

STARTING A BUSINESS

A practical introduction to
creating and organising a
business in France.

STARTER GUIDE

A free practical introduction from HumaForm for English-speaking expats in France.

HumaForm

Clear, practical administrative support — without unnecessary jargon.

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Starting a business in France

Starting a business in France involves more than choosing a name and registering online. You need to understand your activity, choose an appropriate structure, complete the relevant formalities and establish a system for tax, social and administrative obligations.

France has several legal structures and the right choice depends on the project. The official URSSAF Mon-entreprise tools currently provide guidance and comparisons, while business formalities are handled through the official Guichet unique.

This guide deliberately stays at an introductory level. It helps you understand the roadmap without pretending that one structure or tax regime is right for everyone.

“The goal is not to know every French business rule before you start. It is to know which decisions you need to make and where to verify them.”

01 Define your business project

Before starting the formalities, clarify what you actually intend to do in France. Your activity, target clients, expected turnover, location and whether you will work alone or with others can influence the structure and obligations you need to consider.

Do not begin by choosing a status simply because someone else uses it. First understand the activity and the way you expect the business to operate.

HumaForm Tip ■

Write a one-page description of your project before starting the registration process. It will make later decisions much easier.

02 Check whether your activity is regulated

Not every activity can be started under the same conditions. Some professions are regulated and can require qualifications, authorisations, registration or recognition of professional credentials.

This is particularly important for newcomers who obtained qualifications outside France. Check the current rules applicable to the exact activity before registering.

HumaForm Tip ■

Do not assume that being allowed to perform an activity in your home country automatically means you can perform the same regulated activity in France.

03 Choose the appropriate legal structure

France offers several business structures, including entreprise individuelle, micro-entreprise, EURL, SARL, SAS and SASU. The appropriate choice depends on the project, activity, expected income, social protection, taxation and other factors.

The URSSAF Mon-entreprise tools can help compare structures, but the results are indicative and do not replace personalised tax or legal advice.

HumaForm Tip ■

Treat the choice of status as a business decision, not just an administrative formality.

04 Prepare your registration

Business formalities are now handled through the official Guichet unique des formalités des entreprises. The information and supporting documents required depend on the business and its legal structure.

Before submitting, check the current official instructions and make sure the information you provide is consistent across your documents.

HumaForm Tip ■

Prepare your supporting documents before starting the online formalities. It is much easier to complete a registration when your file is already organised.

05 Understand your tax and social obligations

Creating a business means more than obtaining a registration number. Depending on your structure and activity, you may have tax declarations, social contributions, accounting obligations and other administrative requirements.

The exact rules depend heavily on the chosen structure and activity. Use official tools and qualified professionals where detailed tax or accounting advice is required.

HumaForm Tip ■

Before your first invoice, make sure you understand when and how your business income must be declared.

06 Set up your business administration

Once the business is created, put a simple administrative system in place. Keep invoices, contracts, receipts, declarations, correspondence and business records in a structured system.

A separate business folder and clear naming conventions can save considerable time later, especially when you need information for tax, accounting or administrative purposes.

HumaForm Tip ■

Do not wait until tax season to organise your business documents. File them as you go.

07 Banking, invoicing and insurance

Depending on your activity and legal structure, you may need or benefit from a dedicated business bank account, appropriate invoicing procedures and professional insurance. The requirements are not identical for every business.

Check what applies to your specific activity rather than relying on generic advice from social media or another entrepreneur.

HumaForm Tip ■

Create an invoice template before you need to send your first invoice. It is easier to check the required information calmly in advance.

08 Think about the business after registration

Registration is the beginning of the business, not the end of the process. You will need to keep information up to date, meet declaration deadlines and respond to requests from administrations where applicable.

Build a simple calendar for recurring obligations and keep evidence of important submissions.

HumaForm Tip ■

A business can be legally created in one day and administratively neglected for months. Build your routine from the start.

Your Checklist

Use this checklist as an organisational tool. Exact requirements depend on your individual circumstances, so always verify current official information.

- I have clearly defined my business activity and project.
- I have checked whether my activity is regulated.
- I have considered the legal structures relevant to my project.
- I have checked the current official information before registering.
- I have prepared my identity and supporting documents.
- I know where to complete the official business formalities.
- I understand the main tax and social obligations that apply to my chosen structure.
- I have organised my business documents.
- I have prepared an appropriate invoicing process.
- I have checked whether professional insurance is relevant to my activity.
- I have recorded important declaration and payment deadlines.
- I know when I should seek accounting, tax or legal advice.

Useful Official Sources

For current information, start with **formalites.entreprises.gouv.fr** for business formalities and the official **URSSAF Mon-entreprise** tools for comparing statuses and estimating certain costs and contributions. The URSSAF tools themselves state that simulations are indicative and do not replace the calculations of the relevant administrations. For detailed tax, accounting or regulated-profession questions, use the relevant official administration or a qualified professional.

Need help getting organised?

HumaForm can help English-speaking entrepreneurs understand French administrative procedures, organise their documents and identify practical next steps. For accounting, tax or regulated legal advice, the appropriate qualified professional should be consulted.

Book a Free Discovery Call

www.huma-form.fr

This guide provides general administrative information and is not legal, tax or accounting advice. Business rules, thresholds and procedures can change and may depend on your activity and structure. Always verify current requirements with the relevant official authority.