



Information sheet

Naturalization on grounds of restitution of German citizenship pursuant to section 15 of the Nationality Act (*Staatsangehörigkeitsgesetz, StAG*)

- for persons living abroad -

This sheet provides you with information on applying for naturalization on grounds of restitution of German citizenship (*Wiedergutmachungseinbürgerung*), the legal basis for which was amended on 20 August 2021. Eligible for this type of naturalization are persons and their descendants who, in connection with National Socialist persecution on the grounds stated in Article 116 (2) sentence 1 of the Basic Law (*Grundgesetz*), did not lose their German citizenship because they were deprived of it, but lost it for other reasons or were never able to acquire it.

For more information, please contact the Federal Office of Administration (*Bundesverwaltungsamt*) in Cologne or the German diplomatic mission abroad responsible for your area of residence.

1. Who may be naturalized?

Persons who, for reasons connected with persecution on political, racial or religious grounds between 30 January 1933 and 8 May 1945,

1. gave up or lost their German citizenship prior to 26 February 1955 (especially through naturalization upon application in another state),
2. were excluded from the legal acquisition of German citizenship through marriage, legitimation or the collective naturalization of ethnic Germans during this period,
3.
 - a. were not granted naturalization upon application,
or
 - b. were generally excluded from naturalization, which would otherwise have been possible upon application, or
4. gave up or lost their ordinary residence in Germany – within the borders of Germany as at 31 December 1937 – provided that residence
 - a. was established prior to 30 January 1933
or,
 - b. if such persons were children at the time, was established even after 30 January 1933.

Entitlement to naturalization also extends to the descendants of such persons.

This includes descendants who were adopted by eligible persons prior to 1 January 1977.

2. What requirements do I have to meet to become naturalized?

2.1. No criminal record

The following may conflict with the acquisition of German citizenship: terms of imprisonment or youth custody of at least two years, even if imposed abroad; preventive detention for serious offenders ordered in connection with the most recent incontestable conviction, and the existence of grounds for exclusion pursuant to section 11 of the Nationality Act.

2.2. Requirements as a citizen

Applicants aged 16 or older must pledge their allegiance to the free and democratic system anchored in Germany's Basic Law and make a declaration of loyalty pursuant to section 16 of the Nationality Act before the naturalization certificate is handed over.

2.3. Applicants may not acquire German citizenship if they already did so on a previous occasion but subsequently lost their acquired German citizenship

If you were denied acquisition of German citizenship for reasons connected with persecution (1933–1945) and acquired it subsequently, or if you gave up or lost your German citizenship for reasons connected with persecution and acquired it again (e.g. through naturalization) but then subsequently lost it once more (e.g. through renunciation, release, or acquisition of a foreign citizenship upon application), you may not reacquire German citizenship through naturalization pursuant to section 15 of the Nationality Act. This also applies to children who were born or adopted after the (renewed) loss of German citizenship.

Exception: Persons who acquired German citizenship after 8 May 1945 and lost it prior to 1 April 1953 through marriage to a foreigner or through legitimation by a foreigner, effective under German law, remain eligible.

3. Do I have to renounce my existing citizenship upon being naturalized?

No.

Whether or not you retain or lose your previous citizenship is solely governed by the law of the state whose citizenship you currently possess. We therefore advise you to inquire with the responsible authorities of your country of origin well in advance of becoming naturalized.

The Federal Office of Administration cannot give you advice as to foreign laws.

4. How do I file an application for naturalization?

You can file your application for naturalization directly with the Federal Office of Administration. You can also submit your application to the relevant German diplomatic mission abroad, which will then forward it to the Federal Office of Administration.

Please use the application form provided by the Federal Office of Administration.

If you need help, please contact the relevant German diplomatic mission abroad, where you will be given advice in person.

5. What are the relevant forms?

Application E15:	application form for persons aged 16 or over Minors aged 16 or over are treated as adults with respect to citizenship matters; they shall make all declarations themselves.
Application E15_K:	application form for children under the age of 16 The application is to be signed by <u>all</u> holders of rights of custody as legal representatives.
Appendix AV	for information on other ancestors
Vollmacht:	power of attorney to a third party

For the application forms:

- please visit the website of the Federal Office of Administration at www.bundesverwaltungsamt.de, and go to: *Staatsangehörigkeit > Einbürgerung beantragen / Erklärungsantrag > Wiedergutmachungseinbürgerung nach Verfolgung*
- or
- request the forms directly from the Federal Office of Administration
- or
- contact the German diplomatic mission abroad responsible for your area of residence.

6. How do I fill in Application E15?

Section 5: *“Previous citizenships”*

Mention here only citizenships which you previously held but no longer possess.

Example: You lost this citizenship due to naturalization in another country. Enter as precisely as possible the period during which you possessed the previous citizenship.

Section 7: *“Previous citizenship proceedings or expellee proceedings in Germany”*

Please complete this section if you have ever conducted citizenship proceedings and/or proceedings under the Federal Expellees Act (*Bundesvertriebenengesetz*) in Germany. This will help us to process your application. If you provide the reference number and details of the authority involved, the Federal Office of Administration can refer to the files from those proceedings and use any certificates and other documents they contain. This will save you having to submit those documents again.

Nevertheless, in view of limited retention periods under data protection law, it is possible that old files may no longer be available, or that documents may no longer be used as proof after a certain period of time. In such cases we will ask you to resubmit the documents.

Section 8: *“Criminal offences in Germany and abroad”*

You must submit a valid document issued by your country of residence providing comprehensive information confirming that you have no criminal record (certificate of good conduct / police clearance certificate).

The information in this certificate must be no more than six months old and must relate to the whole of the country of residence, not just particular states, provinces or districts (e.g. counties). You must submit the original certificate, not a copy.

Example: Applicants living in the USA must provide information from the Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI).

Section 9: *“Where I have lived”*

You do not need to mention any visits, holiday trips, periods of being away on a job (e.g. in construction) of up to six months.

Section 10: *“Persecution of my family between 30 January 1933 and 8 May 1945.”*

We require this information in order to assess whether you are entitled to naturalization. Please provide us, therefore, with as much detailed information as possible. If there is not enough space on the form, please write any additional information on a separate piece of paper and submit this together with your application.

Please specify here which of your ancestors was exposed to National Socialist persecution between 1933 and 1945, and had to leave Germany as a result (unless you yourself were the person exposed to persecution).

“How long my family lived in Germany”

The key information here is the place of residence in Germany during the period in question where you or your ancestors lived and were exposed to National Socialist persecution.

Section 11: *“Citizenship proceedings conducted by members of my family”*

Have any members of your family ever conducted citizenship proceedings in Germany? Have any of them, for example, applied for naturalization, or for confirmation of German citizenship (in the form of a citizenship certificate)? You can provide details of any such proceedings here and refer to certificates and documents which your relative may have submitted with such applications in order to show, for instance, that one of your common ancestors once possessed German citizenship.

If you provide the reference number and details of the authority involved, the Federal Office of Administration can refer to the files from those proceedings and use any certificates and other documents they contain. This will generally save you having to re-submit those documents to the Federal Office of Administration.

If possible, however, do submit copies of any relevant certificates (including naturalization certificates or citizenship cards) of your family members. This will help us trace relevant files which may be kept by other German authorities.

Nevertheless, in view of retention periods under data protection law, it is possible that old files may no longer be available, or that documents may no longer be used as proof after a certain date. In such cases we will ask you to resubmit the documents.

Section 12: *“My parents”*

Please provide details as accurately as you can. This includes all your parents' current and previous citizenships and the answers to questions such as whether your parents were married to each other or not.

7. A note on Appendix AV (on ancestors)

Please fill in one Appendix AV for each generation preceding your parents (e.g. your maternal grandparents and the parents of your maternal grandfather, i.e. your great-grandparents), **going back to and including the ancestor who was exposed to National Socialist persecution between 1933 and 1945, and had to leave Germany as a result.**

8. Which documents need to be submitted with the application?

- Copy of your current foreign passport / identity document (pages with photograph and personal details), (see section 2)
 - Your birth certificate / certificate of descent
 - Marriage certificate of your parents
 - Your marriage certificate (if you are married)
 - Birth certificates / certificates of descent, marriage certificates, and family registers (if there are any) for all ancestors going back to and including the ancestor who was exposed to National Socialist persecution between 1933 and 1945, and had to leave Germany as a result (see section 10).
 - A valid document issued by your country of residence providing comprehensive information confirming that you have no criminal record (certificate of good conduct / police clearance certificate).

 - Such documents may also include (if applicable):
 - adoption documents (certificate of adoption, court order)
 - divorce documents (judgement dissolving a marriage carrying a remark that it is a final divorce judgement)
 - civil partnership certificate
 - documentation with respect to the acknowledgement or establishment of paternity
 - documentation on any changes of name (applicant and the relevant ancestors), such as change of name certificates, marriage certificates, or other official documents on the use of the name

 - Proof of German citizenship going back to and including the ancestor who was exposed to National Socialist persecution between 1933 and 1945, and had to leave Germany as a result
- or
- Proof that ordinary residence in Germany was established prior to 30 January 1933 (or even later if those concerned were children at the time) and/or proof that they were excluded from acquiring German citizenship (e.g. applications for naturalization that were not granted between 1933 and 1945).
- and
- Proof of the reason for persecution and the type of persecution to which you or your ancestor were exposed between 1933 and 1945.

Other necessary documents:

- Current certificate of good conduct issued by your country of residence (original document, not a copy)

- If possible a document showing the date when your ancestor affected by National Socialist persecution took on a foreign citizenship

Documentation indicating German citizenship

For instance: Naturalization certificates; certificates confirming that the holder acquired German citizenship by declaration or by opting for it; ethnic German repatriate's certificates pursuant to section 15 of the Federal Expellees Act (*Bundesvertriebenengesetz*); letters of appointment for civil servants; citizenship cards; certificates of native country; documents certifying the holder's legal status as a German; passports; identity cards and other ID documents (including old ones); registration certificates; expellees' cards.

Documentation indicating reasons for persecution and type of persecution

For instance: Proof of being banned from practising one's profession, of being dismissed from the public service, or of having one's accreditation as a doctor or lawyer revoked; expulsion orders; documents relating to imprisonment; proof of internment; documents relating to expropriation; entries made in birth or marriage certificates showing that the holder is a member of a persecuted religious community, or similar entries made in passports or other official documents; documents relating to compensation.

9. In what form should I produce the documents?

Unless otherwise specified, documents (in particular certificates) must be submitted in their original form or as photocopies of original certificates officially certified or certified by a notary. Photocopies must be complete, which means that both sides of the certificate must be produced. As a general rule, uncertified photocopies and copies will not be accepted.

Only the following persons and bodies may certify photocopies:

- notaries (public) or
- registrars of the body having made the entry in the civil-status register or
- German authorities (such as the residents' registration office, registry office, or diplomatic mission abroad).

As a general rule, certifications by other bodies will not be accepted.

It is important that it is certified that the copy is completely faithful to the original in terms of content.

The original certification statement is required, including

- the notary's or registry office's original stamp and
- the original signature of the notary or of the registry office.

Copies of certification statements or statements certifying only the translator's signature are not sufficient.

As a rule, foreign official documents (such as civil status documents) must be legalised or carry a Hague apostille.

This is not required for

- civil status documents from EU member states or Switzerland, or
- international multilingual documents (certificates of birth, marriage certificates, death certificates) from Bosnia and Herzegovina, the Republic of Moldova, the Republic of North Macedonia, Montenegro, the Republic of Serbia, and the Republic of Turkey

For information on the legalisation process, contact your local German diplomatic mission. They can also provide you with further information on what kind of verification you require when submitting certificates from your home country.

All foreign-language documents are to be accompanied by a translation made by a sworn translator; it must be clear which translation goes with which document. Translations made by persons who are not sworn translators will not be accepted.

Please note: As a rule, original documents can only be returned upon special request after the process has been completed. It is recommended to send certified copies only. If, in exceptional cases, the original of a document is needed, you will be specifically asked to submit it.

10. What fees will be charged?

You will not be charged any fees.

Please note, however, that you cannot be reimbursed for any costs you may incur in the process (e.g. for the procurement of documents, translations, and certifications), irrespective of whether you are granted or denied naturalization.

11. Note with respect to data protection pursuant to Articles 13 and 14 of the EU General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR)

Pursuant to Section 31 of the German Nationality Act (StAG), the Federal Office of Administration is the citizenship authority for persons abroad and, as such, entitled to collect, store, modify and use personal data insofar as this is necessary to perform its tasks (purpose).

For detailed information on the processing of personal data pursuant to Articles 13 and 14 of the GDPR, please visit the website of the Federal Office of Administration (BVA): see under *Staatsangehörigkeit* and also the specific pages on the relevant proceedings. The data protection officer's contact details are also provided there.

12. Contact information

Postal address

Bundesverwaltungsamt
50728 Köln
GERMANY

Website

www.bundesverwaltungsamt.de

Email

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