



Spain Legal Compliance and Documentation

DISCLAIMER: While we strive to provide the most accurate and up-to-date information possible, this module serves as a general guide and should not be considered legal or professional advice. Your specific situation may require additional or different steps depending on the region of Spain.

Navigating Spain's bureaucratic landscape is a critical part of your relocation journey. While the paperwork and processes may seem overwhelming initially, understanding the legal requirements and having your documentation in order will prepare you for a successful transition to Spanish life.

As a non-EU citizen moving to Spain, you'll encounter several layers of documentation requirements. From your initial visa application to local registration after arrival, each step serves a specific purpose in establishing your legal presence in the country. This module will guide you through these processes chronologically, helping you anticipate what's needed at each stage.

Spain's administrative system can be complex, and sometimes, procedures can vary between autonomous communities or municipalities. However, the core requirements remain consistent nationwide. By preparing thoroughly and understanding the purpose behind each document, you'll avoid common pitfalls that can delay your settlement.

Remember that documentation in Spain often follows a sequential order - certain processes cannot begin until others are completed. For example, you cannot register with your local municipality (empadronamiento) without first having secured accommodation, and you cannot apply for a tax identification number without your NIE (Foreigner Identification Number).

Throughout this module, we'll provide concrete timelines, step-by-step procedures, and practical advice based on real experiences. We'll also highlight where requirements might have changed recently, as Spanish immigration policies continue to evolve, particularly with the introduction of new visa categories like the digital nomad visa.

Let's begin by establishing a comprehensive document checklist to ensure you have everything necessary for your move to Spain.

An aerial photograph of a beautiful coastal scene. The water is a vibrant turquoise color, and several sailboats are anchored in the bay. A rocky coastline with lush greenery is visible on the left side. The overall atmosphere is serene and picturesque.

Document Checklist

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Proper documentation is the foundation of your successful move to Spain. This comprehensive checklist will help you prepare all necessary paperwork before departure and understand which documents you'll need to obtain after arrival.

ESSENTIAL IDENTIFICATION DOCUMENTS

Passport

- Must be valid for at least one year beyond your planned arrival date
- Requires at least two blank pages for visa stamps
- Ensure you have both digital and physical copies (at least 3 physical copies recommended)
- If expiring within 18 months of your move, consider renewing before relocation

Birth Certificates

- Original birth certificates for all family members
- Must be issued within the past year to be considered current for Spanish authorities
- Requires apostille authentication from your home country
- Official Spanish translation by a certified translator

Marriage/Divorce Certificates (if applicable)

- Original certificates with apostille authentication
- Official Spanish translation
- Required for family reunification visas and certain administrative processes

Criminal Background Check

- Must cover the past 5 years from all countries where you've resided
- Requires apostille authentication
- Must be issued within 90 days of your visa application
- Official Spanish translation

VISA-SPECIFIC DOCUMENTATION

Non-Lucrative Visa Requirements

- Proof of financial solvency (bank statements for the past 6 months)
- Minimum required funds: €2,400 per month for the primary applicant and €600 per month for each dependent (as of 2024)
- Health insurance with complete coverage in Spain (no co-payments)
- Medical certificate confirming absence of diseases of public health concern
- Visa application form and payment receipt

Digital Nomad Visa Requirements

- Employment contract or proof of professional relationship with foreign companies
- Documentation proving you can work remotely
- Proof of qualifications and professional experience
- Minimum income threshold documentation (currently at least 200% of minimum wage)
- Health insurance coverage

DOCUMENT AUTHENTICATION PROCESS

Apostille Requirement

- All official documents must bear an apostille seal from your home country's designated authority
- The apostille verifies the document's authenticity for Spanish authorities
- Typically costs between \$15-50 per document, depending on your country
- Plan for 2-4 weeks processing time

Translation Requirements

- All non-Spanish documents must be officially translated by:
 - A sworn translator authorized by the Spanish Ministry of Foreign Affairs
 - Your country's consulate in Spain
 - A Spanish consulate in your country
- Translation costs range from €30-60 per page
- Allow 1-2 weeks for translation processing

Medical Insurance Documentation

- The policy must explicitly state "complete coverage in Spain without co-payments."
- Coverage must be from an authorized Spanish company
- Coverage minimum of €30,000
- Must include repatriation coverage
- No waiting periods for coverage
- Certificate from the insurance company stating compliance with visa requirements





Financial Documentation

- Bank statements for the past 6 months (stamped by your bank)
- Investment portfolio statements (if applicable)
- Pension certification (if applicable)
- Proof of regular income (employment contracts, client agreements, etc.)
- Tax returns from your home country for the past year

Keep all documents organized in a dedicated folder, both physically and digitally. Create a checklist specific to your visa type and track the status of each document. Remember that timing is crucial—many documents have 90-day or less validity periods, so coordinate your application process carefully.



Local Registration Requirements

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Once you've arrived in Spain with your visa, you'll need to complete several crucial registration processes to establish your legal residency. These steps must be completed in a specific order and within certain timeframes to maintain legal status.

NIE (NÚMERO DE IDENTIDAD DE EXTRANJERO) PROCESS

The NIE is your Foreigner Identification Number – the cornerstone of your administrative life in Spain.

If Applying from Abroad:

- You'll receive a temporary NIE with your visa approval
- This provisional number becomes permanent upon residency card issuance
- Your NIE never changes, even if you leave Spain and return years later

If Applying within Spain:

- Book an appointment ("cita previa") through the National Police website (<https://sede.administracionespublica.gob.es>)
- Appointments are often booked 2-3 months in advance; plan accordingly
- Required documents:
 - EX-15 form (available online from Spanish immigration)
 - Original passport and photocopy
 - Proof of legal entry (stamped visa)
 - Justification letter explaining why you need the NIE
 - Payment of fee (currently around €12)
- Processing time: 1-3 weeks

Important NIE Tips:

- Your NIE is permanent and will appear on all official documentation
- Keep a digital and physical copy with you at all times
- You'll need it for virtually everything: opening a bank account, signing rental agreements, purchasing property, obtaining a phone plan, etc.

TIE (TARJETA DE IDENTIDAD DE EXTRANJERO) APPLICATION

The TIE is your physical residency card that confirms your legal status.

Application Process:

- Must apply within 30 days of arrival in Spain
- Book an appointment at your local Foreigners Office (Oficina de Extranjería) or Police Station
- Required documents:
 - EX-17 form
 - Passport and copy
 - Visa page copy
 - Three recent passport-sized photos (white background)
 - Proof of payment of fee (approximately €16)
 - Proof of address in Spain
- Initial TIE valid for 1 year, renewals typically for 2 years

Renewal Process:

- Begin 60 days before expiration
- Different form (EX-11) for renewals
- Proof of continued fulfillment of visa requirements
- Proof of residence in Spain for at least 183 days per year

EMPADRONAMIENTO (MUNICIPAL REGISTRATION)

This crucial step registers you at your local town hall (Ayuntamiento) and establishes your official address.

Process:

- Required within 30 days of establishing permanent residence
- Book an appointment at your local town hall
- Required documents:
 - Completed registration form (provided at town hall)
 - Passport and NIE/TIE
 - Rental contract or property deed
 - Recent utility bill in your name
 - If registering at someone else's property, an authorization letter from the property owner and their ID is required

Benefits of Empadronamiento:

- Proof of residence for various administrative procedures
- Access to local healthcare and educational services
- Enables voter registration (for certain elections)
- Required for vehicle registration and driving license exchange
- Serves as proof of tax residency
- Often required for library cards and other local services

Renewal Requirements:

- For non-EU citizens: must confirm registration every 2 years
- Failure to confirm may result in automatic deregistration
- Some municipalities send reminders; others require you to track this deadline

DIGITAL CERTIFICATE (CERTIFICADO DIGITAL)

This electronic identity document enables secure online interactions with the Spanish administration.

Application Process:

- Apply through the FNMT (Spanish Mint) Website
- Generate initial code online
- Verify identity in person at the designated office with passport and TIE
- Download the certificate to your device
- Valid for 2-4 years, depending on the type

Practical Applications:

- Filing taxes online
- Accessing Social Security information
- Submitting government applications
- Digital signature of official documents
- Accessing health records
- Managing traffic fines and other administrative matters

REGISTRATION WITH YOUR HOME COUNTRY'S CONSULATE

Process:

- Register as a resident abroad with your home country's consulate in Spain
- Requirements typically include:
 - Proof of identity
 - Proof of residence in Spain
 - Completed registration form

Benefits:

- Emergency assistance
- Voting in home country elections
- Passport renewal services
- Official document processing
- Notifications regarding security concerns

Each registration process builds upon the others, creating a complete administrative foundation for your life in Spain. Maintaining accurate and current registrations is essential for legal residency and access to services throughout your stay.



Tax ID and Other Formalities

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After securing your residency documentation and completing local registration, you must address tax matters and other administrative formalities to integrate fully into Spanish life.

TAX ID AND TAX RESIDENCY SETUP

Spanish Tax Identification Number (NIF)

- For foreigners, your NIE serves as your tax identification number
- No separate application is needed, but you must register with the tax authorities

Tax Residency Registration Process

- Visit your local tax office (Agencia Tributaria) within 3 months of arrival
- Schedule an appointment online at www.agenciatributaria.es
- Required documents:
 - Modelo 030 form (tax census registration)
 - Original and copy of passport
 - Original and copy of NIE/TIE
 - Empadronamiento certificate (less than 3 months old)
 - Spanish bank account details
 - If employed: employment contract; if self-employed: business registration

Understanding Tax Residency Rules

- You become a tax resident if:
 - You spend more than 183 days in Spain during a calendar year
 - Your "center of economic interest" is in Spain
 - Your spouse and/or dependent children live in Spain
- Tax residency means declaring worldwide income to Spanish authorities
- Spain has double taxation agreements with many countries; familiarize yourself with the one relevant to your home country
- First tax declaration deadline: typically between April and June of the year following your arrival

Non-Resident Tax Obligations

- If you maintain property or receive income in Spain but don't qualify as a tax resident
- Different tax forms and rates apply
- Typically, simpler declarations with fewer deductions are available

SOCIAL SECURITY REGISTRATION

Process for Employees

- Your employer must register you within your first day of employment
- You'll receive a Social Security number (distinct from your NIE)
- Required documents (employer will usually handle this):
 - TA.1 form
 - Employment contract
 - NIE/TIE
 - Passport

Process for Self-Employed (Autónomo)

- Must register within 30 days of starting business activities
- Visit the nearest Social Security Treasury Office (TGSS)
- Required documents:
 - TA.0521 form
 - NIE/TIE
 - Passport
 - Business activity registration (Modelo 036/037)
 - Bank details for direct debit of monthly contributions
- Monthly contribution rates vary based on the chosen base (minimum currently around €300/month)
- New autónomos may qualify for reduced rates for the first 1-2 years

Benefits of Social Security Registration

- Access to the public healthcare system
- Retirement pension contributions
- Unemployment benefits (for employees)
- Disability coverage
- Maternity/paternity benefits

HEALTHCARE SYSTEM ENROLLMENT

Obtaining Health Insurance Card (Tarjeta Sanitaria)

- Once registered with Social Security or private insurance recognized by Spanish authorities
- Visit your local health center with the following:
 - NIE/TIE
 - Social Security registration document or private insurance certificate
 - Empadronamiento certificate
 - Passport
 - Completed application form (provided at the health center)
- The card is usually issued within 1-4 weeks

Assigning Primary Care Physician

- Upon receiving your health card
- You can select from doctors available at your local health center
- Can change physicians once per year or when moving districts

Private Insurance Considerations

- If using private insurance for residency requirements, it must meet specific criteria
- Ensure your policy includes a waiver for pre-existing conditions
- Confirm the policy explicitly covers all public health services without co-payments
- Annual certification may be needed for visa renewal

BANKING FORMALITIES

Documentation Required for Bank Account

- NIE/TIE
- Passport
- Proof of address (empadronamiento or utility bill)
- Proof of income (employment contract, pension statement, etc.)
- Tax residence certificate (depending on account type)

Account Types

- Resident accounts: Lower fees, more services
- Non-resident accounts: Higher fees, may have restrictions
- If opening an account with a tourist visa initially, you must update the status once residency obtained

Digital Banking Requirements

- A digital certificate is often required for full online banking functionality
- Mobile phones registered in Spain for security codes
- Spanish address for correspondence

VEHICLE REGISTRATION AND DRIVING LICENSE

Importing Vehicles from Abroad

- Must be registered in Spain within 30 days of establishing residency
- Required documents:
 - Original vehicle registration from country of origin
 - Certificate of Conformity (CoC)
 - Payment of registration tax (based on CO2 emissions)
 - Technical inspection (ITV) approval
 - Proof of payment of import duties (if applicable)
 - Completed registration application forms

Driving License Exchange

- Countries with exchange agreements: Simple process at Provincial Traffic Headquarters (Jefatura Provincial de Tráfico)
- Countries without agreements: May need to take theory and practical tests
- Required documents:
 - Application form
 - NIE/TIE
 - Original and photocopy of current license
 - Two recent photographs
 - Medical certificate from the authorized center (Certificado Médico)
 - Payment of fee (approximately €30)
- Must be completed within 6 months of residency establishment

Traffic Authority Registration

- Register with the Spanish Traffic Authority (DGT)
- Create an online profile for managing vehicle-related matters
- Link your NIE to enable online notifications

ADDITIONAL IMPORTANT FORMALITIES

Digital Signature Setup

- Highly recommended for administrative procedures
- Apply through the FNMT website
- Verification in person at designated offices
- Valid for 2-4 years

Professional License Recognition

- If planning to work in regulated professions
- Apply through the Ministry of Education for qualification homologation
- The process can take 6-12 months; plan accordingly

Insurance Requirements

- Home insurance (often required by landlords/mortgage providers)
- Car insurance (mandatory for all vehicles)
- Professional liability insurance (for certain professions)
- All policies should be with Spanish insurers or EU companies authorized in Spain

Addressing these tax and administrative formalities properly will solidify your legal standing in Spain and ensure smooth access to essential services during your residency. Each process builds upon your established documentation, creating a comprehensive framework for your new life in Spain.