

HOW CAN THIRD-COUNTRY NATIONALS OBTAIN CITIZENSHIP OF AN EU MEMBER STATE?

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Introduction to the EMN Study on Pathways to citizenship for third-country nationals in the EU

The increase in the number of new migrants who have arrived in the EU in recent years, either as beneficiaries of international protection, for work, or other purposes, has meant that their integration has become an important policy topic in many Member States. Thus, the acquisition of citizenship, whether as the final step in the integration process, as a means of facilitating integration and/or as an incentive to become part of a new society, is an important topic.

How have national policies evolved over the past five years in relation to the acquisition of citizenship? What are the criteria

and procedures in place, and how costly and long is the process? What type of support do Member States provide to third-country nationals wishing to acquire citizenship? Is citizenship seen as the culmination of the integration process, or as a key tool to facilitate the integration of migrants into a host society?

By exploring the national policies in EU Member States regarding the acquisition of citizenship for third-country nationals, this EMN Study provides a comparative overview of recent trends, frameworks and good practices from 25 Member States. At a glance, the main research findings are introduced below.

Key findings



Policies on the acquisition of citizenship have evolved over the past five years, with Member States reporting trends that render access to citizenship either more liberal or more restrictive. Trends in the numbers of individuals granted citizenship of an EU-28 Member States have shown an overall decline in the period of time covered by the study.



The criteria for granting citizenship and the procedures in place are broadly similar across the Member States but the specific conditions and requirements that apply vary considerably, depending on whether more liberal or restrictive policies are in place. Processing times, the costs to applicants and available support all vary significantly.



For many aspiring citizens, naturalisation can be a lengthy and costly process, with limited available support, and a positive outcome is in general not guaranteed, even where all conditions have been met.

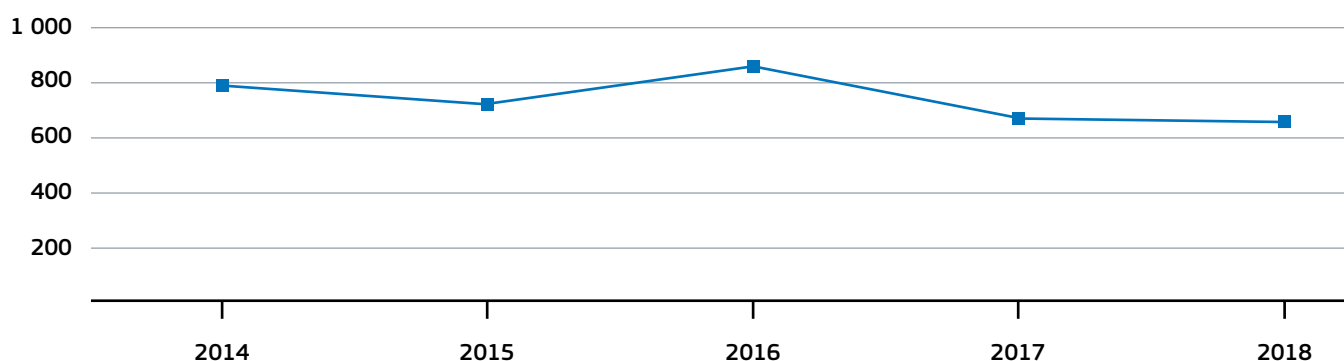


The majority of Member States allow for dual citizenship, which may acknowledge the demographic reality that many migrants have ties to more than one country. Other Member States, in practice, apply exemptions where the renunciation of a previous citizenship cannot reasonably take place. However, dual citizenship brings both benefits and challenges.



Citizenship is seen by Member States as either the culmination of the integration process or as facilitating the integration process. However, in most Member States, third-country nationals are not actively encouraged to apply for citizenship, and support is limited.

Number of third-country nationals having acquired the citizenship of an EU Member State, EU-28, 2014-2018 (1000)



Source: Eurostat migr_acq, extracted 7 May 2020

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