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Ad-Hoc Query on 2022.12 Automation in citizenship processes

Requested by EMN NCP Finland on 22 March 2022

Responses from Bulgaria, Croatia, Cyprus, Czech Republic, Estonia, Finland, France, Germany, Greece, Hungary, Italy, Latvia, Lithuania, Luxembourg, Malta, Netherlands, Poland, Slovakia, Slovenia, Spain, Sweden plus Georgia (22 in Total)

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1. BACKGROUND INFORMATION

In Finland the amount of citizenship applications submitted increased significantly last year. In 2018 the number of applications amounted 11 676, in 2019 11 962, in 2020 11 569 and in 2021 a total of 14 366 citizenship applications were submitted.

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Even though the number of employees processing citizenship applications decreased last year, it was increased again this year, but still this increase in staff cannot impact significantly the backlog in the processing of citizenship applications. Finland also needs to develop and streamline its processes. Automation is crucial in achieving this objective. To support this development work, we would like to know how other Member States have implemented automation in citizenship processes.

We would like to ask the following questions:

- 1. Is automation used in citizenship processes in your Member State? YES/NO.**
- 2. If you answer YES to Q.1, is the process fully or partly automated? E.g. are the prerequisites investigated via automation, is the decision fully automated after automated checks.**
- 3. If you answer to Q.2 that you have a fully automated process, what was the percentage of fully automated decisions in all citizenship decisions last year?**
- 4. Has there been challenges with the automation of some prerequisites? YES/NO. If you answer YES, can you please indicate which prerequisites presented challenges.**
- 5. Does the length of the processing time (e.g. due to clarifications or verifications that can render documents dated) affect the use of automation in decision making? YES/NO. If no, can you please explain how you have dealt with this issue?**
- 6. What are the current processing times for citizenship applications?**


We would very much appreciate your responses by **20 April 2022**.

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2. RESPONSES

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		Wider Dissemination ²	
	EMN NCP Bulgaria	Yes	<p>1. The Bulgarian Citizenship Directorate uses an Automated Information System (AIS) to administer the proceedings under Chapter Five of the Law on Bulgarian Citizenship. AIS connects the Bulgarian Citizenship Directorate with the Ministry of Interior, the Ministry of Regional Development and Public Works (Population Register – National Population Database), and the State Agency for National Security, including through automatic data exchange. The order, the manner, and the scope of the provided data are determined by agreements between the Ministry of Justice and the Ministry of Interior, the Ministry of Regional Development and Public Works and the State Agency for National Security.</p> <p>2. The process is partly automated because after the registration of the application and the formation of a file, it is sent electronically for approval to the Ministry of Interior and the State Agency for National Security. After the obligatory coordination procedure with the interested institutions, the examination of the preconditions for acquisition, restoration or release from Bulgarian citizenship is not automated but is performed by employees of the Bulgarian Citizenship Directorate during an expert examination, respectively – by the members of the Citizenship Council when considering the relevant file at a meeting of the Citizenship Council.</p> <p>3.</p> <p>4.</p>

¹ If possible at time of making the request, the Requesting EMN NCP should add their response(s) to the query. Otherwise, this should be done at the time of making the compilation.

² A default "Yes" is given for your response to be circulated further (e.g. to other EMN NCPs and their national network members). A "No" should be added here if you do not wish your response to be disseminated beyond other EMN NCPs. In case of "No" and wider dissemination beyond other EMN NCPs, then for the Compilation for Wider Dissemination the response should be removed and the following statement should be added in the relevant response box: "This EMN NCP has provided a response to the requesting EMN NCP. However, they have requested that it is not disseminated further."



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			<p>5.</p> <p>6. The terms in which the Minister of Justice should make a proposal to the President/Vice President for issuing a decree or for refusal to issue a decree for acquisition, restoration, release or deprivation of Bulgarian citizenship, as well as for cancellation of naturalization are normatively defined in the provision of Article 35 of the Law on Bulgarian Citizenship. The assessment of the need for additional inspections and submission of additional documents affects the terms for completing the proceedings. It should be borne in mind that there is no statutory deadline for issuing or refusing to issue a decree of the President/Vice President.</p>
	EMN NCP Croatia	Yes	<p>1. NO.</p> <p>2.</p> <p>3.</p> <p>4. NO.</p> <p>5. N/A</p> <p>6. The process of acquiring Croatian citizenship takes an average of 6-12 months. In some cases, the procedure takes longer, when the procedure depends on the applicant's participation.</p>
	EMN NCP Cyprus	Yes	<p>1. No</p> <p>2. N/A</p> <p>3. N/A</p> <p>4. N/A</p>



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			<p>5. N/A</p> <p>6. 18-24 months</p>
	EMN NCP Czech Republic	Yes	<p>1. No, automation has not been implemented in citizenship processes in the Czech Republic.</p> <p>2. N/A</p> <p>3. N/A</p> <p>4. No, automation has not been implemented in citizenship processes in the Czech Republic.</p> <p>5. No, automation has not been implemented in citizenship processes in the Czech Republic.</p> <p>6. Due to the high number of submitted applications and very low numbers of employees dealing with the agenda, the real processing time of citizenship applications is on average about 12-14 months from the delivery of the application to the Ministry of the Interior.</p>
	EMN NCP Estonia	Yes	<p>1. No</p> <p>2. n/a</p> <p>3. n/a</p> <p>4. n/a</p> <p>5. n/a</p> <p>6. n/a</p>


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	EMN NCP Finland	Yes	<p>1. YES.</p> <p>2. In Finland, the processes are partly automated. The prerequisites are investigated with the help of various rules. When all the prerequisites are fulfilled, the processing system creates a decision proposal, which is verified by the user. Also various registry checks are automated.</p> <p>3. In Finland, legislation doesn't enable a fully automated process yet.</p> <p>4. We have had some challenges concerning prerequisites like means of support, integrity (including public order and security) and the period of residence. Legislation is not the problem, but the information may become dated or the information from other systems is not usable in the way automation needs.</p> <p>5. Yes. Clarifications concerning means of support or the period of residence become dated if the processing time is over one year.</p> <p>6. Last year the average processing time for citizenship applications was 350 days. Median was 280 days.</p>
	EMN NCP France	Yes	<p>1. NO</p> <p>2. The procedure in France is in the process of being dematerialised but not automated. As part of the digital administration of foreign nationals in France (ANEF), an experiment was launched in July 2021 within 6 prefecture instruction platforms for the naturalisation procedure by decree, then extended to two new platforms in January 2022. The generalisation of the dematerialisation of application processing to the whole of France is planned for the third quarter of 2022. In this context, applications will be submitted online. The processing of applications for access to French nationality by decree has been tested out and will soon be extended to the whole territory.</p>


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			<p>The application is then examined by a prefecture agent on the basis of the documents provided. He or she may ask for additional supporting documents. The applicant needs to go to the prefecture for an interview to verify assimilation into the French community. At the end of the interview, the applicant is informed of the decision via his/her user account. If the decision is positive, the person receives a 'welcome letter' as a result of the naturalisation process during an official ceremony.</p> <p>The dematerialisation of declaratory procedures (marriage, brothers and sisters, ascendants of French citizens) is planned for the end of 2023/beginning of 2024. Nevertheless, it is already possible to obtain the list of documents to be provided and the application form online. The application is then submitted by post or at the prefecture's counter by appointment.</p> <p>3. n/a in France</p> <p>4. The process is dematerialised but not automated, particularly for the decision-making process. It means that there is no automation of the decision-making process, only the list of documents to be provided is dematerialised. The main difficulties relate to: -managing interfaces for data exchanges with other partner administrations involved in the procedure -communication and support for users in preparing application files (simplification of the administrative language)</p> <p>5. No automation</p> <p>6. The average processing time was 312 days in 2021 for naturalisation by decree</p>
	EMN NCP Germany	Yes	<p>1. Other. In Germany, applications for citizenship are lodged at the competent local authority or, for those not residing in Germany, at the German Federal Administration Office (BVA). Thus, the place of residence defines the competent authority to process the application. Due to the federal system no uniform answer can be provided.</p> <p>2. The majority of federal states indicated no automation of processes whereas some mentioned a partial automation (e.g. security check with police). Automation is considered difficult as an application for citizenship requires thorough processing in very individual circumstances. Discretionary decisions may be required to determine the sufficiency of information provided.</p> <p>3. n/a</p>



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			<p>4. Any steps that include discretionary decision making cannot yet be automated.</p> <p>5. YES. Even with a partially automated processing, some steps (e.g. security check with police with a validity of six months) may have to be repeated because the information is no longer considered valid.</p> <p>6. As this is largely depending on the number of applications, the available staff, the applicants themselves and, if needed, other states to dismiss the applicant from their citizenship no uniform answer can be provided. The processing time ranges between 8 and 15 months as some federal states have indicated. The majority, however, pointed out that providing a mathematically correct figure would still be misleading due to the aforementioned conditions that apply to the individual case.</p>
	EMN NCP Greece	Yes	<p>1. YES</p> <p>2. The processes are partly automated. Greek Citizenship services use the Greek Integrated Informational Citizenship System (Gr.I.I.C.S) to process citizenship applications. For each case the system has two sets of data. A static one that holds the formal law requirements and the supporting documents they derive from and a dynamic set for the specific case examined. Comparing these two sets the system assists the rapporteur of the case to accept or reject the application, but also acts as a red flag mechanism. So, although the final decision is human based, if a crucial requirement is overlooked i.e., application fee not paid, the application cannot be processed further. More clarifications can be provided if needed.</p> <p>3. The Citizenship processes are not fully automated.</p> <p>4. The prerequisites that presented challenges were the following: a) Fee payment. Most common problem is the applicant paying the wrong fee i.e., for a different mode of acquisition of citizenship b) Residence permit. Different agencies issue residence permits for various categories (TCN, EU-citizens, asylum, refugees) and interoperation is available only with the Migration and Asylum Ministry for TCNs. c) Criminal record. When the response from the Criminal Record Database has a penalty, the rapporteur must decide whether the offences present a barrier for the acceptance or not of the application according to the provisions of the law. It must be noted that some law prerequisites cannot be automated at all. Further information can be provided if necessary.</p>

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			<p>5. YES</p> <p>6. It depends according to the mode of acquisition of citizenship. For Naturalization it is typically 9-12 months.</p>
	EMN NCP Hungary	Yes	<p>1. No</p> <p>2. N/A</p> <p>3. N/A</p> <p>4. No</p> <p>5. Each application is examined on an individual basis.</p> <p>6. Each application is examined on an individual basis. The Hungarian authority responsible for citizenship applications is not bound by any deadlines regarding processing times.</p>
	EMN NCP Italy	Yes	<p>1. YES – if "automation" means digital/telematic procedure</p> <p>The Ministry of the Interior has decided to send the citizenship application electronically, which is the only way to formalise the application for the procedures falling within the competence of the Ministry of the Interior (law on citizenship no. 91 of 1992: art. 5, concession for marriage to an Italian citizen, and art. 9, acquisition of citizenship by naturalisation/residence). For information on how to submit the application and the documents to be attached, there is a digital portal: Portale Servizi - Ali Cittadinanza (interno.it).</p> <p>The application for the concession of Italian citizenship by naturalisation (according to art. 9) and the application for attribution by marriage for those resident abroad married to an Italian citizen and for residents in Italy (according to art. 5) is filled in and sent in digital format.</p> <p>The application for the concession of nationality by naturalisation is sent to the competent Prefecture, which carries out the preliminary investigation and sends it, subject to a report from the Police Headquarter (Questura), also in digital mode, to the Ministry of the Interior, which evaluates all the elements of the investigation. In the event of a positive outcome, it proposes the decree conferring Italian citizenship for signature by the President of the Republic. The decree issued by the President is sent to the Prefecture for notification to the interested party through the Municipality of residence. The foreign national who has been</p>


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			<p>granted citizenship has six months from the date of notification of the decree to take an oath at the Municipality of residence. The application referred to in Article 5 for those residing abroad is sent, again in digital mode, to the competent consular representations, which, once they have completed their investigation, transmit it to the Ministry of the Interior, which, under the signature of the Head of the Department of Civil Liberties and Immigration, adopts the final measure, while for those married to an Italian citizen, the procedure is also carried out in telematic mode directly at the Prefecture and the final measure is adopted by the Prefect.</p> <p>The citizenship procedure has recently seen regulatory, administrative, organisational and technical-informatics changes that have resulted in a revision of the operating rules (Circular No. 2646 of 22 March 2019: https://www.cgil.lombardia.it/wp-content/uploads/2019/04/circolare-interno-22-03-2019-cittadinanza-istruttoria1.pdf; Circular No. 3250 of 12 May 2021: http://www.prefettura.it/FILES/AllegatiPag/1231/Circolare_3250_12-05-2021.pdf).</p> <p>Among the simplification measures adopted, the main one was on the digitisation of public services and the new CIVES IT system. Exclusive access to the ALI Portal by citizenship applicants residing in Italy with a digital identity (SPID, Sistema Pubblico per la gestione di Identità Digitale di cittadini e imprese, Public System for the Management of Digital Identities of Citizens and Businesses) was introduced, through which it is possible to access the online services of the public administration in a secure manner. This has made it possible to fully computerise the citizenship process, eliminating the phase of convening a meeting at the Prefecture. In order to view an application already submitted, the related communications and the status of the application, applicants must associate the application already submitted with their SPID credentials. The service provides specific information on the progressive stages of progress of the applications under examination, allowing the interested party to become fully aware of the procedural process, in application of the principles of transparency and publicity of the work of the public administration.</p> <p>The connection of the new application with the smartphone application 'IO APP' has also been activated, which is the users' digital point of contact with the public administration and constitutes an information channel for citizenship applicants in the entire management of the procedure, 'from the application to the decree'; in addition, the integration of the digital payment platform 'PAGOPA' into the citizenship system is at an advanced stage of definition.</p> <p>2. The procedure for granting Italian nationality is completely digitalised.</p> <p>The process is digitalised, the application (for procedures falling within the competence of the Ministry of the Interior, marriage and naturalisation) is sent electronically through the ALI Portal and checks are carried out through the CIVES computer system, as is the examination of the documents transmitted.</p> <p>At the moment of presenting the application, the applicant fills in a news sheet online in order to provide further elements for evaluation.</p>
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			<p>The offices are required to carry out computer checks on the documents issued by the countries of origin, where necessary they will contact the diplomatic-consular Representations for their qualified opinion through the CIVES computer system.</p> <p>3. Citizenship procedures are fully digitised, meaning that all decisions are made in an automated manner. In addition, both automation and organisational efforts have led to productivity gains, with a 10% increase in 2018 and 72% increase in 2019 compared to the previous year, and a further upward trend in 2020 (+2.64) and 2021 (+7.26%).</p> <p>4. No.</p> <p>5. NO. The procedure for granting citizenship is also subject to the terms dictated in general by law 241/1990, therefore any additions to the documentation must always be made in compliance with these terms and always by telematic means.</p> <p>6. The time allowed for the procedure is 3 years from the date of submission of the telematic application (pursuant to art. 9ter of Law on Citizenship 91/1992, for procedures relating to art. 5 marriage and art. 9 naturalisation). In recent years, the Office has managed to catch up with the backlog and aims to respect the deadlines for concluding proceedings. In particular, there is a deadline of 24 months, extendable up to 36 months for citizenship applications submitted after 21 December 2020 (date of entry into force of Law 173/2020) and a deadline of 48 months for citizenship applications submitted between 5 October 2018 (date of entry into force of Decree Law 113/2018) and 21 December 2020. Reducing the timing of the procedure for the Administration represents a challenge of the post-pandemic recovery. Thereafter, the Ministry of the Interior, if the application is accepted, sends the decree granting citizenship to the Prefecture, which will deliver it to the municipality of residence of the interested party; the municipality will arrange an appointment for the oath. The foreign national, who has been granted Italian nationality, has 6 months from the notification of the decree to take the oath in the municipality of residence.</p>
	EMN NCP Latvia	Yes	<p>1. No. Currently an information system on the acquisition and loss of citizenship is being developed, within which it is planned to partially automate the application examination process.</p> <p>2. N/a</p>



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			<p>3. N/a</p> <p>4. N/a</p> <p>5. N/a</p> <p>6. In the naturalisation process the application shall be examined within one year from the date of submission of all documents specified in the regulations of the Cabinet of Ministers. In practice, in the case of the ordinary naturalisation process, the processing time is 4-6 months. In the citizenship registration process, the application is examined from one month to one year.</p>
	EMN NCP Lithuania	Yes	<p>1. No. The application for citizenship is submitted electronically through the Migration Information System (MIGRIS). However, the process of granting citizenship is not automated.</p> <p>2. N/A</p> <p>3. N/A</p> <p>4. N/A</p> <p>5. N/A</p> <p>6. Statistics are not available. By law, the Migration Department must verify and pass the application and the accompanying documents to the Citizenship Commission within 3 months, while the Citizenship Commission has up to 6 months to examine a citizenship application and pass a recommendation to the President, who makes decisions regarding citizenship.</p>
	EMN NCP Luxembourg	Yes	<p>1. No.</p> <p>2. N/A.</p> <p>3. N/A.</p>


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			<p>4. NO.</p> <p>5. NO.</p> <p>6. The legal processing time of a normal naturalization process is of 8 months (article 21 (3) of the amended law of 8 March 2017 on Luxembourg nationality - Nationality Law) and for the naturalization process via option is of 4 months (article 36 (1) of the Nationality Law). These terms begin counting since the reception of the complete file by the Ministry of Justice.</p> <p>At present, in practice, the processing time is 6 months in the case of the normal naturalization process and 4 months for the option procedure.</p>
	EMN NCP Malta	Yes	<p>1. We do not have any automation processes.</p> <p>2. no</p> <p>3. no</p> <p>4. no</p> <p>5. no</p> <p>6. When referring to a manual process time varies in accordance of the basis of the applicable provision of the law – in this regard timelines consist of a few months.</p>
	EMN NCP Netherlands	Yes	<p>1. Yes, partly.</p> <p>2. The process is partly automated. The process starts with the municipality in which the applicant resides. The municipality makes use of the IND (Immigration and Naturalization Service) Portal for Municipality to register the application for naturalization. The process of reception / registration of the application is also automated. The municipality can also send additional documents by making use of the Portal. Also the status of the case can be viewed.</p>



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			<p>The decision making is partially automated. After the naturalization request has been submitted digitally, an automatic test takes place to determine whether the conditions for acquiring Dutch nationality are met. After the automatic test, a decision is still made manually on the naturalization request.</p> <p>The publication of the decision is not automated.[1]</p> <p>[1] This information was provided by the Ministry of Justice and Security on 6 April 2022.</p> <p>3. N/A.</p> <p>4. Yes. Decision making is not fully automated because of data-quality issues and the policy to not fully automate these decisions. It always has to be a person, not a machine, to make the last call.[1]</p> <p>[1] This information was provided by the Ministry of Justice and Security on 6 April 2022.</p> <p>5. Yes. The order in which documents and criteria have to be checked (because of legal reasons) affects the processing time.[1]</p> <p>[1] This information was provided by the Ministry of Justice and Security on 6 April 2022</p> <p>6. Not available yet.</p>
	EMN NCP Poland	Yes	<p>1. No.</p> <p>2. n/a</p> <p>3. n/a</p> <p>4. no</p> <p>5. no</p>



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			<p>6. What are the current processing times for citizenship applications?</p> <p>Polish citizenship applications and restoration of Polish citizenship applications are subject to the provisions of the Code of Administrative Procedure, and thus should be settled within a month, and complicated matters within two months.</p> <p>The procedure for granting Polish citizenship by the President of the Republic of Poland is not governed by the provisions of the Code of Administrative Procedure. The President of the Republic of Poland is not limited in his constitutional powers by any conditions. This directly means that the President of the Republic of Poland is not limited by any deadlines for settling the matter.</p> <p>Currently, the waiting time for the decision of the President of the Republic of Poland on granting Polish citizenship is up to two years.</p>
	EMN NCP Slovakia	Yes	<p>1. No. Public administration information systems are used when deciding on applications for the granting Slovak citizenship, but not automation is being used.</p> <p>2. NA</p> <p>3. NA</p> <p>4. NA</p> <p>5. NA</p> <p>6.</p> <p>According to the Act on Citizenship of the Slovak Republic, the Ministry of Interior has a deadline for deciding on the application for citizenship of the Slovak Republic (according to Article 8a paragraph 7 of the Act), no later than 24 months, while this timeframe does not include the period when requesting opinions, clearances, or additional documents to the application from the applicant (in these cases the proceeding is interrupted).</p>
	EMN NCP Slovenia	Yes	<p>1. No.</p> <p>2. N/A</p>


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			<p>3. N/A</p> <p>4. N/A</p> <p>5. N/A</p> <p>6. On average, the process takes between six and nine months.</p>
	EMN NCP Spain	Yes	<p>1. YES</p> <p>2. Reports from police department, judicial registers and integration reports are requested on-line. The decision is not automated at this time, but a new application is being developed to fully automatize the process.</p> <p>3. N/A</p> <p>4. Main challenge is the correct identification of the subjects. Notification of the decisions is also a challenge due to frequent changes of address of individuals.</p> <p>5. NO</p> <p>6. Processing times vary considerably depending of nationality of individuals and whether or not additional documents must be required; i.e., police reports take more time for Moroccan citizens than for citizens of South American countries.</p>
	EMN NCP Sweden	Yes	<p>1. No</p> <p>2. Not applicable</p> <p>3. Not applicable</p>

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			<p>4. Not applicable</p> <p>5. Not applicable</p> <p>6. 430 days on average</p>
	EMN NCP Georgia	Yes	<p>1. Citizenship related applications are registered and processed electronically through the Citizenship and Migration Electronic Management System (DCM) run by the Public Service Development Agency under the Ministry of Justice of Georgia. The main purpose of the DCM is to enhance e-governance at the PSDA, aiming at significant time and human resource saving at a relevant unit in-charge, as well as improvement of administrative procedures and the quality of customer service. The DCM includes some automatized processes.</p> <p>2. Processing of citizenship applications through the DCM is a partially automated process, i.e. when uploading all relevant documents attached to the application, the documents package is sent electronically to the Citizenship and Migration Unit of the PSDA. After receiving the applications, the manager of the unit distributes them to the staff electronically for further processing. During the processing cycle the information provided in the application is automatically checked across several databases while establishing e-communication with relevant state agencies (connected to the DCM). When collecting all necessary information, the relevant decisions are made in an electronic format, signed electronically by the authorized person and automatically published at the PSDA's website, with sending notification to the applicant by SMS and e-mail.</p> <p>3. As mentioned above, the processing of citizenship applications through the DCM is not a fully automated process.</p> <p>4. Yes. Bearing in mind that processing of citizenship applications is a multi-stage and complicated process, the final decisions can not be made solely by the System and needs human check as well (i.e. assessment of applicants' interviews or evaluation of exam results for naturalization).</p> <p>5. No. Because there are different terms for processing citizenship applications, defined by service fee paid by an applicant.</p>

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			6. According to the national legislation, a decision on granting Georgian citizenship should be made within the period of three months. However, there is a possibility for an accelerate procedure, depending on the service fee paid by an applicant, hence shortening the term (to 80, 60, 40, 30 or 20 days) when the PSDA makes a final decision.
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