



SETTLING-IN GUIDE

Welcome to France

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*Your permit is granted and your company exists. Here is
what comes next.*

PARIS · 2026

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YOU HAVE ARRIVED

What you have obtained is not an end. It is an authorisation to trade.

The residence permit is granted, the company exists, the Kbis certificate is signed.

What begins now is the part where you hire, sign a lease and contract with French clients and suppliers – and where the obligations French law places on a company director become yours.

No one will remind you of them. The day they surface, it is through an inspection, a claim or a summons.

This document sets out what awaits you in your first months, what each step costs, and how to work with me over time if you would rather have a continuing relationship than pay act by act.

You do not need to know French law. You need to know when to call your lawyer – and that is what this guide is for.



PARIS · 2026

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PART ONE

Settling in



The first weeks decide the rest: what is not completed on time cannot be made up afterwards.

Your first weeks

Your residence permit

Your long-stay visa serves as a residence permit for as long as it is valid: no separate card application is due in the meantime. An online validation must be completed within three months of your arrival. The multi-year card, however, is prepared before the visa expires – not after. Your spouse's and children's permits follow yours and are applied for separately.

Your bank

The share capital held in the CARPA escrow account is transferred to your business account as soon as the Kbis certificate is issued. If an account was refused before you arrived, it almost always becomes available once you are in France with proof of address.

Your accounts

A chartered accountant is essential from the first financial year, even if trading has not started: VAT returns and the annual filing of accounts cannot be caught up later.

Your cover

Professional indemnity insurance, registration with the director's social security scheme, health cover. Some regulated activities also require compulsory insurance or a financial guarantee, and trading without it is an offence.

Your registered office

If your registered office sits with a domiciliation provider, watch the contract's expiry date: its termination removes the registered office from the register and, with it, the consistency between your Kbis and your immigration file.

Your personal life

Residential lease, schooling, exchanging your driving licence depending on your country of origin. I answer these questions as part of the engagement, even where they are not strictly legal, and point you to the right person when they fall outside my field.

Your company's corporate life

A French company is not a document you file away after registration. It generates obligations every year, some of which apply even where there has been no trading at all – a dormant company must approve its accounts like any other.

The annual general meeting

It approves the accounts for the financial year and decides how the result is allocated. It gives rise to written minutes, to the updating of the company's registers and, in most cases, to the filing of the annual accounts with the commercial court registry. Failure to file is penalised and exposes the director to a court order backed by a daily fine.

Amendments to the articles

A change of name, corporate purpose, registered office or director each requires a formal decision, updated articles of association, a legal notice and a filing with the one-stop shop. A change of corporate purpose deserves particular care where your residence permit was granted on the strength of a defined business project.

The register of beneficial owners

It must reflect the reality of your shareholding at all times. Any shareholder joining or leaving, and any change in the split, requires a corrective filing within thirty days.

The shareholders' agreement

This is the document people regret not signing. As soon as there are two of you, it organises what the articles leave unsaid: exit, deadlock, a third party coming in, a founder leaving, and who holds power when interests diverge.

SERVICE	FEES (EXCL. VAT)
Annual general meeting approving the accounts	from €600
Amendment to the articles (name, purpose, director)	from €800
Transfer of the registered office	from €800
Update of the register of beneficial owners	from €300
Share capital increase	from €1,500
Shareholders' agreement	from €2,000
Transfer of shares	from €2,500 quoted separately with warranties on assets and liabilities
Investor entry, fundraising, restructuring	on quotation

PART TWO

Your business



*Contracting, invoicing, hiring, taking premises: everything
that binds your company day to day.*

Your contracts

A badly drafted contract stays invisible until there is a disagreement. It is the item where saving at the outset costs the most later.

Review

A review covers the whole document: the balance of obligations, liability and termination clauses, penalties, intellectual property, governing law and jurisdiction. You receive a written note separating what is unacceptable, what is negotiable and what is standard, followed by the amendments to request, drafted and ready to send.

Drafting

Drafting starts from your actual business, not from a template. It includes a preliminary discussion, the draft, a series of exchanges until you are satisfied, and the final version ready for signature – in French, or in a bilingual French-English version where your counterparty is foreign.

SERVICE	FEES (EXCL. VAT)
Review or audit of an existing contract	from €500
Non-disclosure agreement	from €500
Services agreement	from €1,000
General terms of sale or of use	from €1,200
Subcontracting agreement	from €1,000
Partnership or business introducer agreement	from €1,200
Framework or distribution agreement	on quotation
Joint venture agreement, international contract	on quotation
Negotiating a contract with the other side	hourly fixed fee from €1,500

Your invoices and payment terms

Three rules that newly established companies often discover the hard way.

Your invoices must carry mandatory particulars

The identity and registration number of both parties, the invoice number and date, a precise description of the goods or services, the price before tax, the VAT rate and amount, the due date, the late payment interest rate and the fixed recovery indemnity. An incomplete invoice can be disputed by your client, and missing particulars are penalised.

Payment terms between businesses are capped by law

You may neither grant a client, nor accept from a supplier, a payment period longer than the legal maximum. Breaches are inspected and carry administrative fines.

Electronic invoicing is becoming compulsory

Since 1 September 2026, every company must be able to receive its invoices in electronic form. The obligation to issue electronic invoices and to transmit transaction data to the tax authorities already applies to large and mid-sized companies; it will apply to small and medium-sized enterprises and to micro-enterprises from 1 September 2027. In practice you will need to choose an approved platform – a point to settle with your accountant well before the deadline.

A USEFUL HABIT

Have your invoice template and payment terms reviewed once, at the outset. One hour of work saves years of disputable invoices.

Hiring staff

Employing in France means accepting a body of obligations that apply from the first employee onwards. In short:

- declare the employee before they start work;
- give them a written contract – always for a fixed-term, part-time or day-rate arrangement;
- apply your sector's collective bargaining agreement, which often overrides what you had planned;
- keep a staff register and a workplace risk assessment document;
- put collective health cover in place and register the employee with the pension schemes;
- arrange the pre-employment medical appointment;
- display a number of mandatory notices on the premises;
- adopt internal rules above a given headcount, and an IT charter if your staff use your digital tools;
- keep a register of your personal data processing;
- set up staff representation once the applicable headcount threshold is reached.

POINT OF CAUTION

For a foreign employee, you must also verify their right to work before hiring. An employer cannot be relieved of this duty, and the penalty does not depend on good faith.

The employment contract

It is drafted from your collective bargaining agreement, the actual role and your operating constraints: probationary period, variable pay, confidentiality and non-compete clauses – the latter requiring compulsory financial consideration – and a day-rate arrangement where your sector allows one.

Dismissal

The procedure covers the preliminary assessment of grounds and risk, the invitation to a pre-dismissal meeting, preparing that meeting with you, the reasoned dismissal letter, and the calculation of sums due on the final payslip. The reasons stated in the letter fix the boundaries of any later debate before the court: it is the decisive document.

Mutually agreed termination

This covers the negotiation with the employee, the agreement itself, compliance with the withdrawal periods and follow-up of the administrative approval.

SERVICE	FEES (EXCL. VAT)
Tailored employment contract (permanent or fixed-term)	from €500
Amendment to an employment contract	from €400
Internal rules	from €1,500
IT charter	from €800
Setting up collective health cover	from €600
Employment compliance audit	from €2,500
Disciplinary procedure (warning, suspension)	from €600
Dismissal, from invitation to notification	from €1,000
Mutually agreed termination, approval included	from €1,500

Hiring declarations and payslips fall to your chartered accountant. This firm handles the legal instruments and whatever binds the company.

Your premises

Reviewing a commercial lease means looking at its term and break dates, the permitted use – which governs your ability to change activity –, how charges and works are split between landlord and tenant, rent indexation, the deposit, the forfeiture clause and any personal guarantees asked of the director. That last point is the one foreign entrepreneurs discover too late: a personal guarantee binds your own assets, not the company's.

SERVICE	FEES (EXCL. VAT)
Commercial lease review and assistance at signature	from €1,000
Review of a short-term lease or domiciliation agreement	from €600
Negotiating the lease with the landlord	hourly or on quotation
Rent review, lease renewal, change of permitted use	on quotation
Assignment of the lease	on quotation

Do not sign a commercial lease before having it reviewed. It binds you for nine years.

Buying an existing business

The engagement covers due diligence on the target, the sale agreement, escrow of the price on the Paris Bar's CARPA account, clearance of the seller's creditors' claims and the publication formalities. Escrow protects the buyer: the price is released to the seller only once the objection periods have run, failing which the buyer can end up paying twice.

FEES FROM, BY SALE PRICE, EXCLUDING STOCK AND GOODS

SALE PRICE	FEES (EXCL. VAT)
Up to €200,000	€6,000
From €200,001 to €300,000	€8,000
Above €300,000	€6,000 + 1% of the price floor €9,000, cap €20,000

PART THREE

Your disputes



*What is decided at the outset determines almost everything:
the court seised, the evidence assembled, the moment you
negotiate.*

Your disputes

An unpaid invoice, an employee contesting their dismissal, a shareholder blocking a decision, a supplier failing to deliver, a landlord making a claim: disputes are part of a company's life.

Before proceedings

A formal notice from a lawyer settles a significant share of matters with nothing further. It quantifies the claim, sets a deadline and states precisely what happens when it expires. An attempt at amicable resolution is also compulsory before going to court in a number of disputes.

During proceedings

Representation covers the assessment of the case and its prospects, assembling the bundle of exhibits, the written submissions, the procedural hearings, the oral argument and follow-up through to judgment.

Afterwards

Enforcement of the judgment, which is prepared before it is obtained: a judgment against an insolvent debtor is worth nothing.

SERVICE	FEES (EXCL. VAT)
Formal notice from a lawyer	from €600
Negotiation and amicable settlement	fixed fee from €1,500
Court proceedings, per instance, hearings included	from €3,000
The same proceedings, for a client on a retainer	from €2,500
Interim relief, protective measure, attachment	from €2,500
Proceedings before the commercial court	from €5,000
Appeal or appeal to the Cour de cassation	separately quoted never included in the first instance

IF YOU ARE ON A RETAINER

The base fee per instance falls from €3,000 to €2,500, whichever plan you have chosen.

The fee per instance is set according to what is at stake, the complexity of the case and the foreseeable volume of work. It excludes court costs, the judicial officer's disbursements and local counsel fees – around €500 excl. VAT where a locally registered attorney is required. A success fee may be agreed, always in addition to the base fee, never instead of it.

PART FOUR

Working together



Three retainer plans, a single point of contact, and a network of professionals when a matter falls outside my field.

Three retainer plans

Paying act by act works while your needs are occasional. Once trading starts – a client negotiating, an employee to hire, a supplier failing to deliver – the question arises every week. A retainer answers that: you call without doing the arithmetic first.

All three plans include a single point of contact, the lawyer himself, a reply within 24 working hours, and the litigation rate reserved for retainer clients.

Essential

€1,000 excl. VAT

PER MONTH · 5 HOURS

Your day-to-day questions by telephone and e-mail. One contract reviewed each month. Alerts on your employer obligations and payroll deadlines. Review of sensitive letters before you send them.

Growth

€2,000 excl. VAT

PER MONTH · 10 HOURS

Two standard contracts drafted each month. Review of incoming contracts. Follow-up of your employment matters – contracts, amendments, disciplinary procedures. Assistance in your negotiations. A quarterly review of the company's legal position.

Premium

€3,500 excl. VAT

PER MONTH · NO TIME
LIMIT

All your legal questions. Review of every contract, incoming and outgoing. Full follow-up of your employment and commercial matters. Routine corporate housekeeping, annual general meeting included. Attendance at your important negotiations. A monthly review and a watch on developments affecting your sector.

What is not included

Excluded from all three plans and separately quoted: share transfers, investors coming into the capital, fundraising, restructurings, acquisitions and insolvency proceedings. Disputes are governed by the fee schedule in section 08, at the rate reserved for retainer clients.

How it works

A twelve-month engagement, terminable on one month's notice. Unused hours do not carry over from one month to the next. Beyond the plan, time is billed at the firm's hourly rate, subject to your written agreement. VAT at 20% is added to these amounts, your company being established in France.

TO DISCUSS IT

A thirty-minute appointment is enough to identify the plan that fits your business – or to conclude that none of them fits yet.

calendly.com/contact-sd-avocat/consultation

What I do not do – and who I refer you to

A lawyer who claims to handle everything does you a disservice. On request, the firm will recommend a trusted professional:

- a **chartered accountant**, for bookkeeping, filings, payroll and annual accounts;
- a **tax lawyer**, for advanced tax questions – group structuring, transfer pricing, tax audits, the director's tax residence;
- a **tax adviser in your country of residence**, for anything governed by foreign tax law: I never advise on it, and no one should do so from a distance;
- a **lawyer handling URSSAF audits and disputes**, for a social security reassessment, a challenge to contributions or the reclassification of your contractors as employees;
- a **family lawyer**, for a marriage, a divorce, an estate or the protection of a relative;
- a **criminal lawyer**, if you or your company are the subject of proceedings;
- an **intellectual property lawyer**, to file and defend your trade marks;
- a **notaire**, for real estate and instruments requiring notarised form;
- a **statutory auditor**, once your company crosses the thresholds that require one.

Beyond the law, settling in calls for contacts that take months to find when you arrive: an insurance broker for your professional indemnity and compulsory covers, a mortgage broker, an estate agent for your premises or your home, a banker used to the files of recently arrived directors, a reliable domiciliation provider, a sworn translator. The firm will help you find the right people.

These referrals are free of charge and give rise to no commission. I remain your point of contact and make the connection whenever the matter calls for it.

Glossary

Kbis – the official extract proving your company's existence, issued by the commercial court registry.

RCS – the trade and companies register, where your company is registered.

SIREN and SIRET – the identification numbers of your business and of each of its establishments.

Guichet unique (INPI) – the one-stop online portal through which all incorporation and amendment filings pass.

RBE – the register of beneficial owners, listing the individuals who own or control the company.

URSSAF – the body that collects social security contributions and audits their accuracy.

DRIETS – the State department responsible, in the Paris region, for the economy, labour and employment; it issues the opinion on foreign entrepreneurs' business projects.

Collective bargaining agreement – the sector-wide agreement that supplements the Labour Code in your industry; it is binding on you.

CDI, CDD – permanent employment contract, fixed-term employment contract.

CSE – the social and economic committee, the staff representative body required above a given headcount.

Intra-Community VAT number – the VAT number allowing you to invoice a business client established in another EU Member State without VAT.

CARPA – the Bar's fund which receives and holds in escrow money handled by a lawyer.

Commissaire de justice – the public officer who serves documents and enforces court decisions; formerly the huissier.



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FEES

Every engagement is governed by a written fee agreement signed in advance.

The amounts in this document are indicative and negotiable according to the complexity of the matter and what is at stake.
They are stated before tax; VAT at the applicable rate is added.

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