

Residencia changes and your car

The changes to the requirements for gaining Residency status in Spain have recently changed amid the usual confusion caused by of lack of information and notice plus poorly advised civil servants. The expat rumour mill is in serious overdrive. As usual the bar room lawyers have latched on to this and suddenly have become experts where no one else is sure

The fundamental changes are that you must be eligible for the Spanish NHS or have private medical cover via a Spanish company and demonstrate proof of income. These changes are designed to ensure that newcomers to Spain are not a drain on the country's finances. Is anyone listening at Westminster?

How does this affect the re-registration of your vehicle? In pure terms it doesn't, but many of my previous customers have imported their vehicle as a personal possession and avoided the registration/import/emissions tax. Those wishing to do so now have more hurdles to jump and more bits of paper to collect

So it may be time to review what documents are needed to re-register or import a vehicle to Spain. This area is full of ifs, buts and maybes so it is always worth seeking expert advice

In our native countries, we grow up having some knowledge of the system and collect documents on the way, the first being our birth certificate. As we start work we are given a social security number and later on a passport. We end up on the electoral roll and pay council tax. The only document that we never see is the death certificate, but we can be assured that it will be produced one day

A similar system operates in Spain so when we move here it is like being born again (halleluia!) so we have to start over with the NIE, Padron, voting register and if permanent the Residencia. The advantage that the Spanish have is that they have been brought up into this system and speak the language so find it slightly less painful. I can absolutely assure you that the natives also suffer from mindless bureaucrats, bang their heads against walls and suffer unnecessary delays the same as we expats do. No the system is not out to get you; it just feels that way because we are foreigners

What documents are needed to re-register a vehicle?

The first is the registration document or log book as we old timers call it. This should be in your name (believe me not all of them are) or if not you must prove that you own the vehicle

You will need a photocopy of your NIE certificate (this is similar to the Social Security number in the UK). Note that unless you have previously owned a Spanish vehicle, the old style hand written NIE certificates will not be accepted at Trafico so need to be renewed, though your number will not change. Incidentally, newly issued NIE certificates only have a shelf life of 3 months as after this period you should obtain Residency or renew it again if it is required for any other purpose

Finally you need some proof of address, such as a utility bill or escritura. The Padron is not mandatory in most situations though more and more Town Halls are demanding that one is issued before they will tax your car and then make it difficult to get one!! The Padron is a local census or list of people living in or having property in any given town. It is not the same as the electoral roll

Ifs, buts and maybes

In addition to the above documents the vehicle will also need to have a Certificate of Conformity issued by the manufacturer. The engineer's report (ficha reducida) is a substitute and in most cases a better document as it can incorporate any changes to the car since it was made. These documents define the vehicle and for imported vehicles are used as the basis of the ITV inspection

Where a vehicle is being imported from a non-EU country, a DUA is required to show that Customs Duty has been paid

Motor homes and caravans have to have the gas and electric installations inspected and certified

Tow bars must be of an approved type. In most instances, tow bars can remain in situ when a car is re-registered, but in other cases it has to be removed and then refitted as a modification or reform after the car has become Spanish. In fact any change to a vehicle must be approved, fitted according to the prevailing regulations and then added to the definitive ITV card, so yet more paperwork

If the vehicle that you have bought is fairly new, you may also be asked to provide the bill of sale. This is because the cost will be compared to the tax office table of valuations and registration tax will be levied on the higher value; well they would wouldn't they?

Many people have expressed surprise as well as thanks that I freely give information such as this bearing in mind that my business relies upon people paying for my services, so why? Well for a start I enjoy it and it keeps me on my toes and whilst I have a sneaking admiration for those that use this knowledge to try and re-register their own cars, unless the knowledge is used correctly and prudently there will be pit falls meaning that the job is not completed or it costs more overall as unnecessary expenses are incurred. Whether it is re-registration or any other service, the professional help of someone who not only speaks the language but knows the system cannot be underestimated

Do you need Residencia to re-register a vehicle? No, but if you wish to avoid registration tax it is one of the bits of paper that is acquired along the way

Do you need a Padron? Again no for most people, but in certain cases, yes

Still unsure? Then please get in touch, advice as always is free and freely given

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