

# EXODUS MIGRATION

## **Exodus Migration-Global Residence and Citizenship through Investment**

Exodus Migration was established to assist American citizens and residents to navigate the elusive path of obtaining citizenship or residence in one or more other countries.

Specifically, we assist two groups of Americans – those seeking citizenship by descent (through parents or grandparents) and those seeking either citizenship or residence by investment. This article will focus on the latter.

For the purposes of this article, we will divide clients into two groups – those seeking citizenship or residence in the EU and those seeking citizenship or residence in the Caribbean or Latin America. This article will not discuss other citizenship by investment options, such as Turkey and Vanuatu, among others. Obtaining residence or citizenship in third countries through investment is not cheap and may come with obligations. The best option is different for each client based on their priorities, obligations imposed by third countries, and their budgets. Individual considerations vary but in our experience often include investment amount, access to quality medical care, language, religious tolerance, income and estate tax implications, physical presence requirements, political stability, visa free travel to other countries, proximity to the U.S. or other countries, ease of obtaining citizenship, need to renew residence, cost of renewal of residence and the inclusion of possible age-out dependents, inclusion of certain dependents (spouse, siblings, parents, sons and daughters etc.), processing times, and climate-related issues.

Clients seeking citizenship by investment in the European Union, with all its attendant residence and work benefits in all European countries, are usually limited to one option - - Malta. Malta has a very popular citizenship by investment program, but the financial commitment far exceeds the requirements of most other citizenship by investment programs, including the Caribbean. Specifically, the minimum investment to obtain Maltese citizenship for a single person is approximately €600,000 plus the purchase of property with a minimum value of €700,000 or the rental of a residential property for a minimum annual lease payment of €16,000. Additional family members can be added for additional investments. It is important to note that, while Malta is the only country in the European Union that provides citizenship expeditiously, many countries in the EU had citizenship by investment programs that have been discontinued, and Malta's program is being challenged

by the European Commission. It is also important to note that countries regularly change required investment amount and permitted investment vehicles.

Residence options are available with a much smaller investment, but do not include the right to live and work in EU countries other than the country of residence. Three EU residence options are generally of most interest to our clients.

Malta residence (not citizenship) requires a contribution to the government of €30,000 plus the purchase of property with a minimum value of €375,000 or a contribution to the government of €60,000 with a rental of a residential property with a minimum annual lease of €14,000. There are also minimum asset holding requirements. Residents of Malta have the right to work in Malta.

The golden visa residence option in Portugal is the most popular but has recently required much larger investments and entailed much longer processing times. The minimum investment is now €500,000 in an investment fund or a non-recoverable donation of €250,000. There is a requirement to live in Portugal at least 7 days per year. The processing time can exceed 30 months. The benefits include the ability to work in Portugal. Portuguese citizenship may be available after 5 years but requires some knowledge of Portuguese language.

The golden visa residence option in Greece requires a real estate investment of at least €250,000. It features a much quicker processing time (often 4 months), but does not include the right to work in Greece.

For those seeking citizenship by investment in a Caribbean country, there are several options all with a minimum investment amount of \$200,000 to \$250,000. The options include Antigua and Barbuda, Grenada, Dominica, St. Lucia and St. Kitts. Each of these programs has advantages and disadvantages, issues and strengths, that we discuss with our clients.

For those clients for whom a second or third passport is not critical, but the ability to reside as needed in another country in the Caribbean or Latin America is sufficient, there are several residences by investment options with wildly varying investment requirements. These include Panama, Costa Rica, Bahamas, Turks and Caicos and the Cayman Islands. St. Maarten also has a residence option only available to US citizens.

It is unfortunate, but consideration of citizenship or residence options in countries other than the U.S. is a higher priority after November 5 for many U.S. citizen and foreign national clients and potential clients. The good news is that, for many clients, there are a number of different options that may be available to them.