowledge of the Greek language, history, culture as well his/her moral standards and personality. The case file then is submitted to the Ministry of Interior, Public Administration & Decentralization, with all supporting documents and the opinion of the respective police authority of the place of residence of the alien for matters that concern the public safety and security of the country.

3. Following the file examination, the responsible office of the Ministry of Interior, Public Administration & Decentralization, invites the alien for an interview at a specific place and time in the presence of the Naturalization Committee of article 12, so they can express their opinion to the Minister of Interior, Public Administration & Decentralization, regarding the alien's knowledge of the Greek language, history, culture as well his/her moral standards and personality. A receipt as proof of summoning the alien for the interview is necessary. Absence of the alien from the interview is excused only for reasons beyond his/her control. In the event of inexcusable absence, the Minister rejects the application for naturalization.

Article 8
Naturalization Decision

1. Naturalization is granted by a decision of the Minister of Interior, Public Administration & Decentralization and is published at the Government Gazette.

2. If the decision that rejects a request of naturalization is not justified, then a request for a new
naturalization application is permitted a year after the rejection of the previous application.

Article 9
Oath

1. Greek citizenship can be acquired following the alien's oath, which has to be given within a year from the publishing of the naturalization order in the Government Gazette. The naturalization order is revoked if the oath is not given within the one-year time frame.

2. The oath to be taken is as follows: "I swear to keep faith in the country, abide by the Constitution and the laws and fulfill conscientiously my duties as a Greek citizen."

3. The oath is given in the presence of the General Secretary of the Prefecture. The oath can
also be given in the presence of the another official representative, only if so instructed by the Minister of Interior, Public Administration and Decentralization.

Article 10
Naturalization of Greek Nationals who live abroad

1. The application for naturalization of Greek nationals living abroad should be submitted to the Greek Consul of the area of the applicant's residence. The Greek Consul, in turn, forwards the application to the Ministry of Interior, Public Administration and Decentralization, together with a report in which the applicant's identity is confirmed. The following documents are submitted together with the application:

a. A naturalization statement is given before the Greek Consul in the presence of two Greek citizens acting as witnesses.

b. Photocopy of passport or any other travel document.

c. Birth certificate or - in case that it cannot be provided - baptismal certificate.

d. Penal record issued by the foreign authorities.

2. The responsible official of the Ministry of Interior, Public Administration and Decentralization following the opinion of the Ministry of Public Order for matters concerning the National Order and Security, recommends to the Minister of Interior, Public Administration and Centralization to either accept or reject the naturalization application.

3. The provisions of articles 8 and 9 are implemented also for the naturalization issues of this article.

Article 11
Acquisition of Greek citizenship by children of naturalized individuals

The children of an alien become Greek nationals, with no other formality, if at the time of the aliens' naturalization they are minors and unmarried.

Article 12
Naturalization Committee

1. A five-member Naturalization Committee is formed at the Ministry of Interior, Public Administration and Decentralization, which consists of the following people:

a. The director of General Directorate of Administrative Support of the Ministry of Interior, Public Administration and Decentralization, as the president.

b. A member of D.E.P. who specializes in sociology at a high educational institution, proposed by the President of the local section along with his deputy,

c. A member of D.E.P. who specializes in psychology, at a high educational institution, proposed by the President of the local section along with his deputy,

d. The Chief of the Directorate of the Civil and Municipal Condition of the Ministry of Interior, Public Administration and Decentralization, and

e. The Chief of the local Citizenship Section of the Ministry of Interior, Public Administration and Decentralization.

2. The committee is formed by the decision of the Minister of Interior, Public Administration and Decentralization. The same decision names the President's deputies and the members of the committee. An employee of the Directorate of Civil and Municipal Position of the Ministry of Interior, Public Administration and Decentralization, performs the committee's secretarial duties, and is appointed with his/her deputy by the same decision. The employee handling the case participates in the Naturalization Committee as advisor with no right to vote.

3. The Naturalization Committee's tenure is for two years. An order issued by the Ministers of Finance, National Economy and Interior, Public Administration and Decentralization determines the payment of the committee members, of the secretary and the advisor.

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Article 13
Honorary naturalization

An alien who has offered special services to Greece or if his/her naturalization may serve the country's interest, can be naturalized as a Greek citizen without the prerequisites of paragraph 2 of article 5 and articles 6, 7 and 8, by a Presidential Order, following the justified proposal of the Minister of Interior, Public Administration and Decentralization

VI. Special circumstances for acquiring citizenship

Article 14

1. A child born before May 8, 1984, of a mother who was Greek during her pregnancy or at the time of marriage, from which this child was born, can become a Greek national if he/she expresses his/her wish to the General Secretary of the Prefecture or to the Greek Consular authorities of the area of residence.

2. A child born of a Greek father and an alien mother before the enforcement of Law 1250/1982 (16/7/1982), can became a Greek national, as long as he/she is considered legitimate in accordance with the provisions of article 7 paragraph 3, of the above mentioned law, if he/she expresses his/her wish to the General Secretary of the Prefecture or to the Greek Consular authorities of the area of residence.

3. The acquisition of Greek citizenship, under the conditions of the previous paragraphs is confirmed by the decision of the General Secretary of the Prefecture.

4. According to this article, the children of those acquiring Greek citizenship, become Greek nationals, without any other formalities, if at the time of submission of the application the children are minors and unmarried.

Article 15

1. People of Greek descent residing in countries of the former Soviet Union may acquire Greek citizenship after submitting an application to the respective Greek Consulate if: a) they are adults; and b) Greek citizenship cannot be established as defined by the terms and conditions of the Ankara and Lausanne Treaties.

2. People of Greek descent may acquire Greek citizenship provided there are no "restrictive" conditions, as mentioned in sub-paragraph b, paragraph 1, of article 5 of this law, according to a decision issued by the Secretary General of the Prefecture, which must also be published in the Government's Gazette. A three-member committee, composed by the Greek Consul as president and two members, opines on the status of the person of Greek descent. The Ministry of Economy and Finances and the Ministry of Foreign Affairs decides about the members of the committee and their payment. The committee members must be Greek citizens. To establish the status of the person of Greek descent, the above committee interviews the interested party and evaluates the presented evidence proving said status.

3. The application along with the evidence submitted and the committee's opinion, mentioned in the previous paragraph regarding the status of the applicant - as of Greek descent - are sent by the respective Consulate to the local Secretary General of the Prefecture, for the issuance of Greek citizenship. Before the issuance of said decision, a commentary note is issued by special committees, which are formed by the joint decision of the Ministers of Economy and Finances, Internal Affairs, Public Administration and Decentralization, published in the Government Gazette. The same Ministerial decision establishes the number of the committees, the payment of their members and of the secretary, their responsibility and their way of operation. Following a proposal of the co-responsible Ministries, the Minister of Internal Affairs, Public Administration and Decentralization, names the members of the special committees. The most representative organization of people of Greek descent of the Prefecture appoints one member in each special committee. In case of difficulty in designating the most representational organization, a representative proposed by the Board of the Council of Hellenes Abroad becomes a member of the Committee. The special committee's role is to provide an additional opinion on the status of the persons of Greek descent who wish to obtain Greek citizenship, based on the evidence transmitted by the Greek Consulate. Said committees form their opinion by evaluating the interview given to the three-member committee of the previous paragraph.

4. In order to acquire Greek citizenship, persons of Greek descent must take an oath in the presence of a Greek Consul or the Secretary General of the Prefecture within one year after the publishing of the decision of the Secretary General of the Prefecture at the Government's Gazette. The oath is as follows: "I swear to keep faith in the country, abide by the Constitution and the laws, and fulfill conscientiously my duties as a Greek citizen".

Minors and unmarried children of said person become Greek citizens immediately after the oath, and they all register with the Records of Males and municipal rolls, of the parent's preference, based on the information contained at the above decision of the Secretary General of the Prefecture. Any information not covered by the above decision is supplemented with the submission of any other suitable proof.

Chapter B

LOSS OF CITIZENSHIP

1. Due to Acquisition of Foreign Citizenship
Article 16

1. The Minister of Internal Affairs, Public Administration and Decentralization may grant permission to an individual who wishes to renounce Greek citizenship, if:
a) he/she voluntarily acquired the citizenship of a foreign state, or b) took over a position in the public sector of a foreign state, and by taking said position, he/she would have to acquire the citizenship of that state. In exceptional cases permission is granted after the acquisition of the other citizenship; therefore, Greek citizenship is renounced following the granting of permission.

2. An individual who has acquired a foreign citizenship can renounce Greek citizenship provided that the Minister of Internal Affairs, Public Administration and Decentralization, accepts a request for the renunciation of Greek citizenship. In this case, renunciation of Greek citizenship is effective from the date of the acceptance of the request.

3. The granting of the permission mentioned in paragraph 1 and the acceptance of the application mentioned in paragraph 2 is done following the opinion of the Citizenship Council. Neither will permission be granted nor the request accepted, if the requestor has not completed or delays his military obligation or is prosecuted for a felony or misdemeanor.

2. Due to Revocation
Article 17

1. The Greek citizenship can be revoked in the following cases:

a. If the individual takes over a position in the public sector of a foreign country and the Minister of Internal Affairs, Public Administration and Decentralization, invites him/her to abstain from that office, as opposed to the country's interests, within a defined period of time, but he/she abides by it, and

b. If during his/her stay in a foreign country, the individual acted for the interests of the foreign country, unyielding to his/her status as a Greek citizen and contrary to the interests of Greece.

2. The revocation mentioned in the previous paragraph is announced with the decision of the Minister of Internal Affairs, Public Administration and Decentralization, following a justified concurrent opinion of the Citizenship Council, or the loss of citizenship comes after the publication of this decision in the Government's Gazette.

3. One's loss of citizenship is personal and does not affect his wife's or children's citizenship.

DUE TO RENUNCIATION BY DECLARATION
Article 18

Renunciation of Greek citizenship is permitted provided that the interested party is an adult, declares that he/she has no connection with the country, and he/she resides abroad. For the renunciation a written declaration has to be submitted before the Greek Consul at the Greek Consulate of his/her place of residence together with an application to the Ministry of Interior, Public Administration and Decentralization. The application is approved with the mutual agreement of the Citizenship Council and the Minister of Interior, Public Administration and Decentralization and it is published in the Government's Gazette. Loss of citizenship is taken as from the day of the approval of the application.

LOSS OF CITIZENSHIP FOR CHILDREN OF NATURALIZED GREEK CITIZENS.
Article 19

1. Children of naturalized Greek citizens who became Greek citizens according to Article 11 may renounce their Greek citizenship provided that:

a. They are aliens

b. They maintain the citizenship they acquired during the naturalization of their parent

c. Declare their wish to renounce the Greek citizenship before the Mayor or the President of the Community or the Greek Consulate at their place of residence within one year of completing eighteen years of age. A copy of the declaration is submitted from the above-mentioned authorities to the Ministry of Interior, Public Administration and Decentralization.

2. For the renunciation of Greek citizenship a decision is issued by the Minister of Interior, Public Administration and Decentralization and is published in the Government's Gazette.

DUE TO ADOPTION BY ALIEN
Article 20

A Greek citizen who was adopted before reaching the age of eighteen by an alien may, after the application of the adoptee, if bearing the citizenship of the adoptee, renounce his Greek citizenship. This can only occur with the approval of the Minister of Interior, Public Administration and Decentralization, who evaluates the special circumstances together with the Citizenship Council. The application will not be accepted if the adopted person has not completed his military obligations or he is prosecuted for felony or misdemeanor.

LOSS OF CITIZENSHIP DUE TO MARRIAGE TO A GREEK CITIZEN
Article 21

An alien who acquired Greek citizenship through marriage to a Greek citizen and maintains foreign citizenship, renounces the Greek citizenship if he/she declares his/her wish to the Secretary General of the Prefecture or to the Greek Consulate in the place of his/her residence. For the loss of citizenship the Secretary General of the local Prefecture issues a final judgment.

Chapter C

RE-AQUISITION OF GREEK CITIZENSHIP

Article 22

A Greek woman who has lost her Greek citizenship due to her marriage to an alien, may acquire it, provided she declares her relevant intention to the Secretary General of the Prefecture or to the Greek Consulate at her place of residence.

Article 23

A child born by a Greek mother that lost his/her Greek citizenship because of legitimation or acknowledgement by an alien father regains his/her Greek citizenship provided he/she declares his/her intention to the Secretary General of the Prefecture or at the Greek Consulate at his/her place of residence. According to this article, children of those who acquire Greek citizenship become Greek citizens if at the date of the application have not reached the age of eighteen and are unmarried.

Article 24

The Secretary General of the local Prefecture provides verification or reacquisition of Greek citizenship.

Chapter D

COMPETENCE IN MATTERS OF CITIZENSHIP AND PROOF OF GREEK CITIZENSHIP

Article 25
Competent Authority

1. All citizenship issues fall under the jurisdiction of the Ministry of Interior, Public Administration and Decentralization.

2. The acquisition of Greek citizenship is determined by the Secretary General of the local Prefecture, in accordance with the present code together with the pre-existing relevant provisions and international agreements and treaties.

Article 26
Jurisdiction over disputed citizenship cases

The Minister of Interior, Public Administration and Decentralization is exclusively responsible to rule on any controversies over citizenship with the concurring and justified opinion of the Citizenship Council. The decision is summarized in the Government Gazette and the individual concerned is notified.

Article 27
GREEK CITIZENSHIP CERTIFICATES

1. Mayors and presidents of communities issue Greek Citizenship Certificates to resident citizens according to the municipal registries where the legal grounds of the acquisition of citizenship is mentioned.

2. The above-mentioned certificates verify Greek Citizenship until proven otherwise.