

Residency in the Turkish Republic of Northern Cyprus

Many people find the thought of the residency procedure here quite daunting, but in reality most people are able to complete the process quickly and easily without any assistance.

Because laws and regulations of the European Union are not applied in the TRNC, European Union citizens still have to follow the residency procedure in the same way as other nationals. There is no automatic right to reside and work in the TRNC for EU citizens.

Whenever a person enters the TRNC, their passport is stamped at the port of entry with a tourist visitor. This entitles that person to remain in the TRNC for the period of time stated on the tourist visa (usually three months) without working. On the expiry of this period, that person must leave the TRNC or face heavy fines for exceeding the visa period. It is possible for a person to leave the TRNC and return the following day, for example by flying to Turkey, thereby obtaining a further tourist visa (it should be noted that there is some doubt about whether crossing to the South of Cyprus counts as leaving the TRNC for the purpose of obtaining the tourist visa). For many people this is a sufficient means of 'residing' in the TRNC. Many people do not stay in the TRNC for longer than the period of the tourist visa at any given time and therefore do not need to apply for residency. For those people, however, who wish to stay in the TRNC for longer than the period of the tourist visa, a residency permit must be obtained. To obtain this, the first port of call is the local police station's immigration department – in Kyrenia this is near the Wednesday market.

You will need to produce to the police the following documents:

- Passport original and photocopy
- If you have the title deeds to property in your name, the title deeds (original) and photocopy. If you have purchased a property under Contract of Sale, but have not yet received the title deeds to the property, the Contract of Sale (original) and photocopy. If you are living in rented accommodation the Tenancy Agreement (original) and photocopy.
- A letter from your local village chief (Muhtar as they are known in Turkish) to say that you reside in his village. This letter is called Ikametgah Belgesi in Turkish. You can usually find your Muhtar in the centre of the village where you live near to the local municipality (belediye) building or the post office.
- Bank documents showing that you have a TRNC bank account which has sufficient funds or a regular income to enable you to support yourself in the TRNC without working.
- 2 passport photographs
- 6YTL stamps (Damga Pulu in Turkish) (the amount required is constantly changing, so you should take a selection of stamps with you in case further stamps are required)

The police will then refer you to the Lefkosa State Hospital, or now there are certain clinics which are licensed to carry out this work, for a health test. The test will check for infectious diseases such as HIV, hepatitis and TB. After you have had the health test, you will collect the results and take them unopened to the immigration office in Lefkosa for the residency permit to be stamped in your passport. The immigration office is called the 'Muhaceret Dairesi' in Turkish.

It is important to note that the residency permit only entitles you to live in the TRNC. It does not entitle you to work or to set up a business in the TRNC. To do these things you will need either a work permit or a permit to set up a business.

The residency permit is valid for a period of 1 year. It must be renewed every year by following the same procedure (except for the hospital check).

Children under the age of 18 years do not require residency permits. This is only applicable to adults. Therefore, families moving to the TRNC only need to apply for residency for the adult members of the family. Non-citizens who give birth to a child in the TRNC, will need to notify the embassy or consulate of their country of origin of the birth of the child and once this has been done and a letter to this effect has been obtained from the embassy or consulate, they will need to apply to the District Office (Kaymakamlik) in the area in which they live to register the child's birth.

Becoming a citizen of the TRNC is more complex. Citizenship is granted to all persons whose mother or father is a Turkish Cypriot or to those married to a Turkish Cypriot. At the moment, there is a new law in Parliament to allow foreign nationals to become citizens of the TRNC after 10 years of residence in the TRNC.