



International Social Security Agreements

The United States has established a network of bilateral Social Security agreements that coordinate the US Social Security programme with the comparable programs of other countries.

International Social Security agreements, often called "Totalisation agreements," have two main purposes. First, they eliminate dual Social Security taxation, the situation that occurs when a worker from one country works in another country and is required to pay Social Security taxes to both countries on the same earnings. Second, the agreements help fill gaps in benefit protection benefits for workers who have divided their careers between different countries.

The following is the link to the Social Security agreement between the United States and Portugal:

https://www.ssa.gov/international/Agreement_Pamphlets/portugal.html

In addition to providing better Social Security coverage for active workers, international Social Security agreements help assure continuity of benefit protection for persons who have acquired Social Security credits under the system of the United States and the system of another country.

Workers who have divided their careers between the United States and Portugal sometimes fail to qualify for retirement, survivors or disability insurance benefits (pensions) from one or both countries because they have not worked long enough or recently enough to meet minimum eligibility requirements. Under an agreement, such workers may qualify for partial US or foreign benefits based on combined, or "totalised," coverage credits from both countries.



To qualify for benefits under the US Social Security program, a worker must have earned enough work credits, called quarters of coverage, to meet specified "insured status requirements." For example, a worker who attains age 62 in 1991 or later generally needs 40 calendar quarters of coverage to be insured for retirement benefits. Under the Totalisation agreement, if a worker has some US coverage but not enough to qualify for benefits, SSA will count periods of coverage that the worker has earned under the Social Security program of an agreement country. In the same way, a country party to an agreement with the United States will take into account a worker's coverage under the US program if it is needed to qualify for that country's Social Security benefits. If the combined credits in the two countries enable the worker to meet the eligibility requirements, a partial benefit can then be paid, which is based on the proportion of the worker's total career completed in the paying country.

The agreements allow SSA to totalise US and foreign coverage credits only if the worker has at least six quarters of US coverage. Similarly, a person may need a minimum amount of coverage under the foreign system in order to have US coverage counted toward meeting the foreign benefit eligibility requirements.

People generally do not need to take action concerning Totalisation benefits under an agreement until they are ready to file a claim for retirement, survivors or disability benefits. A person who wishes to file a claim for benefits under a Totalisation agreement may do so at any Social Security office in the United States or Portugal.

Source: *US Social Security Administration*

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