Setting up a Business in Europe

Enterprise Europe Network London

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1. Introduction

This factsheet gives a basic overview of your rights as a legal or natural person when doing business in other European Union countries. It also provides information on how to set up a business in each of the 27 EU member states including the contact details of national agencies responsible for registering new businesses.

2. Principles of the single European market

Since 1973, the United Kingdom has been a full member of the European Union and all UK citizens and businesses therefore enjoy certain rights stemming from the EU membership. The four basic rights that citizens and businesses take advantage of are the free movement of goods, services (including freedom of establishment), capital and citizens within the single European market. At the moment, the market covers 27 countries and approximately 500 million consumers. These rights are based on the provisions of the Treaty establishing the European Community.

The Treaty guarantees the principle of a single European market whereby there are no quantitative or qualitative barriers to trade. Companies can sell their goods and provide services elsewhere in the common market without facing any trade barriers (eliminating import tariffs and licenses or discrimination of British companies in foreign markets).

These Treaty-based rights have been further reinforced by secondary legislation including the Services Directive, which aims at removing all remaining obstacles to the liberalisation of cross-border provision of services on a temporary basis. The Commission Communication on the Single Market Act details 50 measures to strengthen the single market of goods and to eliminate any obstacles that may still exist.

Furthermore, article 49 of this Treaty gives citizens of all EU member states the freedom to establish themselves either as a self-employed person or as a legal entity in other EU countries to pursue business activities.. The Treaty states:

“… restrictions on the freedom of establishment of nationals of a member state in the territory of another member state shall be prohibited. Such prohibition shall also apply to restrictions on the setting-up of agencies, branches or subsidiaries by nationals of any member state established in the territory of any member state. Freedom of establishment shall include the right to take up and pursue activities as a self-employed persons and to set up and manage undertakings...under the conditions laid down for its own nationals by the law of the country where such establishment is effected, ….”

The impact of the freedom of establishment is the removal of any discrimination on the grounds of nationality and harmonisation of national rules on access to local markets and mutual recognition. However, it is essential to bear in mind that the establishment of a company in another EU member state is still subject to national company law and it will be the national legislation of an EU member state that will determine the incorporation/registration and functioning of a company.

3. How to register your business in another EU country

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Country</th>
<th>Name of the company register</th>
<th>Website of the company register</th>
<th>Further information</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Austria</td>
<td>Business Register of the Ministry of Justice</td>
<td><a href="http://www.justiz.gv.at/internet/html/default/2c9484852308c2a601240b693e1c0860.de.html">http://www.justiz.gv.at/internet/html/default/2c9484852308c2a601240b693e1c0860.de.html</a></td>
<td>Click here</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Belgium</td>
<td>Crossroads Bank for Enterprises</td>
<td><a href="http://economie.fgov.be/fr/entreprises">economie.fgov.be/fr/entreprises/BCE</a></td>
<td>Click here</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bulgaria</td>
<td>Commercial Registry of the</td>
<td><a href="http://www.brra.bg">www.brra.bg</a></td>
<td>Click here</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Country</td>
<td>Registry Agency</td>
<td>Website</td>
<td>Click here</td>
</tr>
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<td>---------------</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Czech Republic</td>
<td>Commercial Register of the Ministry of Justice</td>
<td><a href="http://www.justice.cz">www.justice.cz</a></td>
<td>Click here</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Denmark</td>
<td>Central Business Register of the Commerce and Companies Agency</td>
<td><a href="http://www.virk.dk/English">http://www.virk.dk/English</a></td>
<td>Click here</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Estonia</td>
<td>Register of a County Court</td>
<td><a href="https://ariregister.rik.ee/index.py?lang=eng&amp;sess=8606033791281605721679708574356718751393989327936891041993029065">https://ariregister.rik.ee/index.py?lang=eng&amp;sess=8606033791281605721679708574356718751393989327936891041993029065</a></td>
<td>Click here</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Finland</td>
<td>National Board of Patents and Registration</td>
<td><a href="http://www.prh.fi/en.html">http://www.prh.fi/en.html</a></td>
<td>Click here</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>France</td>
<td>Register of Commerce and Businesses via a local Chamber of Commerce</td>
<td><a href="http://www.greffes-formalites.fr">www.greffes-formalites.fr</a></td>
<td>Click here</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Germany</td>
<td>Commercial Register of a local Court and Trade Register of a local municipality</td>
<td><a href="https://www.unternehmensregister.de/ureg/?submitaction=language&amp;language=en">https://www.unternehmensregister.de/ureg/?submitaction=language&amp;language=en</a></td>
<td>Click here</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Greece</td>
<td>Local Chamber of Commerce</td>
<td><a href="http://www.athensinfoguide.com/businessgreekchambers.htm">www.athensinfoguide.com/businessgreekchambers.htm</a></td>
<td>Click here</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hungary</td>
<td>Court of Company Registration</td>
<td><a href="http://www.e-cegjegyzek.hu/info/page/ceginfo">http://www.e-cegjegyzek.hu/info/page/ceginfo</a></td>
<td>Click here</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ireland</td>
<td>Companies Registration Office</td>
<td><a href="http://www.cro.ie">www.cro.ie</a></td>
<td>Click here</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Italy</td>
<td>Business Register</td>
<td><a href="http://www.registroimprese.it/dama/navcom?cl=EN">http://www.registroimprese.it/dama/navcom?cl=EN</a></td>
<td>Click here</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Luxembourg</td>
<td>Commercial Register of Companies</td>
<td><a href="http://www.rcsi.lu">www.rcsi.lu</a></td>
<td>Click here</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Portugal</td>
<td>Register of National Entities</td>
<td><a href="http://www.irn.mj.pt/sections/inicio">www.irn.mj.pt/sections/inicio</a></td>
<td>Click here</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Romania</td>
<td>National Trade Register Office</td>
<td><a href="http://www.onrc.ro/indexe.php">http://www.onrc.ro/indexe.php</a></td>
<td>Click here</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Slovenia</td>
<td>Court Register of a region</td>
<td><a href="http://evem.gov.si">http://evem.gov.si</a></td>
<td>Click here</td>
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</table>
**Spain**
The Mercantile Register
Click here

**Sweden**
Companies Registration Office
http://www.bolagsverket.se/in_enGLISH/
Click here

**The Netherlands**
Trade Register of a local Chamber of Commerce
www.kvk.nl/english/traderegister
Click here

**United Kingdom**
Companies House
www.companieshouse.gov.uk
Click here

### 4. Further sources of information

**Your Europe – Business portal**
This pan-European portal provides practical information on aspects related to doing business in another EU member state. It includes details on the procedures relating to registration of a company, taxation rules, HR and employment law, and many more. It also has a citizen’s information chapter.

**Business Link – Understanding the European market**
This is the UK government portal providing information on all aspects of doing business in the UK. It also includes a comprehensive section on European markets and on doing business in the EU.
W: [http://www.businesslink.gov.uk/bdotg/action/layer?r.s=t1&r.l1=1079717544&r.lc=en&r.l3=1084109530&r.l2=1084109527&topicId=1084109532](http://www.businesslink.gov.uk/bdotg/action/layer?r.s=t1&r.l1=1079717544&r.lc=en&r.l3=1084109530&r.l2=1084109527&topicId=1084109532)

**EU Services Directive**
[http://ec.europa.eu/internal_market/services/services-dir/index_en.htm](http://ec.europa.eu/internal_market/services/services-dir/index_en.htm)

**EU’s Single Market Act**
[http://ec.europa.eu/internal_market/smact/index_en.htm](http://ec.europa.eu/internal_market/smact/index_en.htm)

### 5. Useful contacts

**Enterprise Europe Network London**
33 Queen Street, EC4R 1AP London
T: +44 (0)20 7489 1992
E: europe@londonchamber.co.uk
W: [www.londonchamber.co.uk/europe](http://www.londonchamber.co.uk/europe)
Enterprise Europe Network is an EU-sponsored network of business advisors assisting small companies in making the most of business opportunities in Europe. It provides a wide range of services on finding business partners in other European countries, developing pan-European technology partnerships and accessing European funding opportunities.

**UK Trade & Investment**
This is a business support arm of the UK government assisting British businesses to trade and invest overseas. It has offices in over 100 countries worldwide.
W: [www.uktradeinvest.gov.uk](http://www.uktradeinvest.gov.uk)

**The Council of Foreign Chambers of Commerce in the UK**
The Council represents more than 30 bilateral chambers in the UK and over 10,000 foreign businesses with trading and investment interests in the UK.
W: [www.thecfcc.com](http://www.thecfcc.com)
This factsheet was produced by the Enterprise Europe Network London team at London Chamber of Commerce. The Enterprise Europe Network London brings together GLE, London Chamber of Commerce and London Technology Network. The Enterprise Europe Network London is funded by the European Commission and the London Development Agency.

We provide practical, hands-on support and information for London’s small and medium businesses seeking funding, hoping to expand their business into Europe, or wishing to develop (technology) partnerships with other European businesses. For more information please go to: www.een-london.co.uk

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