Russian Billionaire Abramovich Obtains Portuguese Citizenship

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Roman Abramovich. **Sergei Kiselev / Moskva News Agency**

Russian billionaire Roman Abramovich has obtained Portuguese citizenship through his Jewish ancestry following years of failed visa and residence bids elsewhere in Europe, media reported Thursday.

Abramovich became a citizen of the EU member after he withdrew his residency application with non-EU member Switzerland in 2017 over Swiss concerns with reputational and public safety risks and the United Kingdom did not extend his visa in 2018. The Russian-born magnate and Chelsea football club owner has also held Israeli citizenship since 2018.

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Portugal's justice ministry said it approved Abramovich's naturalization bid on April 13, 2021, according to AFP.

"He proved he was a descendant of Portuguese Sephardi Jews through a certificate delivered by the Israelite community of Porto," a ministry spokesman was quoted as saying.

According to the Jewish News Syndicate, Abramovich is an [honorary member](#) of several Portuguese Jewish organizations.

Portugal has offered passports since 2015 to those who can prove familial links to Sephardi Jews who were expelled or forcibly converted to Christianity at the end of the 15th century.

Abramovich, whose net worth Forbes estimates at $14.4 billion, automatically becomes Portugal's richest person.

He is also the richest person in Lithuania, where his paternal grandparents had fled from Belarus to escape the Bolshevik Revolution. They were captured and deported to Siberia after the Soviet Union annexed Lithuania.

Forbes ranks Abramovich 142nd in its world billionaires ranking.