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French Tech Visa

*The French residence permit
built for startup founders*

*“No €30,000. No master's degree. No five years of experience.
One condition only: that your project be recognised as innovative.”*

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PARIS · 2026

The door

almost nobody shows to founders

When a foreign entrepreneur contacts me about moving to France, they have almost always been told the same thing: *"you need €30,000 and a master's degree."* That is true – of one route out of three under the Talent Passport. The best known, the most used, and not always yours.

There is another one, built for startup founders: the **French Tech Visa**. It rests on a simple idea. The State does not ask you to prove that you have money. It asks you to prove that your project is **innovative** – and it accepts that the people of the ecosystem (incubators, laboratories, investors) say so on your behalf.

"On this route, your best asset is not your bank account. It is your product, your team, and the people who believe in you."

These pages tell you whether you belong on this route or the other one, how to obtain recognition from the Ministry for the Economy, and what tips a file into refusal. The 30-minute eligibility assessment is free of charge.

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Two routes, *one four-year permit*

The Talent Passport "project holder" card opens three doors: the standard company founder, the investor – and the **innovative economic project**, known as the French Tech Visa. The same permit at the end. Radically different conditions to get in.

	STANDARD ROUTE – COMPANY CREATION	FRENCH TECH VISA – INNOVATIVE PROJECT
Degree	Master's or 5 years' experience	No degree requirement
Funding	€30,000 documented and traceable	No threshold
Personal resources	≥ annual gross minimum wage	≥ annual gross minimum wage
What you must prove	A genuine and serious project	An innovative project, recognised by a public body
Who validates	DRIETS	Ministry for the Economy (DGE)
Permit duration	Up to 4 years	Up to 4 years
Family	Spouse & children – spouse allowed to work	Identical

WHAT "INNOVATIVE" MEANS HERE

Not deeptech only. French authorities accept any project aiming to commercialise a product, a service or a process that is **new or significantly improved**: technological innovation, but equally innovation in use, process, organisation, business model, marketing, or social innovation.

A marketplace that reshapes a supply chain is innovative. A restaurant franchise is not.

The French Tech Visa is not a separate scheme. It is the second branch of the same article. You are not applying for a different permit – you are proving something different in order to obtain it.

ARTICLE L. 421-16, 2° OF THE CESEDA

Two ways in *you only need one of them*

ROUTE 1

You are incubated

You have been selected by an incubator or accelerator **listed under the French Tech network**. This is the fast lane: the structure certifies your selection itself, and the file moves quickly. Station F, Wilco, Agoranov, the incubators of the grandes écoles, the regional French Tech Capitals – dozens of listed structures operate across France.

ROUTE 2

You are not, yet

Not incubated, or your incubator is not listed? The route stays open with **letters of support** from ecosystem players: a research body, a laboratory, a recognised specialist in your field, a partner company, an investor. Two strong, detailed letters carry the weight of a label.

"I DON'T HAVE AN INCUBATOR" IS NOT A DEAD END

It is the sentence I hear most often. It stops founders who are, on the merits, perfectly eligible.

I work with a **specialist in securing incubation** in France, who knows the structures, their selection criteria and their application calendars. I introduce you: they handle the targeting of incubators suited to your sector and stage, the building of your application file, and preparation for the selection interviews.

My own role stays legal: I confirm that the structure you join is properly listed for the French Tech Visa, I review the incubation agreement before you sign it, and I align the selection you obtain with the innovation file submitted to the Ministry.

The introduction is free. You contract directly with the specialist; the firm receives no commission. And nobody can guarantee you admission: that decision belongs to the incubator.

SO WHAT ABOUT THE MONEY?

THE ONLY FIGURE THAT MATTERS

Personal resources at least equal to the **annual gross minimum wage** – around **€22,400 gross per year**.

THE DECISIVE DIFFERENCE

These are your living resources, **not capital to lock away**. The money does not have to be deposited. It has to exist.

French gross minimum wage: €1,867.02 per month as of 1 June 2026. Several founders? The project may be carried by more than one person, provided each holds a management position in the company; each co-founder files a separate application.

Five players,

one decides on your innovation

This is the single greatest source of confusion around the scheme. Let us lay it out.

PLAYER	ITS ROLE	WHAT IT DOES NOT DO
The incubator FRENCH TECH LISTED	Selects you and certifies your selection	It does not issue the innovation certificate
Bpifrance OPTIONAL	Funds and qualifies innovation. Strengthens the file when the company already exists, and becomes the first funding lever once the permit is granted – seed grants, subsidies, loans	It issues neither the certificate nor the permit. It is never mandatory
DRIEETS ÎLE-DE-FRANCE	Processes your certificate application	It does not issue the visa
Ministry for the Economy DGE	Recognises the innovative nature of your project and issues the certificate	It does not decide on your admission to stay
Consulate, then préfecture	Issue the visa, then the residence card	They do not reassess innovation
Business France	Runs the <i>Welcome to La French Tech Desk</i> : free support with your relocation	No role whatsoever in the decision

What to take from this. One player recognises innovation: the Ministry for the Economy. Every other one builds the evidence, funds the project, or welcomes you. Knocking on the wrong door costs six months.

WHAT DECISIVELY STRENGTHENS A FILE

- An **investor** specialising in innovative companies on your cap table.
- **Support from an innovation structure** over the past five years.
- An **intellectual property right**: a filed patent, software, a trademark.
- *If your company is already registered in France*: a **Bpifrance qualification or grant** – the "entreprise innovante" qualification (FCPI label), Bourse French Tech, a seed loan, the i-Lab competition. Not required, but the most persuasive document you can produce, since a public decision has already recognised the innovation.

ALREADY IN FRANCE WITH A COMPANY?

The calendar changes. It becomes worth targeting a Bpifrance qualification or grant **before** filing the permit application: a few months more, but a markedly stronger file. This strategy only concerns status changes – if you are applying from abroad, it is of no use to you, and I will tell you so at the assessment.

Six steps,

from your country to the préfecture

I ASSESSMENT AND POSITIONING

We settle the real question first: does your project go through the innovative route or the standard one? Choosing the wrong door costs six months.

II SECURING ECOSYSTEM RECOGNITION

Application to a listed incubator, or building the body of support letters. This is where the file is won – and the stage that takes the most work.

III SETTING UP THE FRENCH COMPANY

Articles of association, registered office, incorporation. The firm handles every formality from Paris; your presence in France is not required.

IV INNOVATION CERTIFICATE APPLICATION

Filed on the dedicated government portal. Processing is handled by DRIEETS Île-de-France; the certificate is issued in the name of the Ministry for the Economy. Allow a few days to three weeks for a complete file – several months if it is incomplete.

V LONG-STAY "TALENT" VISA APPLICATION

Filed at the French consulate in your country of residence, with the certificate and the firm's covering note.

VI ARRIVAL AND COLLECTION OF THE CARD

Collection of the multi-year residence card at the préfecture, then the "talent (famille)" file for your spouse and children.

THE CERTIFICATE IS NOT THE VISA

The Ministry rules on innovation; the consulate retains its own discretion – public order, general conditions of stay. This is why the consular file is prepared with **the same care** as the innovation file.

Four mistakes

that sink a French Tech file

NOT TO BE MADE

- ✗ **Confusing "new to me" with "new to the market."** Replicating in France a service that already exists in France is not innovation, however much better you execute it. You must identify precisely what your product brings that the French market does not have.
- ✗ **Courtesy support letters.** A three-line note signed by an entrepreneur friend carries nothing. A letter that describes the technology, situates the market and commits its author to a collaboration carries weight. Who signs matters as much as how enthusiastic they sound.
- ✗ **Not naming the right regime.** The innovation certificate application and the "genuine and serious project" opinion are two distinct procedures, with two different files. Filing with the wrong one means starting over.
- ✗ **A founder absent from the project.** An AI venture carried by someone with no technical background, no technical team and no technical co-founder makes for a fragile file. No degree is required – the founder's credibility is.

WHAT I CHECK SYSTEMATICALLY BEFORE FILING

COHERENCE

The fit between your background and your project.

PRIOR ART

What already exists on the French market.

STRUCTURE

The legal soundness of the company created.

RESOURCES

The traceability of your personal means.

SUPPORT

The standing and real commitment of your signatories.

PUBLIC ORDER

The absence of any bar to issuance.

A French Tech file is rarely refused because a document is missing. It is refused because the story is not credible. My work begins by making your project legible to someone who does not know your industry.

A four-year card, *from the very first visa*

4 years

PERMIT DURATION

A multi-year card from your first admission to stay, with no one-year interim permit.

Work

NO AUTHORISATION

Running your company is not salaried employment – it requires no work permit.

Family

SPOUSE & CHILDREN

Your spouse receives the "**talent (famille)**" card and may work with no authorisation. Your children come with you.

Renewable

AS LONG AS THE PROJECT LIVES

The permit adapts as your company grows, pivots or raises funds.

YOUR OBLIGATIONS

Your permit rests on your project: if you **permanently cease your activity**, your right to stay has to be reassessed. The firm handles the reporting duties and prepares the renewal.

AFTER THE PERMIT: YOU ARE NOT ON YOUR OWN

Once your card is issued, the **Welcome to La French Tech Desk**, run by Business France, supports your relocation free of charge: arrival formalities, schooling for your children, housing, introductions to the local ecosystem. It is a free public service, and many founders never learn it exists. I point every client to it.

4 years

Permit duration from the first visa

Work

No authorisation to apply for

Family

Spouse free to work

The part

nobody tells you about

Getting the card is not the end of the file. It is the moment your company has to exist for real: hiring, signing, and most often, **raising money**. This is where most foreign founders find themselves alone – their lawyer left them at the préfecture.

YOUR PERMIT AND YOUR RAISE HOLD EACH OTHER UP

Your permit conditions your raise. No investor puts money into a company whose founder could be outside France within twelve months. Legal due diligence looks at your immigration status, and a four-year multi-year permit removes that objection before it is ever raised.

Your raise conditions your renewal. After four years, the administration checks that the innovative project is still alive. A completed round, a Bpifrance grant, revenue: these are the most persuasive pieces of evidence available. The renewal file is built over four years, not in the last month.

WHAT BPIFRANCE BECOMES AT THIS STAGE

Once your company is registered and your permit granted, Bpifrance moves back to centre stage – no longer as evidence, but as a **funder**. Bourse French Tech, seed loans, deeptech development grants, the "entreprise innovante" qualification that unlocks FCPI funds. Almost always a French startup's first non-dilutive euro, and often what triggers the next round with business angels.

THREE TRAPS THAT COST FOUNDERS THEIR PERMIT DURING A RAISE

- ✗ **A badly negotiated dilution.** Your permit is tied to your project and to your management role. A round that costs you control or your corporate office weakens your immigration position. This is settled in the shareholders' agreement, not afterwards.
- ✗ **An undeclared pivot.** Changing model or activity is normal in a startup. It still has to be checked that the project remains the one for which the innovation was recognised.
- ✗ **A silent cessation of activity.** If you permanently stop trading, the permit loses its basis and may be withdrawn. Talk to the firm before you decide: another residence route can often be prepared.

ONE COUNSEL, FROM THE VISA TO THE SERIES A

Capital structuring and shareholders' agreement · term sheet negotiation · convertible instruments and capital increases · founder and employee incentive plans · legal due diligence preparation · continuous alignment between capital operations and the strength of your permit · four-year renewal · family file.

I have known your file since the first line of the business plan. When an investor asks about your immigration status or your corporate structure, the answer already exists.

Method & fees

a flat fee of €8,000 excl. VAT, payable in three instalments

ENGAGEMENT	FEES EXCL. VAT
Eligibility assessment (30 minutes)	Free of charge
In-depth consultation where positioning is unclear	From €250
French Tech Visa package – innovative project	€8,000 <i>payable in three instalments</i>
1. On signature of the engagement letter	€2,000 non-refundable
2. On obtaining the Ministry's certificate of innovation	€4,000
3. On obtaining the visa	€2,000
Introduction to the incubation specialist	Free of charge
Second applicant – complete file (co-founder or partner)	€8,000
Family file (spouse + children)	€3,000
Appeals against a refusal (administrative or judicial)	Quoted separately – not included

What the package covers. Assessment and choice of regime · recognition strategy · sourcing and calibration of support letters · review of the incubation agreement · company formation and registration · drafting and filing of the innovation file · follow-up to the certificate · covering note to the consulate · assistance to collection of the card.

THE REAL BUDGET TO PLAN FOR

ITEM	PAID TO	INDICATIVE AMOUNT
Legal fees – French Tech Visa package	THE FIRM	€8,000 excl. VAT
Support in securing incubation (<i>if not yet incubated</i>)	EXTERNAL SPECIALIST	≈ €3,000 excl. VAT
Incubation fees – 12 months of support	THE INCUBATOR	€2,000 to €4,000
Company formation (<i>registry, legal notice, registered office</i>)	THIRD PARTIES	€300 to €900
Long-stay visa	CONSULATE	€99
Tax and stamp duty on collection	FRENCH STATE	€225
TOTAL ENVELOPE		from ≈ €13,600

Worth noting. Incubation included, this stays well below the €30,000 the standard route requires you to lock away – and these sums fund your project, not a frozen account.

Three lines I want

written in plain sight

INDEPENDENCE OF THE FIRM

Incubation fees and incubation support **do not pass through the firm**: you pay the incubator and the specialist directly.

The firm receives **no commission, no referral fee and no benefit of any kind** from the structures or professionals it points you towards. Its fees pay for its legal work alone.

That independence is what makes the advice worth having: **I point you towards the structure that serves your file, never towards the one that would serve the firm.**

TERMS

Fees exclusive of VAT, set out in a prior written engagement letter. Each instalment falls due when a stage of your file has been completed: you pay only as your file moves forward. Sums already paid are non-refundable; instalments not yet due are not payable.

The package covers the route through to issuance of the visa in your country of residence; appeals against a refusal, and requests for additional documents beyond the first, are the subject of a separate written quote. A second applicant and the family file are charged according to the dedicated lines of the fee table; a pre-existing company may justify an addendum.

Services are not subject to French VAT as long as the client is established outside the European Union.

HOW TO GET STARTED

ASSESSMENT

30 minutes, free of charge, to check that your project belongs on the innovation route.

ENGAGEMENT LETTER

A written engagement letter sets the fee and the instalments before any work begins.

INSTALMENTS

Each instalment falls due at a completed stage: you pay as your file moves forward.

ONE LAWYER

A single lawyer, from the assessment through to collecting your card at the préfecture.

This general information document does not constitute legal advice and does not replace an individual review of your situation.



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*“French Tech Visa assessment – 30 minutes,
free of charge, for foreign startup founders.”*

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