

Changes in Uruguayan Immigration Office Residence Criteria

Over the last few months it has become apparent that the Immigration Office is reviewing residence applications with a very fine toothcomb, instead of the broad brush approach taken before. In the past residence applications took about 6 months to be reviewed and granted. Now they are taking about 18 months and are subject to numerous objections/observations. The bottom line is that the documents required in order to apply no longer represent all that is required in order to be granted residence and other hurdles will have to be overcome. An increasing number of applicants are also being called in for a personal interview.

Intent to permanently reside

Apart from the traditional formal requirements of producing birth certificates, police records and showing an income, the Immigration Office is now using a criteria that applicants must have an intent to reside permanently in the country. This requirement seems to have arisen as a result of the Immigration Office now having new software which means that they have everybody's Uruguayan entry/exit details available. They have noticed that a number of applicants were filing for residence and then leaving and not coming back. Applicants in this situation will not be granted residence as the Immigration Office understands that it is implicit within the request for permanent resident status that a person really intend to live in the country. What is not clear yet is exactly what period of time it is necessary for somebody to be in the country to satisfy the Immigration Office. We understand that over half of each year should be sufficient without doubt and that others who come and go on a frequent basis but for a lesser total of days should also be ok, provided they can give a reasonable explanation for their being out of the country e.g. somebody who wants to retire in Uruguay, but is winding down their activities in another country first.

Income Requirement

The income requirement has to date been around U\$600 per person. It is clear that this is no longer going to be sufficient and the Immigration Office is looking at applicants and their lifestyle and wants to know where the income to support it comes from. Simultaneously Uruguayan banks are also now making it much harder to open accounts, particularly for foreigners. They need more documents about the people opening the account and information about the source of any funds being deposited. This creates an issue for applicants for residence as in principle they need to have a bank account here to show that the income they declare is being duly received in Uruguay.

Police Records

The requirement is to have a clean police record report from the country of birth and any other country in which the applicant has been resident in the previous 5 years. This requirement is being applied very strictly and causing enormous problems for people who

may have visited a country for a few months but not lived there and for whom it is very difficult to get a police record, either because they do not know anybody in that country who can go about getting the form for them or simply because the other country will not issue them with a report because they were not resident there.

Visas

For nationals of countries which require a visa to enter Uruguay even as a tourist, it is no longer possible to get a professional to act as guarantor/sponsor for the visa. The Immigration Office want any application to be supported by somebody who actually knows the applicant. This obviously creates a serious problem for a lot of people who want to just visit Uruguay, with a view to possibly seeking residence at a later date.

Conclusion

The result of the above is more work and more expense in getting residency approved even for those who can fulfill the requirements and for a lot of people who have been looking at Uruguay as an option, it will no longer be available.

It seems strange that the authorities want to make it harder for people to get into the country, when the latest census, just completed at the end of 2011, will show that the population is still not growing. In that situation it seems illogical to be turning away immigrants, particularly when these are almost all people who are well off – by Uruguayan standards – and will not represent any sort of burden on the state, in fact exactly the opposite, they will be consumers of Uruguayan products and services.