

Community
Legal Service



COVENTRY LAW CENTRE

IMMIGRATION

Information about Dual Nationality

This leaflet explains the Law in the United Kingdom regarding dual nationality

The Law in the United Kingdom

In general there is no restriction, in UK law, on a British national being a citizen of another country as well. So, if you get another nationality, you will not lose your British nationality. Similarly, you will not need to give up any other nationality when you become British. (Different rules apply in the cases of British protected persons and certain British subjects. A person who is a British subject otherwise than by connection with the Republic of Ireland will lose that status on acquiring any other nationality or citizenship. Similarly, a British protected person will no longer be a British protected person on acquiring any other nationality or citizenship).

Other countries

Many other countries will not let you have dual nationality (two nationalities). If you get a British nationality, and are also a national of a country which does not allow dual nationality, the authorities of that country may either regard you as having lost that nationality or may refuse to recognise your new nationality. The Consulate or High Commission of the country whose nationality you also hold will be able to tell you whether that country allows dual nationality.

Travelling abroad

Under international law, a State may not give diplomatic protection to one of its nationals in a country whose citizenship that person also holds. For example, if you are British and have another nationality, for example, Chinese, and are visiting China, the British representative in China cannot give you diplomatic help.

If you are planning to visit your former homeland, and you are not sure whether you have lost your old nationality, you should ask its Consulate or High Commission in the United Kingdom. If you have not lost the old nationality and want to give it up, they will be able to tell you what to do.

If you receive written confirmation that you have given up your old nationality, or you no longer have it, send the letter to the Foreign and Commonwealth Office. It shows that you have the right to British protection while you are in your former country. The address is:

Foreign and Commonwealth Office
Consular Division
Old Admiralty Building
London SW1D 2AF

Under the nationality laws of some countries, a married person automatically has his or her partner's nationality and children have a parent's nationality where they were born. So, if your wife, husband or child is visiting the country of your nationality, this advice may apply to them also, but you should check this.

Renunciation

If you are a British citizen, British overseas territories citizen (see Note below), British Overseas citizen, British subject, British National (Overseas) or British protected person, you may renounce (give up) your citizenship or status if:

- you have a nationality other than the one you want to renounce; or
- you can show that you will get another citizenship or nationality; and
- you are over 18 (or you are under 18 but have been married); and
- you are of full capacity (i.e. not of unsound mind)

You can renounce your British citizenship, British Overseas citizenship, British National (Overseas) status and British subject status by filling in a declaration of renunciation. You will no longer hold that status on the date we register your declaration. If you do not get another citizenship within six months, the declaration does not take effect and we consider you to have kept your British nationality.

Please remember that:

- declarations of renunciation of British overseas territories citizenship are registered by the Governor of a British overseas territory; and
- declarations of renunciation of British protected person status are registered by the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs.

Resumption

If you renounce your British citizenship or British overseas territories citizenship (see Note below) to keep or get another citizenship, you have a right to be registered and resume the citizenship you renounced but you can make use of this only once. If you have already given up and then resumed one of these citizenships, and renounced again, the Home Secretary (for British citizenship) or the Governor of a British overseas territory (for British overseas territories citizenship) will decide whether you can resume it again.

You may not resume any of the other types of British nationality once you have renounced them.

If you have any questions about dual nationality you can contact Coventry Law Centre on our free legal advice telephone line on Tuesdays and Thursdays between 10:00am and 12:00noon on 024 76253168.

Note:

Before 26 February 2002, British overseas territories citizenship was called British Dependent Territories citizenship.

The law covering British nationality is in the relevant Nationality Acts, mainly the British Nationality Act 1981, and the Regulations made under them. The information given in this leaflet is only a brief guide to the law and to the Home Secretary's policy. It is not a complete statement of either the law or policy.

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