

Residency in Cyprus for Non-EU Nationals: The Cyprus Start-Up Visa

The Cyprus Start-Up Visa Programme provides non-EU and non-EEA [JM1.1][Kd1.2]entrepreneurs and senior executives with the opportunity to reside and work in Cyprus while establishing or scaling an innovative, high-growth business.

22nd June 2018

Introduction

The Cyprus Start-Up Visa Programme provides [non-EU and non-EEA](#) entrepreneurs and senior executives with the opportunity to reside and work in Cyprus while establishing or scaling an innovative, high-growth business.

Alongside residency rights, the programme offers access to corporate and personal tax efficiencies, as well as a structured route toward long-term residence and [potential EU citizenship](#), subject to meeting the relevant criteria.

This article outlines how the programme operates, who is eligible, and the benefits available to founders and executive teams.

What Is the Cyprus Start-Up Visa Programme?

The Cyprus Start-Up Visa Programme is designed to attract skilled entrepreneurs from outside the EU and EEA, either as individuals or as part of a team, to establish, operate, and develop innovative start-ups in Cyprus.

The programme supports businesses with strong growth potential and aims to:

- Create new employment opportunities in Cyprus
- Promote innovation and research
- Strengthen the local business ecosystem
- Contribute to the country's long-term economic development

Definition of an Innovative Start-Up

For the purposes of the programme, an innovative start-up is defined as a business that:

- Is a small, unlisted enterprise

- Was registered within the last five years
- Has not distributed profits
- Has not been formed through a merger

The business must develop or offer new or significantly improved products, services, or processes that:

- Create or disrupt markets,
- Are based on new or adapted technologies, or
- Introduce innovative business models.

Who Can Apply?

Applicants may apply under one of the following two routes.

Individual Start-Up Visa Scheme

This route applies to:

- A sole founder who is a non-EU/EEA national
- The founder must actively establish, operate, and develop the innovative start-up

Team Start-Up Visa Scheme

This route applies to:

- Teams of up to five non-EU/EEA nationals
- Teams may consist of founders only, or at least one founder together with senior executive members

Ownership and Capital Requirements

Under both routes:

- The founder and/or team must collectively hold at least 25% of the company's shares
- The start-up must have minimum available capital of:
 - €20,000 for teams, or
 - €10,000 where there are fewer than two founders

Residency Rights Under the Programme

Successful applicants are granted a residence permit valid for three years, with the possibility of renewal for further two-year periods, provided the relevant criteria continue to be met.

Permit holders are entitled to:

- Reside in Cyprus
- Work in their own start-up, either as self-employed founders or salaried executives

- Engage in full business activity related to their registered company

Employment of Non-EU Nationals

Start-ups approved under the programme may employ:

- Up to 50% non-EU nationals of their total workforce

In addition, companies may recruit further foreign personnel if their investment in Cyprus equals or exceeds €150,000. This flexibility is particularly beneficial for scaling technology-driven and specialised businesses.

Renewal of the Start-Up Residency Permit

At the end of the initial three-year period, the start-up must demonstrate that it has achieved measurable progress in order for the residence permits to be renewed.

At least one of the following criteria must be met:

- 15% revenue growth
- Securing €150,000 or more in external investment
- Employment of at least three Cypriot nationals
- Participation in a recognised local innovation support scheme
- Launch of at least one product or service

These benchmarks provide flexibility while ensuring that approved businesses deliver tangible economic value.

Tax-Efficient Benefits of the Cyprus Start-Up Visa Programme

Cyprus' [corporate tax regime](#) and [the personal tax incentives](#) remain a key consideration for founders and executive teams relocating under the Start-Up Visa Programme.

The key points to note are that Cyprus tax-resident companies benefit from a highly attractive and a globally competitive [corporate tax regime](#), while entrepreneurs and executives who become Cyprus tax residents may benefit from [the Cyprus Non-Domicile \(Non-Dom\) regime](#).

Important Note: Cyprus Tax Residency

Residency for immigration purposes does not automatically confer tax residency. If you wish to understand tax residency rules and associated benefits, please review our [Tax Residency article](#) and our [Non-Domicile article](#).

How Can Dixcart Help?

With over 50 years of international advisory experience, Dixcart Cyprus helps clients establish a smooth and compliant path to relocating themselves, their families, or their

business operations.

We provide:

- Guidance on eligibility and registration
- Full corporate services, including incorporation and administration
- Immigration support for work and residency permits
- Ongoing compliance and advisory assistance

If you are considering moving to Cyprus using the Start-Up Visa route, our team can help you evaluate the most suitable approach. To discuss your plans or explore whether this route is right for you, please contact us at advice.cyprus@dixcart.com.

We will be pleased to support you with clear guidance and practical solutions tailored to your needs.