



Can expats apply for UAE Citizenship? The new amendments to the UAE Federal Law No. 17 of 1972 (the “Citizenship Law”)

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

On the 30th of January 2021 H.H Sheikh Mohammed Bin Rashid Al Maktoum announced new amendments to the Citizenship Law. Without a doubt the UAE is known for creating and succeeding in forming an attractive and comfortable investment hub for its expat community. The main goal of amendments in the Citizenship Law is to attract a positive development that reinforces and contributes to the growth of the United Arab Emirates (the “UAE”).

The UAE is home to a great number of expats and this new directive focuses on inclusivity and diversity. For this reason, the UAE acknowledges its multicultural population and seeks for them to play a more significant role in the progress and evolution of the country.

Before the New Citizenship Law the only route to obtain a UAE citizenship was through Aran heritage. The new amendments provided three additional ways to obtain the UAE nationality which are by virtue of law, by citizenship and via naturalization.

The new amendments to the Citizenship Law in 2021 provide the opportunity for another category to obtain the nationality such as, investors, specialized talent, and professionals Now scientists, doctors, engineers, artists, authors, and intellectuals can opt for the UAE citizenship. The application for citizenship can also include their family members. As we can perceive from the eligible categories, there is a desire for new talent that will continue to enrich and enhance the culture and community of the UAE.

WHO’S ELIGIBLE ?

Although the Citizenship Law has been announced, we are still yet to receive the specifics of the criteria that permits the access to one of the most desired nationalities. The definition of ‘investor’ is still yet to be provided, but for the time being we have the following general terms to guide us:

1. Investors – The requirement is for an investor to acquire property within the UAE.
2. Doctors and Scientist – They must be in a unique scientific field that is of demand and the applicant must contribute to the scientific prestige of the community. Amongst other requirements, they must be a reputable doctor or scientist in their home country with at least 10 years of experience having provided scientific contribution and research of significant value.

3. Creative Talent – An author, intellectual or artist must be an avant-garde in the field, with previous recognition and international awards from governmental institutions in their country of origin. A letter of recommendation from the relevant governmental authorities is an essential requirement.

A very important distinction and amendment that this Citizenship Law offers which was not available in the past is the possibility for the applicant to retain their own nationality and existing passport. The individual granted the citizenship will be able to keep their existing citizenship and will not be required to relinquish it. The citizenship will be granted via a nomination by each Emirates Ruler's Court through a mechanism that will be determined in the near future.

BENEFITS OF ACQUIRING UAE CITIZENSHIP

Some of the most pertinent benefits include the right to own commercial entities and properties within mainland UAE (this is a clear benefit for those that are keen on a long-term investment in the country) and visa-free travel to more than one-hundred countries worldwide.

The introduction of this Citizenship Law is a milestone step in the progression of the UAE towards long-term investments and building a community of like minded individuals serving a common purpose with a common goal.

For any enquiries related to any of the new amendments that may resonate or have a direct affect in your specific industry or sphere, please contact Hamdan Al Shamsi Lawyer and Legal Consultants.

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