

Update on Uruguayan Residence Filings

Recent information made available from the Uruguayan Immigration Office shows that 2012 was a record year for the number of applications filed: 5347. At the same time only 2426 applications were granted, so the backlog is still growing and applicants can now expect to be waiting at least 2 years for their application to be granted.

An analysis of the statistical information available shows that the number of applications filed in Uruguay has increased almost 400% over the last 10 years. For example in 2002, 1479 applications were filed.

For most of the last decade the Immigration Office has kept pace with the increase in applications, but over the last 2 -3 years this has become impossible, since no new employees have been assigned to the area and at the same time the lawyers of the Immigration Office and those of the Ministry of the Interior (who review the work of the lawyers of the Immigration Office and for good measure apply different criteria!) have started examining applications a lot more rigorously. As a result many objections are now being raised, most of them formal in nature. One substantive change however is that applicants must show an “intent to permanently reside” so can no longer simply come to Uruguay, file an application, leave and wait for their application to be granted. Whilst applicants are still free to come and go as they please during the application period, they must be able to justify any long absences.

The 2012 figures show that the great majority of applicants are still from S. America – mainly from Argentina and Brasil - there were over 700 applicants from Europe and over 250 from USA/ Canada.

In conclusion, whilst Uruguay has become increasingly expensive over the last few years, it remains an increasing popular destination for immigrants. Whilst applicants can expect a longer delay, if they have the basic documentation there is no reason to suppose that they will not eventually obtain permanent resident status. The underlying legislation has not changed and the requirements are still relatively straightforward in comparison to many other countries. In recent months as well the President of the Republic has publicly expressed his desire that immigrants be accepted with more flexibility and less delay. This message has obviously not yet got through to immigration officials, but it is to be hoped that at some time (soon?) changes will be made to at least reduce the current delays.