

11. Encourage naturalisation

WHAT and WHY?

Citizenship is a powerful asset that can positively impact various aspects of life. Acquiring citizenship legally enables full social and civic participation and also builds a sense of belonging (Hainmueller, Hangartner and Pietrantuono, 2017^[111]; Bloemraad, 2006^[112]; OECD, 2011^[113]).

What is more, citizenship is associated with better labour market outcomes for youth with migrant parents. As nationals, children of immigrants are more likely to work in high-skilled jobs and the public sector than their peers with foreign nationality. The citizenship premium can play a vital role when youth start to look for a job, as youth who are nationals receive more invitations to job interviews. Reasons include perceived lower administrative costs to hire a national, as opposed to a foreigner, as well as positive signalling of skills and broader social integration (OECD, 2011^[113]). Finally, holding host country nationality facilitates access to financial resources. Advantages include access to scholarships and credits, enabling youth with migrant parents to start or expand business ideas.

In spite of all these advantages, many youth with migrant parents who would be eligible for host-country citizenship do not take it up.

WHO?

The share of native-born children of immigrants holding the nationality of their country of residence varies widely across OECD countries. Much of this variation reflects differences in legislation for birthright citizenship. In countries, where the principle of birthright citizenship (*jus soli*) applies, such as in Canada and the United States, native-born children of immigrants have automatic citizenship. The same is essentially true for countries with a modified version of *jus soli* like France and the United Kingdom. In other countries, native-born youth can naturalise easily. In Sweden and the Netherlands, more than 90% of the native-born children of immigrants aged 20-29 are nationals. In contrast, in countries where citizenship descends based on parents' nationality (*jus sanguinis*), like Austria and Switzerland, shares of native-born children of immigrants nationality are lowest (OECD, 2011^[113]).

HOW?

Countries have a range of policy tools at their disposal to encourage citizenship take-up among children of immigrants. Among the most common measures are the following set of actions:

- Ensuring that native-born youth and those raised in the country access citizenship easily, by creating birthright entitlements for native-born and facilitated pathways for others
- Allowing for dual citizenship
- Promoting citizenship take-up by disseminating information about naturalisation and the favourable impact it can have on life

The most straightforward way to ensure that native-born children of immigrants become nationals is to automatically attribute nationality at birth to those born in the country. This *jus soli* principle is prevalent in the OECD countries settled by migration. However, recently, a number of European OECD countries made amendments to their citizenship laws to facilitate access to citizenship among native-born children of immigrants. Almost half of all OECD countries have integrated elements of *jus soli* into their citizenship legislation. Often, however, birthright citizenship in Europe is conditional upon a parent having resided for a specified period in the country. In countries where nationality is still largely transferred via descent (i.e. *jus sanguinis*), regulations can be more or less stringent. Minimum residence requirements for regular naturalisation range from three to ten years with an average of five years. Applicants often need to prove a certain level of language proficiency, knowledge of institutions and civic values, self-sufficiency, and a clear criminal record.

In the vast majority of countries, native-born children of immigrants enjoy certain facilitations, including shorter residency requirements, exemptions from tests or other obligations, and an entitlement to declare citizenship at a certain age. Typically, the option to declare citizenship exists only within a specified time window following legal age. However, in a few countries, children (or parents on their behalf) may declare citizenship earlier. In Sweden, for example, children (or their legal guardian) may declare citizenship after three years of residence. In Greece and Portugal, this option exists at the start or upon completion of primary school. Australia and Luxembourg automatically attribute nationality to children born and raised in their country who are not eligible to birthright citizenship at age 10 and 18, respectively.

Enabling youth with migrant parents to keep other nationalities is a critical way to encourage citizenship take-up. Indeed, for many youth, the cost associated with giving up the nationality of a parent constitutes a significant obstacle. In the past, several countries have required children of immigrants to choose one nationality. The rationale behind such policies were fears that dual and multiple citizenship might decrease loyalty to the country of residence and lead to abuse of rights. However, it is increasingly recognised that such fears are unwarranted and dual citizenship is now recognised in more than three-quarters of OECD countries. In some countries, this possibility is subject to conditions. For instance, in Germany, since 2014, children of immigrants who have been growing up in the country can maintain dual nationality. As a precondition, they must have lived in Germany for eight years, when turning 21 and have attended a German school for six years or completed vocational training. Previously, such youth were obliged to choose one citizenship upon becoming 18 until the age of 23.

Public information campaigns to promote naturalisation among eligible immigrant groups can help to increase citizenship take-up. Such programmes typically explain the required steps to naturalise, as well as the benefits of holding citizenship. Countries settled by migration have made such efforts for many years, in line with a longstanding perception of newly arrived immigrants as future citizens.

Canada, the OECD country with the highest citizenship take-up rate, has a long tradition of encouraging and facilitating naturalisation among permanent residents. An example is the 'Citizenship Awareness Program', an initiative of the federal government, with support of provinces and local communities. The programme includes the distribution of the citizenship study guide 'Discover Canada', the organisation of an annual citizenship week, and social media campaigns for promoting citizenship. Initiatives to reach immigrant youth include emails to school principals to use citizenship material and school visits of citizenship judges, who are expected to conduct outreach activities one half-day per month. According to a survey-based evaluation of the programme, activities that reinforced feelings of belonging and permanency facilitated naturalisation (Government of Canada, 2014^[114]).

In the United States, the National Partnership for New Americans (NPNA) co-operates with community partners, mayor's offices, members of congress, and labour unions to co-ordinate the nationwide nonpartisan 'Naturalise NOW' campaign. Through application assistance events, communication, outreach, and co-ordinated policy strategies, the campaign encourages eligible lawful permanent residents to naturalise.

High fees for naturalisation might hinder youth from naturalising. In many countries, fees are negligible, though not everywhere. In an attempt to address this barrier, a range of countries have lowered fees or introduced fee waivers. In the United Kingdom, for example, the ‘Citizenship Payment Plan’ supports families to cover the cost of their children’s citizenship application fees. The programme includes legal support to immigrant families, a one-off loan to the family to cover the high cost of a citizenship application, as well as a 12-month repayment plan. In the United States, the use of partial fee waivers as well as credit card fee payments to raise naturalisation rates among low-income immigrants have been tried. An example is the ‘NaturalizNY’ initiative, a public-private partnership. The programme, which uses a lottery to offer immigrants in the state of New York a voucher, is covering the naturalisation application fee of USD 725. An evaluation of the policy intervention suggests that those who were offered a voucher were twice as likely to apply as those who had to cover the fee themselves (Hainmueller et al., 2018^[115]).

Table 11.1. National legislation on the acquisition of citizenship at birth for children of immigrants and legal framework with respect to dual citizenship, 2018

	Adoption of (elements of) jus soli	Legal framework with respect to dual citizenship
Australia	Yes	Yes
Austria	No	Yes (children who have obtained dual nationality by birth/origin may maintain dual citizenship, also beyond the age of 18, according to Austrian law)
Belgium	Yes (if at least one parent was also born in Belgium and has lived in Belgium during at least 5 of the 10 years preceding the child’s birth)	Yes
Canada	Yes	Yes
Chile	Yes (if at least one parent resides in Chile at the time of the child’s birth)	Yes
Czech Republic	No	Yes
Denmark	No	Yes (if dual nationality was obtained at birth and in some cases of naturalisation)
Estonia	No	No
Finland	Yes (if the child’s parents have refugee status or have been granted protection against the authorities of their country of nationality)	Yes
France	Yes (if at least one parent was also born in France)	Yes
Germany	Yes (if at least one parent resided in Germany for at least 8 years prior to the child’s birth)	Yes
Greece	No	Yes
Hungary	No	Yes
Iceland	No	Yes
Israel	No	Yes (for Jewish persons)
Ireland	Yes (if at least one parent resided for a minimum of 3 out of 4 years in Ireland prior to the child’s birth)	Yes
Italy	No	Yes
Japan	Yes (if born in Japan and both of the parents are unknown or are without nationality.)	No
Korea	No	Yes
Latvia	No	No (except in exceptional cases for naturalising foreigners of certain nationalities and Latvians abroad)
Lithuania	No	Yes (children who have obtained dual nationality by birth may maintain both citizenships, also beyond the age of 21, according to Lithuanian law)
Luxembourg	Yes (if at least one parent was also born in Luxembourg)	Yes
Mexico	Yes	Yes
Netherlands	Yes (if at least one parent was also born in the	No (except in exceptional cases)

	Adoption of (elements of) jus soli	Legal framework with respect to dual citizenship
	Netherlands)	
New Zealand	Yes (if at least one parent is a permanent resident)	Yes
Norway	No	No (except in exceptional cases)
Poland	No	Yes
Portugal	Yes (if at least one parent was either born in Portugal or has been resident for at least 5 years prior to the child's birth)	Yes
Slovak Republic	No	Yes
Slovenia	No	No (except in exceptional cases)
Spain	Yes (if at least one parent was also born in Spain)	No
Sweden	Yes	Yes
Switzerland	No	Yes
Turkey	No	Yes
United Kingdom	Yes (if at least one parent was settled in the UK at the time of the child's birth)	Yes
United States	Yes	Yes

Note: n.a. = information not available; / = not applicable. This table does not account for cases where a new-born child would become stateless or is found in the territory of unknown identity.

Source: National provisions based on publicly available information, compiled by the OECD Secretariat, 2018.

Table 11.2. Legal framework with respect to the conditions for the acquisition of citizenship through naturalisation in OECD countries, 2018

	Standard residency requirement	Facilitations for children born or raised in the country
Australia	4 years	Yes (minors are exempt from citizenship test; children born to foreign nationals who are not permanent residents become citizens automatically at age 10)
Austria	10 years (6 years if exceptionally well-integrated)	No
Belgium	5 or 10 years	Yes (youth who were born in Belgium can claim citizenship between age 18 and 30 or their parents, if they have resided in Belgium for at least 10 years, can file the claim before the child's 12 th birthday)
Canada	5 years of which 3 physically present	Yes (youth under 18 years of age are exempt from meeting the language and knowledge requirement and, under certain conditions, the residence requirement)
Chile	5 years	Yes (youth born in Chile to foreign non-resident parents may declare Chilean nationality by option within one year of their 18 th birthday)
Czech Republic	5 years permanent residence or 10 years total	Yes (youth educated in the Czech Republic are exempt from language and citizenship test; young adults (18-21) resident since age 10 are eligible to a rights-based "declaration" procedure)
Denmark	9 years	Yes (children born and raised in Denmark are, under certain conditions, entitled to Danish citizenship by a declaration submitted before the age of 19)
Estonia	8 years	Yes (young immigrants who have lived in Estonia for eight years and descendants of emigrants)
Finland	5 years (4 years for fluent Finnish or Swedish speakers)	Yes (children raised in Finland can claim citizenship between age 18 and 22)
France	5 years	Yes (children who were born in France and have lived at least 5 consecutive years in France after their 8 th birthday are entitled to citizenship)
Germany	8 years (6 years in exceptional cases)	Yes (youth who have obtained a German school leaving diploma are exempt from passing the citizenship test)
Greece	7 years	Yes (minors whose parents resided for a minimum of 5 years in Greece prior to the child's birth can declare Greek citizenship when entering primary education, as well as those who have attended nine years of compulsory education or have graduated from a Greek

	Standard residency requirement	Facilitations for children born or raised in the country
		university or technical college in the past three years)
Hungary	8 years	Yes, a non-Hungarian citizen who has resided in Hungary continuously for a period of five years prior, may be naturalised on preferential terms if born or residing in Hungary before reaching legal age, and if other conditions are satisfied. The criteria of continuous residence in Hungary, may be waived for minors, who applied together with their parents or if their parent(s) were granted Hungarian citizenship. Yes, a refugee recognised by the Hungarian authority or a stateless person may be naturalised if resided continuously in Hungary for 3 years prior.
Iceland	7 years	Yes (18-or-19-year-old youth resident since age 11 can declare themselves citizens)
Israel	Permanent residence for 3 out of 5 years preceding the application	n.a.
Ireland	5 years	No
Italy	10 years	No
Japan	5 years	Yes for persons born in Japan, and continuously having a domicile or residence in Japan for three years or more or whose father or mother (excluding an adoptive parent) was born in Japan. Yes for persons without any nationality since the time of birth, and continuously having a domicile in Japan for three years or more since that time
Korea	5 years	No
Latvia	5 years	No (except stateless/non-citizen children born after independence who can be registered by their parents as Latvian citizens)
Lithuania	10 years	No
Luxembourg	5 years	Yes (youth who lived in Luxembourg between age 13 and 18 and whose parents resided in Luxembourg before the child was born automatically obtain nationality at age 18)
Mexico	5 years	n.a.
Netherlands	7 years	Yes (children born or raised in the Netherlands can claim citizenship at age 18, before age 18 they face no or a reduced residence requirement)
New Zealand	5 years	Yes (children under 16 years of age may be exempted from requirements)
Norway	7 years	Yes (children below the age of 12, born or raised in the country face shorter residence requirements; those aged 12+ go through the same procedure as newcomer immigrants)
Poland	8 years (1 year for people of Polish origin)	No
Portugal	6 years	Yes (children born in the country are entitled to citizenship after their first cycle of compulsory education; foreign-born children must naturalise with or after their parents)
Slovak Republic	8 years	No
Slovenia	10 years	Yes (children born or raised in Slovenia and youth who completed higher education in Slovenia face shorter actual residence requirements)
Spain	10 years	Yes (for children born in Spain the residency requirement is reduced to 1 year)
Sweden	5 years	Yes (children of immigrants are eligible to citizenship after 3 years of residence in the country upon notification by their parents)
Switzerland	10 years	Yes (years spent in Switzerland between the ages of eight and 18 count double towards the residence requirement; youth who were born and educated in Switzerland and whose family lives in Switzerland in the third generation are eligible for a facilitated procedure)
Turkey	5 years	No
United Kingdom	5 years	Yes (minors who were born in the UK and either spent their first 10 years there or whose parents received permanent residence can register as citizens)
United States	5 years	n.a.

Note: n.a. = information not available; / = not applicable. The minimum residence duration displayed in this table does not account for specific cases, such as for the spouses of nationals, who often face shorter residence requirements.

Source: National provisions based on publicly available information, compiled by the OECD Secretariat, 2018.

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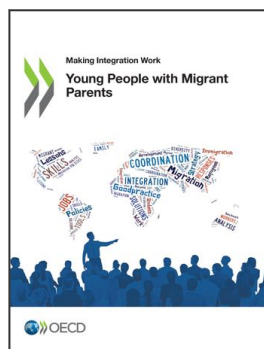
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