

Immigrant
Investor
Programme and
Start-up
Entrepreneur
Programme

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Immigrant Investor Programme and Start-up Entrepreneur Programme

Introduction

The Department of Justice, Equality and Defence (the “Department”) has recently introduced two new immigration initiatives aimed at facilitating non-EEA migrant entrepreneurs and investors who, in return for permission to reside in the State, are prepared to invest in Ireland.

The new initiatives are known as:

-  The Immigrant Investor Programme; and
-  The Start-up Entrepreneur Programme.

Immigrant Investor Programme

The purpose of the Immigrant Investor Programme is to enable non-EEA nationals and their families who commit to an approved investment in Ireland to acquire a secure residency status in Ireland.

Application Requirements for the Immigrant Investor Programme

In order to be considered for the programme, an investor must propose an investment in one or more of the following eligible investment options:-

1. A once off endowment of a minimum of €500,000 to a public project benefiting the arts, sports, health, culture or education.
2. A minimum €1,000,000 aggregate investment into new or existing Irish registered businesses headquartered in Ireland for a minimum of three years and which supports the creation or maintenance of employment. Funding by the investor through the intermediary of a venture capital fund will be considered provided that it can be demonstrated that the net effect is at least equivalent to that of a direct investment.

3. A minimum €2,000,000 investment in a special low interest 5 year immigrant investor bond. There will be one interest payment of 5.1% at the end of the 5 year investment period and this is equal to an annual equivalent interest rate of 1% (AER).
4. A minimum €1,000,000 mixed investment consisting of €500,000 in property and €500,000 in immigrant investor bonds. Property investments will be evaluated on their merits by reference to their contribution to the public interest and job creation. In certain circumstances, where the overall investment in property is over €1,000,000 and considered to be of particular benefit to the State, a bond investment may not be necessary.

The application will be considered by an independent evaluation committee who will recommend to the Minister for Justice, Equality and Defence (the "Minister") as to whether or not the applicant should be accepted to the scheme. It should be noted that merely meeting the financial thresholds set out above does not guarantee approval, the evaluation committee must be satisfied that the proposal is in the public interest.

Successful applicants and their nominated family members can expect to receive residence permission for five years. An initial permission will be granted for two years and following a review at that point to ensure the investor is continuing to meet the conditions of the scheme (i.e. the investment has not been withdrawn, they continue to be law abiding and self sufficient), a further period of three years will be granted. After this initial five year period, the investor will be free to apply for residence in five year tranches. The investor is not required to establish actual residence in Ireland. The Immigrant Investment Programme is about rights of residence that the investor may exercise as their business and family needs dictate. No minimum residence requirement is set other than the stipulation that the persons concerned should visit Ireland at least once in every twelve month period.

Start-up Entrepreneur Programme

The purpose of the Start-up Entrepreneur Programme is to enable non-EEA nationals and their families who commit to a high potential start up business (as defined below) in Ireland to acquire a secure residency status in Ireland. The scheme is not intended for retail, personal services, catering or other businesses of this nature. The Department's existing immigration channel referred to as the "Business Permission Scheme" remains available to this sort of enterprise.

Application Requirements for the Start-up Entrepreneur Programme

The applicant must invest in a high potential start up business which is defined as a start-up venture that is:

- ▣ Introducing a new or innovative product or service to international markets.
- ▣ Capable of creating 10 jobs in Ireland and realising €1,000,000 in sales within three to four years of starting up.
- ▣ Led by an experienced management team.
- ▣ Headquartered and controlled in Ireland.
- ▣ Less than six years old.

Applicants are required to demonstrate access to secured funding of €75,000 for their business.

The application will be considered by an independent evaluation committee who will recommend to the Minister as to whether or not the applicant should be accepted to the scheme. It should be noted that merely meeting the financial thresholds set out above does not guarantee approval. The evaluation committee must be satisfied that the proposal is genuinely innovative and has significant export potential.

Successful applicants and their nominated family members can expect to receive residence permission for five years. An initial permission will be granted for two years and following a review at that point to ensure the investor is continuing to meet the conditions of the scheme (i.e. the Start-up business remains in operation, the applicant continues to be law abiding and self sufficient), a further period of three years will be granted. After this initial five year period, the investor will be free to apply for residence in five year tranches.

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