

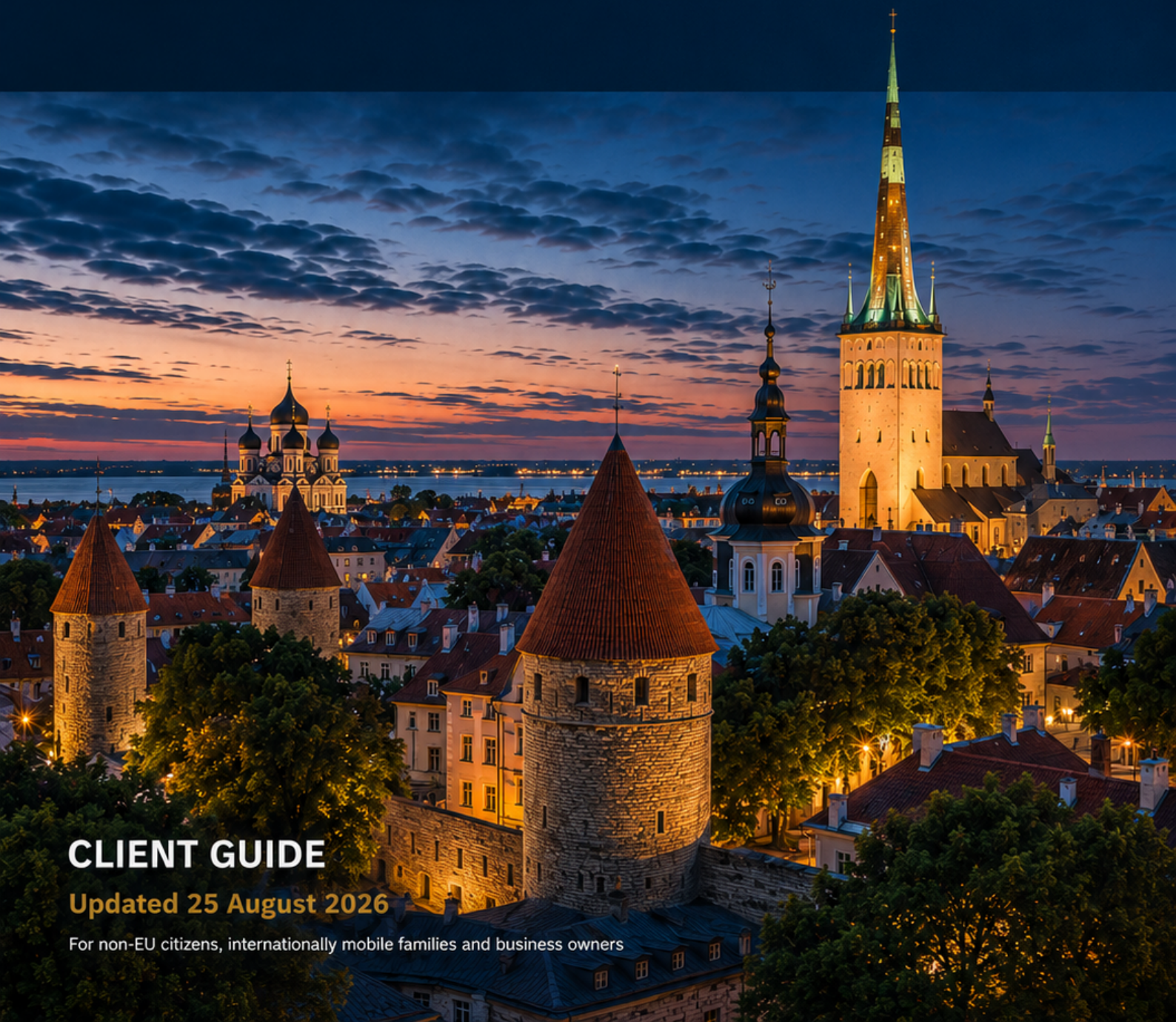
MOVING TO ESTONIA

Residence, company formation
and taxation for non-EU citizens

CLIENT GUIDE

Updated 25 August 2026

For non-EU citizens, internationally mobile families and business owners



Executive overview

A non-EEA national may generally incorporate and own an Estonian company, but company ownership does not by itself provide permission to live or work in Estonia. The immigration route, corporate structure and personal extraction strategy should be planned together.

KEY PRINCIPLE Estonian company law and immigration law operate independently. Share ownership or a directorship does not itself create a right of residence or the right to work.

At a glance

Question	General position
Can a non-EEA national own an Estonian company?	Generally yes, subject to company, sanctions, regulated-sector and investment-screening rules.
Does incorporation grant residence?	No. A separate immigration permission is required.
Can the owner work in Estonia?	Only if the person holds a permission allowing the intended employment, management or self-employment activity.
Is there a no-work route?	Estonia does not provide a broad retirement or passive-income residence permit simply for holding assets. A recogni...
Can an entrepreneur use a founder route?	Potentially, if the business and applicant meet the applicable immigration conditions.
Main company tax rate?	22/78 on distributed profits; retained profits are generally not taxed until distribution

Who this guide is for

- Non-EEA founders planning to relocate to Estonia and build an Estonian business.
- International entrepreneurs who want an Estonian company but may continue living abroad.
- Financially independent individuals considering whether a no-work residence route is available.
- Professionals assessing employment, EU Blue Card or high-skilled routes.
- Families assessing employment, study or family-reunification routes.

Important terminology

Estonia applies EU free-movement rules to EU/EEA nationals and relevant Swiss arrangements. Third-country nationals normally need a separate immigration basis for residence and, where applicable, work or business activity.

Choosing an Estonian residence route

Company ownership and immigration permission must be assessed separately.

BEFORE COMMITTING TO A ROUTE Confirm nationality, intended activity, salary / business eligibility, family position, funding and tax residence. A company-registration certificate does not itself confer a right to live or work in Estonia.

1. Main routes to Estonian residence

The correct route depends on nationality, intended activity, qualifications, salary or business plan, family relationships, funding and whether the person will work locally.

Employment and high-skilled routes

Employment-based temporary residence and EU Blue Card routes apply to qualifying third-country nationals. Salary, employer and labour-market conditions depend on the route.

Route	Typical features	Residence implications
Employment / EU Blue Card	Employment-based temporary residence and EU Blue Card routes apply to qualifying third-country nationals. Salary, employer and	Permission linked to the qualifying job / route and its conditions.
Start-up / business residence	Estonia has a start-up visa / residence framework for qualifying technology or innovation-driven businesses and separate busi	Permission linked to the approved business / self-employed activity.
Family / study	Documented relationship or eligible study programme; financial and insurance conditions may apply.	Permission depends on sponsor / programme and may have work limits.

OWNER-MANAGED COMPANY Forming an Estonian company does not automatically allow its shareholder or director to work in Estonia. The immigration basis must authorise the actual role and activity.

Employment / EU Blue Card

Work-route eligibility, salary thresholds and labour-market conditions should be checked immediately before application because they can change during the year.

Family and study

Family reunification and study routes are available in defined circumstances. Requirements commonly include evidence of relationship or admission, sufficient funds, insurance and accommodation. Work rights depend on the specific Estonian permission.

2. Residence without work / independent means

Estonia does not provide a broad retirement or passive-income residence permit simply for holding assets. A recognised immigration purpose is normally required.

Practical implications

- Company ownership, investments or property ownership should never be assumed to create a residence right.
- Passive ownership should be distinguished from active management, employment or self-employment.
- The permission wording and actual day-to-day activity should be reviewed before relocation.
- Proof of funds, health insurance and accommodation may be required depending on the route.
- Tax residence is separate from immigration residence and requires its own analysis.

NO-WORK RESIDENCE Estonia does not provide a broad retirement or passive-income residence permit simply for holding assets. A recognised immigration purpose is normally required.

WORK RESTRICTION Passive investment should not be confused with employment, self-employment or active company management. A person carrying out work must hold an immigration basis that permits it.

Passive ownership versus active management

Activity	Likely position without work permission
Holding shares as an investment	Potentially possible, subject to company law, sanctions, tax and sector rules.
Receiving dividends / investment returns	Potentially possible, with local and cross-border tax consequences.
Managing daily operations	Work activity; an appropriate immigration basis is normally required.
Providing services to the company	Employment / self-employment activity; authorisation should be confirmed.
Drawing salary or management fees for work	Requires immigration, payroll and tax analysis.

Long-term residence caution

Temporary residence, permanent residence, citizenship residence and tax residence are separate tests. Whether time under a particular permit counts toward a long-term objective depends on the rules in force at the relevant time.

3. Entrepreneur and founder routes

Start-up / business residence

An OÜ is widely used by international founders, but e-Residency and company ownership do not create immigration or tax residence rights.

Core planning requirements

- A credible business plan and evidence that the proposed activity is genuine and viable.
- Appropriate funding and source-of-funds documentation.
- Evidence of founder skills, qualifications or commercial track record where relevant.
- A residence permission that expressly permits the proposed founder, management or self-employed activity.

More likely to support a founder application	Generally weaker case
Innovative or commercially credible venture with documented funding	Passive investment or shell company
Business plan showing market need and economic substance	Company formed only to obtain residence
Founder capability and lawful source of funds	Unclear activity, funding or local economic rationale

Permit duration and limits

Founder permissions are normally conditional on continuing to satisfy the qualifying business and personal requirements.

- Material changes to the business, ownership, employer or activity can trigger a notification or new immigration application.
- Unrelated employment may require separate authorisation.
- The application evidence should be prepared before committing to relocation or local payroll.
- Passive investment should not be confused with a founder or self-employment residence route.

CONDITION OF PERMISSION A founder must comply with the conditions of the residence route actually granted. Incorporation alone does not expand work rights.

4. Establishing an Estonian private limited company

The usual owner-managed vehicle considered in this guide is the Osaühing (OÜ). It has separate legal personality and shareholder liability is generally limited, subject to statutory exceptions and capital rules.

Coordinated Estonia planning sequence

1	IMMIGRATION	Choose a permission that authorises the intended activity.
2	COMPANY	Design the ownership, management, capital and governance arrangements.
3	REGISTRATION	Complete company, tax, VAT, payroll and ownership registrations.
4	REMUNERATION	Model salary, dividends, pension and social-security exposure.
5	COMPLIANCE	Maintain books, annual accounts, tax returns and sector licences.

SEQUENCE MATTERS Immigration, company substance, payroll and personal tax residence are legally distinct, but they interact in practice and should be planned together.

Core formation requirements

Requirement	Practical point
Company form	Osaühing (OÜ)
Share capital	An OÜ can be formed with very low share capital; the fixed EUR 2,500 minimum was abolished. Share nominal values, contribution and solvency rules still apply.
Shareholder	One or more shareholders are generally possible; foreign ownership is subject to any sector-specific rules.
Management	Local company-law requirements for directors / managers must be satisfied.
Registered office	A valid registered office / business address in Estonia is generally required.
Registration	Complete the prescribed commercial / company register process.
Tax registrations	Register for corporation tax, VAT, payroll and employer obligations where relevant.
Beneficial ownership	Maintain and file beneficial-owner information where required.

Registration and ongoing obligations

1. Confirm the company form, name, founders, management and registered office.
2. Prepare and execute the constitutional / incorporation documents and contribute the required capital.
3. Complete company, tax, VAT, payroll and employer registrations where relevant.
4. Register legal and beneficial ownership information where required.
5. Maintain accounting records and prepare annual accounts / filings under local law.
6. File corporation tax, VAT, payroll and other returns and maintain sector licences where required.

FOREIGN OWNERSHIP A non-EEA person can generally own an Estonian company, but ownership is separate from immigration permission. Banking, sanctions, regulated-sector and tax-residence issues may require additional review.

5. Company taxation

an Estonian resident company is generally subject to local corporation tax under the rules described below. Cross-border management, permanent establishments, transfer pricing and treaty residence require specialist analysis.

Principal company tax rates

Tax / item	Indicative 2026 treatment
Corporation tax	22/78 on distributed profits; retained profits are generally not taxed until distribution
Standard VAT	24% from 1 July 2025 and continuing in 2026
Dividend / withholding	Domestic withholding and treaty relief depend on recipient and structure.
Payroll / social security	Separate employer and employee charges may apply.
Transfer pricing / cross-border	Arm's-length and documentation rules can apply to related-party transactions.

Trading-profit illustration

Calculation	Amount
Illustrative taxable company profit	EUR 100,000
Indicative company tax	EUR 22,000 on a EUR 78,000 net distribution basis is not directly comparable
Profit after company tax	EUR Distribution-tax system - see text

This simplified illustration excludes payroll taxes, VAT, withholding taxes, local taxes, incentives and cross-border adjustments. The actual taxable base can differ from accounting profit.

PLANNING POINT The headline company-tax rate is not the owner's final tax rate. Additional personal tax, social charges and withholding can arise when profits are extracted.

Company residence and management

If an Estonian company is effectively managed from another country, or a foreign company is managed from Estonia, dual-residence, permanent-establishment and treaty issues can arise. Board process, decision-making, personnel and operating substance should match the intended structure.

6. Personal Income Tax - 2026

For 2026, Estonia applies a 22% personal income-tax rate and a basic exemption of EUR 700 per month (EUR 8,400 per year), with separate social tax and employment contributions.

Principal personal-tax considerations

Personal-tax component	2026 position
Employment / business income	For 2026, Estonia applies a 22% personal income-tax rate and a basic exemption of EUR 700 per month (EUR 8,400 per year)
Dividends / investment income	Estonian companies pay 22/78 corporate income tax when profits are distributed. Ordinary dividends from profits taxed at
Social security	Separate rules may materially affect salary / director remuneration.
Treaty relief	Can affect residence, withholding and double taxation.
Annual changes	Thresholds and reliefs should be reconfirmed before implementation.

The final liability depends on residence, deductions, family position, social-security classification, municipality or local taxes where relevant, and treaty relief.

2026 planning point

Personal tax thresholds and social-security rules should be confirmed for the taxpayer and payment type at the time remuneration is implemented.

PERSONAL TAX Do not use a single headline rate as a personal forecast. Residence, deductions, social contributions, family position and treaty relief can materially change the result.

Dividends and investment income

Estonian companies pay 22/78 corporate income tax when profits are distributed. Ordinary dividends from profits taxed at that level are generally not subject to additional Estonian withholding for resident individuals, subject to transitional cases.

Tax residence is separate from immigration

Individuals are generally Estonian tax resident if their place of residence is in Estonia or they stay at least 183 days in a 12-month period, subject to treaties.

7. Salary, director remuneration and dividends

Owner-directors commonly extract value through salary, director remuneration, dividends, pension contributions or a combination. Each route has different company, personal-tax, payroll, social-security, cash-flow and immigration consequences.

Salary / employment remuneration

- Normally deductible for the company where commercially supportable and incurred for the business.
- Subject to payroll withholding and the applicable personal income-tax and social-security rules.
- Employer social contributions, pension and other payroll obligations may apply depending on the country and arrangement.
- A non-EEA owner must hold permission that authorises the underlying work or management activity.

Director / management remuneration

Board or management fees require separate tax and payroll analysis. The treatment can depend on whether the individual is an employee, executive director, board member or non-resident and on any applicable treaty.

Dividends

- Paid from distributable profits after company tax and subject to proper corporate approval.
- Not normally deductible in calculating company taxable profit.
- Domestic withholding tax may apply to dividends depending on recipient and structure.
- Estonian companies pay 22/78 corporate income tax when profits are distributed. Ordinary dividends from profits taxed at that level are generally not subject to additional Estonian withholding for resident individuals, subject to transitional cases.
- Dividends are investment returns and do not by themselves create a right to work or manage the company.

IMMIGRATION CHECK Changing the extraction method does not cure an immigration mismatch. Salary or management activity requires a permit that authorises the underlying work.

8. Combined company and shareholder illustration

This simplified example shows the company-level position before any personal tax on distribution. It is not a recommendation or a complete shareholder tax calculation.

Stage	Illustrative amount
Company taxable profit	EUR 100,000
Company tax	EUR 22,000 on a EUR 78,000 net distribution basis is not directly comparable
After-tax amount before distribution	EUR Distribution-tax system - see text
Personal tax on distribution	Depends on residence, dividend rules, withholding and treaty relief.
Net amount personally retained	Requires case-specific calculation.

EFFECTIVE RESULT The combined company-and-shareholder burden cannot be stated reliably from the company-tax rate alone. This guide therefore avoids presenting a single combined effective rate as a recommendation.

Salary versus dividend comparison

Salary / remuneration	Dividend
Usually deductible for the company if properly incurred.	Not normally deductible for the company.
Payroll tax and social contributions may apply.	Dividend / investment-income tax and withholding may apply.
May support pension / employment contribution history.	Investment return rather than earned remuneration.
Requires work permission where the owner performs the activity.	Does not itself authorise work or management.
Must be commercially supportable.	Requires distributable reserves and corporate approval.

This comparison is deliberately high-level. The appropriate mix depends on company profitability, the owner's tax residence, immigration permission, pension strategy, payroll classification, treaty relief and whether profits are retained or distributed.

9. Recommended planning sequence

The sequence matters. Incorporating first and addressing immigration or tax residence later can create a company that the founder is not legally permitted to operate in Estonia, or can create unintended cross-border tax exposure.

1. Confirm nationality, current residence and whether an entry visa or preclearance is required for Estonia.
2. Identify the immigration route before committing to relocation, employment or active company management.
3. Test the relevant employment, Blue Card, entrepreneur, family, study or no-work route against the actual facts.
4. Define ownership, management, registered office, capital and banking arrangements for the Osühing (OÜ).
5. Prepare the employment file or founder business plan, funding and source-of-funds evidence.
6. Incorporate and complete company, tax, VAT, payroll and beneficial-ownership registrations.
7. Agree a compliant salary, dividend, pension and payroll strategy with Estonian advisers.
8. Review personal and company tax residence, treaty exposure, permanent establishments and continuing obligations elsewhere.
9. Complete post-arrival residence, population/tax registration and other local formalities where required.

Documents commonly required

Immigration and personal	Company and commercial
Passport and civil-status documents	Constitutional / incorporation documents
Employment contract or founder-route evidence	Business plan and financial forecasts
Proof of qualifications / funds / insurance	Funding and source-of-funds evidence
Family, study or accommodation evidence	Management, address and ownership details
Tax-residence / social-security file	Tax, VAT, payroll and beneficial-owner registrations

DO NOT RELY ON INCORPORATION A company-registration certificate proves that the company exists. It does not prove that a non-EEA founder may enter Estonia, live there, work for the company or manage it.

10. Cross-border and advisory considerations

Tax residence is separate from immigration residence

an Estonian residence permit does not by itself determine tax residence. Domestic residence tests and double-tax treaties must be analysed separately.

Operating from another country

an Estonian company managed from abroad can create foreign permanent-establishment, payroll, social-security, VAT and company-residence issues. The owner's home country may also tax salary, director fees, dividends or capital gains.

Remote work and foreign employers

Working physically in Estonia for a foreign employer can create local payroll, social-security or personal-tax exposure even where the employer is abroad. Treaty day-count rules are not a universal exemption.

Regulated and professional activities

Company registration does not replace professional licences or regulatory permissions. Financial services, insurance, legal work, healthcare, recruitment, transport, food, hospitality and other regulated sectors may require separate Estonian or EU authorisation.

Questions to resolve before proceeding

- What is the applicant's nationality and current country of tax residence?
- Will the person be employed in Estonia, run a business, or remain only a passive shareholder?
- Which immigration route actually authorises the intended activity?
- How much funding is available and can its source be documented?
- Where will company management decisions actually be taken?
- Will profits be retained, paid as salary, contributed to pension arrangements or distributed as dividends?
- Does the person have ongoing tax, company, social-security or estate-planning exposure elsewhere?

PROFESSIONAL REVIEW Immigration, corporate, tax, payroll, social-security and regulatory advice should be coordinated. A structure that works for tax may not satisfy immigration conditions, and a residence route may restrict the intended company role.

About the Founder - Gary Day

Founder and Senior Wealth Advisor

A DISCIPLINED INTERNATIONAL PERSPECTIVE Gary combines military discipline with decades of experience helping internationally mobile clients navigate cross-border financial decisions.

Gary Day is the Founder and a Senior Wealth Advisor at Elysium Wealth Advisors, bringing over 25 years of international financial-services experience across the United Kingdom, Europe and the Middle East.

Gary began his professional career in the British Army before moving into financial services in 1990. That background shaped the disciplined, structured and analytical approach that continues to underpin his work in wealth advisory and financial planning.

He has held senior advisory and leadership roles within FCA-regulated firms in the UK and has extensive experience advising expatriates, internationally mobile professionals and high-net-worth individuals. His work focuses on bringing clarity and coordination to complex, multi-jurisdictional financial arrangements.

Core areas of expertise

- Cross-border financial planning
- Estate and succession planning, including UAE wills
- Pension structuring and transfers
- Investment portfolio design and analysis
- Individual and corporate protection planning

Gary Day

Founder and Senior Wealth Advisor



A DISCIPLINED INTERNATIONAL PERSPECTIVE

Gary combines military discipline with more than 25 years of international financial-services experience, supporting internationally mobile clients with structured cross-border planning.

Founder profile | Elysium Wealth Advisors Group of Companies

Professional qualifications and specialist education

Area	Background
PROFESSIONAL QUALIFICATIONS	Level 4 Diploma in Financial Services; Financial Planning Certificate; CF2 Investment and Risk.
SPECIALIST ADVICE	Mortgage Advice; Equity Release; Long-Term Care; Level 6 Award in Pension Transfers.
INVESTMENT & MARKETS	Hedge Funds, Equity Portfolio Management and Fixed Income Portfolio Management - New York Institute of Finance.
INTERNATIONAL STUDY	Programmes through KU Leuven, HarvardX and the IMF, together with specialist Islamic banking, insurance and investment certifications.

Gary regularly works with clients across the EU, the UAE and other international markets, supporting Elysium Wealth Advisors' commitment to bespoke, client-centred planning.

Official sources and further information

- Police and Border Guard Board - residence
- Work in Estonia / Startup Estonia - founder and employment routes
- Estonian Tax and Customs Board - 2026 tax rates and 22/78 distributed-profit tax
- e-Business Register - OÜ formation
- eesti.ee - business and residence information
- Official sources and thresholds should be checked again immediately before any application or transaction.

Important Disclaimer

This guide is provided for general information and client education only. It does not constitute legal, immigration, tax, accounting, investment, pension or regulatory advice, and it does not take account of any person's objectives, financial position, nationality, residence, domicile or individual circumstances. All tax figures and worked examples are illustrative only and must not be treated as personal calculations, forecasts or recommendations.

The information is based on public and official sources reviewed up to 25 August 2026. Laws, salary thresholds, occupation lists, administrative practices, tax rates and official interpretations may change. Before taking action, obtain written, case-specific advice from appropriately qualified Estonian immigration, legal, tax and accounting professionals and, where relevant, a suitably authorised financial adviser.

Particular points to reconfirm at the action date include immigration salary and funding thresholds, company-registration requirements, personal tax bands, social-security rates, dividend withholding and any treaty relief.

About this guide

Prepared as a client education document by Elysium Wealth Advisors Group of Companies. The guide is designed to support an initial professional discussion and should be supplemented by a written, case-specific assessment.

WhatsApp contacts

To arrange an initial discussion, contact Elysium Wealth Advisors using the most convenient regional WhatsApp number:

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Publication note

This guide is a general overview of Estonia residence, company formation and taxation as at 25 August 2026. It is not legal, tax or immigration advice. Rules, thresholds and administrative practice can change, and individual circumstances can materially affect the outcome. Obtain country-specific professional advice before acting.