



Greece introduces new start-up investor residence permit to drive innovation and economic growth

Recent legislative amendments to the Greek Immigration Code have introduced a new residence by investment permit category for third-country nationals investing in start-up companies in Greece. This initiative aims to promote foreign investment in innovation and entrepreneurship, supporting Greece's economic development and enhancing its appeal as a business destination.

A new pathway for investors

Under the new provisions, third-country nationals can obtain a residence permit by contributing at least Euro 250,000 to the capital of a start-up company registered in the **National Registry of Start-up Companies** (i.e. Elevate Greece). Such contribution may take place through:

- Acquisition of shares in the context of a share capital increase
- Subscription for bonds in the context of a bond loan issuance

Key requirements and conditions

To qualify for and maintain the residence permit, the following conditions must be fulfilled:

- / **Participation limitations:** The third-country national investor's participation cannot exceed 33% of the company's share capital or voting rights
- / **New job positions:** The start-up must create at least two new jobs within the first year after the investment
- / **Sustained employment:** The total number of jobs, including those created as a result of the investment, must be maintained for a period of at least five years after the investment

/ **Retention requirement:** The investor is required to retain the shares for a minimum of five years from their acquisition

/ **Non-compliance with the prescribed conditions** can lead to the revocation of the residence permit as well as an administrative fine of Euro 50,000.

Application process and main characteristics

Applications for the issuance of the residence permit must be filed within one year of completing the investment before the competent authority after obtaining a retention certificate by the **Directorate of Foreign Direct Investments** of the Ministry of Development.

The residence permit **initially has annual duration, renewable for two-year periods thereafter**, contingent upon compliance with the investment conditions, while it does not impose any requirement for minimum stay periods in Greece.

Investors can be accompanied by their family members, while this residence permit does not provide access to the Greek labour market for the investor or their family members.

The framework allows for continuity in residence permit eligibility, even in cases of liquidation, corporate restructuring, or other changes. Investors may reinvest in another eligible start-up or in other eligible investments (i.e. financial or real estate investments in Greece) within two months in order to maintain their residence permit.

It is noted that the Greek Immigration Code already includes an alternative to the above investment option, whereby the investor is entitled to a Golden Visa, i.e. a residence permit with a 5-year validity, through an investment of at least Euro 500,000 in Venture Capital Companies (VCC) or Funds (VCF). These entities must exclusively invest in businesses registered or established in Greece. Key conditions include the retention of the investment, the use of a dedicated bank account, and certification of the investment by the fund manager and custodian bank. However, this option is not currently feasible, as the required list identifying eligible VCC and VCF entities has not yet been issued by the Ministry of Development, following the enforcement of the new Immigration Code in March 2024.

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