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CARIBBEAN SERVICE DESK · EASTERN CARIBBEAN

Doing Business in Saint Martin (French side)

A practical guide to establishing, operating and growing a business in Saint Martin (French side)

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FOREWORD

Saint Martin (French side) offers something rare in the Caribbean: a French and European legal setting, the euro, and its own local tax code, on an island it shares with Sint Maarten.

Investors are drawn to the French side of the island for its tourism economy, its place in the European Union and a local tax system that differs markedly from mainland France. Opportunity sits alongside complexity. French company and labour law, local tax rules and the open border with Sint Maarten all need careful handling from the first day.

This guide sets out what you need to know in plain language: how to choose a structure, how the set-up process works, what taxes apply, how to employ people, and which incentives may be available. It is written for investors, entrepreneurs and regional and international groups considering Saint Martin (French side).

We serve clients in Saint Martin through Dawgen Global's Caribbean Service Desk, managed from our headquarters in Kingston, and we are ready to help you turn a plan into a well-run, compliant business.

Dr. Dawkins Brown, Ph.D., MCMI, ACFE

Executive Chairman, Dawgen Global

How to use this guide

This guide gives a practical overview of establishing and running a business in Saint Martin (French side). It is general information, current to October 2026, and is not a substitute for advice on your circumstances. Rates and rules change; speak to us before you act.

OVERVIEW

01 Saint Martin at a glance

A French overseas collectivity on the northern part of the island of Saint Martin, with an economy built on tourism, trade and construction.

CAPITAL
Marigot
Administrative and commercial centre

POPULATION
About 31,500
INSEE estimate for 2022

LANGUAGE
French
Official language; English widely spoken

CURRENCY
Euro (EUR)
No exchange controls; US dollar widely used

STATUS
French COM, EU region
Overseas collectivity since 2007; EU outermost region

TIME ZONE
UTC−4
Atlantic Standard Time all year; no daylight saving

CORPORATE INCOME TAX
20%
Local standard rate; reduced rate for small companies

TURNOVER TAX (TGCA)
4%
Local tax in place of VAT, which does not apply

LEGAL SYSTEM
French civil law
Local rules on tax and planning set by the Collectivité

Leading sectors

Tourism and hospitality · Restaurants · Retail and distribution · Construction and real estate · Yachting and marine services · Transport · Professional services · Renewable energy

Gateways

Grand Case–L'Espérance airport serves regional flights. Most international flights use Princess Juliana International on the Dutch side, a short drive across the open border. Galisbay port in Marigot handles cargo.

One island, two systems

The southern part is Sint Maarten, a country within the Kingdom of the Netherlands. The border is open, but currency, law, tax and licences differ on each side.

INVESTMENT CLIMATE

02 Why Saint Martin

A European legal setting, the euro and its own tax code give the French side a distinct position in the north-eastern Caribbean.

Europe in the Caribbean

As an outermost region, Saint Martin is part of the European Union. EU law applies, with local adaptations, and businesses benefit from the euro, French legal protection and access to EU funding programmes.

Its own tax system

Since 2008 the Collectivité has set its own taxes under the Code général des impôts de Saint-Martin. There is no VAT; a 4% turnover tax applies instead, and the corporate income tax rate is set locally.

Shared island market

The open border with Sint Maarten creates one island economy for visitors, shoppers and suppliers, and a base for serving Anguilla and Saint Barthélemy.

Rebuilding and renewal

Hurricane Irma in September 2017 destroyed or severely damaged about 31% of buildings on the French side. Reconstruction has rebuilt much of the housing and hotel stock, and the Collectivité continues to invest in schools, roads, flood prevention and waste management. Tourist arrivals on the French side were close to 2019 levels in 2024.

Where the opportunities are

Sector	Examples of opportunity
Tourism	Hotels, villas, restaurants, excursions and services for visitors staying on both sides of the island
Construction	Resilient housing, public buildings, renovation and building supplies
Marine	Marinas, yacht services, chartering and repairs
Energy and environment	Solar generation, energy efficiency, waste and water services
Services	Accounting, digital, logistics and business support for local firms

Local support

The Chambre Consulaire Interprofessionnelle de Saint-Martin (CCISM) acts as the chamber of commerce, trades and agriculture, and helps new businesses with formalities. The Collectivité's economic development service supports investors.

LEGAL VEHICLES

03 Choosing a business structure

Company law is French national law. Most investors use a simplified joint-stock company (SAS) or a limited liability company (SARL). Foreign companies may register a branch.

Vehicle	Key features	Typical use	Main obligations
SAS / SASU	Separate legal entity; liability limited to contributions; flexible by-laws; a president is required; one or more shareholders; no minimum capital	Most operating businesses and subsidiaries of foreign groups	RCS registration; annual accounts filed with the registry; local tax returns
SARL / EURL	Limited liability company with one to 100 partners; managed by one or more managers (gérants); no minimum capital	Family and owner-managed businesses	RCS registration; annual accounts; local tax returns
SA	Joint-stock company with a board; stricter governance; may raise capital from the public	Larger businesses	Statutory auditor; fuller disclosure
Branch (succursale)	Registered establishment of a foreign company; not a separate legal entity	Projects, contracts and market entry	RCS registration; local tax on Saint Martin profits
SNC	General partnership; partners jointly and personally liable	Property and specific projects	RCS registration; partners taxed on their share
Sole trader (EI)	Individual trading in their own name; business assets separated from personal assets by law	Small owner-managed businesses	Registration; personal income tax

Foreign ownership

Foreign investors may own 100% of a company in most sectors. Regulated activities, such as banking, insurance, investment services, transport and some professions, need authorisation before trading starts.

Beneficial ownership

Companies must file details of their beneficial owners, the individuals who ultimately own or control them, in the French register of beneficial owners (RBE) when they register, and update them when they change.

GETTING STARTED

04 Setting up: step by step

Registration follows French procedures and is filed online. A straightforward company can be registered in a few weeks once documents are ready; bank accounts and authorisations usually take longer.

1 **Plan the structure and residence position** — WEEK 1

Choose the vehicle, shareholding and management, and take advice on how the local tax residence rules apply to the owners.

2 **Draft by-laws and deposit capital** — WEEK 1–3

Prepare the by-laws, deposit the share capital with a bank or notary, and publish a legal notice of formation.

3 **Register the company** — WEEK 2–4

File the formation online through the national one-stop shop (guichet unique). The company is entered in the trade and companies register (RCS) and receives its SIREN number. The CCISM can assist.

4 **Register with the local tax service** — WEEK 3–5

Register with the Saint Martin tax administration for corporate income tax, TGCA and the business licence and patente contribution (DLCP).

5 **Open a bank account** — WEEK 2–8

Banks apply full know-your-customer checks on the company, managers and beneficial owners. Allow extra time where owners are overseas.

6 **Obtain authorisations** — VARIES

Apply for sector authorisations, planning and building permits from the Collectivité, and work authorisations for non-EU staff.

7 **Set up accounting and compliance** — BEFORE TRADING

Put in place French-standard bookkeeping, payroll, a tax and filing calendar, GDPR compliance and anti-money laundering controls where your sector requires them.

Documents you will usually need

Passport and proof of address for each manager, shareholder and beneficial owner; signed by-laws; proof of capital deposit; proof of registered office; and, for a branch, certified and translated constitutional documents and a recent registry extract for the parent company.

TAXATION

05 Tax at a glance

Saint Martin is a separate tax jurisdiction from France, with its own tax code. The headline position is below; rates are set by the Territorial Council each year.

Business taxes	
Corporate income tax	20% standard local rate; a reduced rate applies to a first slice of profit for qualifying small companies
TGCA	4% on turnover from sales and services; imports, exports and some sectors are exempt or outside scope; no VAT
DLCP	Annual business licence and patente contribution, based on premises and equipment
Transfer duties	Registration duties on property and business transfers, set by the Collectivité and updated in December 2025
Property tax	Annual taxe foncière on built and unbuilt property
Customs	No customs duties on general imports; specific duties on petroleum products

Individuals	
Income tax	Local progressive scale with household shares, broadly modelled on the French system; paid by provisional instalments and a balance
Five-year rule	People who settled after 15 July 2007 become Saint Martin tax residents only after five years' residence; until then they are taxed by France

France–Saint Martin convention	Rate
Dividends	15%; 0% for a 10%+ company holding
Interest	10% maximum
Royalties	0% at source

Maximum rates under the 2010 convention with France, in force since 1 May 2011. Saint Martin's own withholding rules and the reach of other treaties should be checked case by case.

Recent changes

In December 2025 the Territorial Council set the 2026 tax rates, updated the transfer duty rules, introduced a capital gains exemption on certain property sales to free up land, and updated the local tax relief regime. Tax forms are now downloaded and returns filed electronically.

PEOPLE

06 Employing people

The French Labour Code applies. Employers must register staff, file monthly social declarations and observe national minimum standards on pay, working time, leave and termination.

Minimum standards

- **SMIC:** €12.31 gross an hour from 1 June 2026, about €1,867 a month for 35 hours
- **Hours:** 35-hour legal week; overtime at +25% for the first 8 hours and +50% after
- **Paid leave:** 2.5 working days a month, five weeks a year
- **Maternity:** 16 weeks for a first or second child, paid through social security
- **Notice:** one month after six months' service, two months after two years, unless the collective agreement says more
- **Severance:** after eight months' service, at least a quarter-month's pay per year for the first ten years and a third thereafter

Social charges

Item	Position
Contributions	French employer and employee social security rates apply, collected through the URSSAF network
LODEOM relief	Overseas exemption from employer contributions on lower and middle wages, wider for firms under 11 staff and priority sectors; reformed from 1 January 2026
Unemployment	Contributions to the national unemployment insurance scheme
Pensions	Basic and mandatory supplementary pension schemes

Payroll is reported monthly through the social nominative declaration (DSN). Income tax is not deducted from pay; employees settle it with the local tax service.

Bringing in foreign staff

EU, EEA and Swiss nationals

Free to live and work without a permit, including Dutch nationals from Sint Maarten.

Non-EU nationals

Need a work authorisation, applied for online by the employer, and a residence permit from the Préfecture. Saint Martin is outside the Schengen area and has its own entry rules.

Cross-border workers

A right to work in Sint Maarten does not give a right to work on the French side, and the reverse is also true.

HR essentials from day one

Check which collective agreement applies, issue written contracts in French, register staff before they start and keep time and leave records. French labour courts are strict on procedure.

MONEY AND ASSETS

07 Banking, currency and property

Banking and finance

French banking groups operate on the French side under European supervision by the ACPR. IEDOM acts as the central bank's agent in the territory.

- **No exchange controls:** funds, profits and capital move freely
- **Euro:** the legal currency; the US dollar is widely accepted in trade
- **Sint Maarten** uses the Caribbean guilder (XCG), so cross-border trade involves currency conversion
- **Compliance:** expect thorough anti-money laundering and know-your-customer checks under French law
- **Credit:** bank lending is about €484 million (end-2024)

Financial reporting

Companies keep accounts under French accounting standards (PCG) and file annual accounts with the commercial registry.

Land and property

Foreign nationals and foreign-owned companies may buy property without special approval. Sales are completed before a notary, who handles the deed, registration and duties.

Typical costs on a property purchase	
Transfer duties	Local registration duties, usually paid by the buyer; rules updated in December 2025
Notary fees	Regulated fees and disbursements
Property tax	Annual taxe foncière
Capital gains	Local rules on resale, with new exemptions for some sales

Before you build

The Collectivité has set its own planning rules since 2012. Check the natural risk prevention plan (PPRN), revised after Irma, and the coastal public zone (50 pas géométriques) before buying.

GROWTH LEVERS

08 Incentives, trade and customs

Incentives come from three sources: local tax relief set by the Collectivité, French State overseas schemes, and European Union funding.

Key incentive regimes

Regime	What it offers
Local tax relief	Deductions for productive investment in priority sectors under the Saint Martin tax code, updated in December 2025
LODEOM	Exemption from employer social contributions on lower and middle wages
New businesses	Relief from the DLCP in the early years of trading
Land release	Capital gains exemption on certain property sales from 2026
EU funds	European regional development funding and Interreg Caribbean cooperation projects

Eligibility and conditions apply to each regime. We can assess which incentives fit your project and prepare the applications.

Market access

- **European Union:** part of the EU as an outermost region, with French and EU legal protection
- **Island market:** open border with Sint Maarten and its port and airport
- **Neighbours:** close links with Anguilla, Saint Barthélemy and Guadeloupe
- **No VAT:** sales bear the 4% TGCA instead

Customs

Saint Martin is a free port: general imports bear no customs duties, and imports are outside the scope of TGCA. Specific duties apply to petroleum products. Businesses importing goods should check documentation and controls with the customs service.

COMPLIANCE

09 Regulators and compliance calendar

Who regulates what

Body	Role
Collectivité de Saint-Martin	Local tax law and rates, planning, business licences
Public Finance Centre, Concordia	Tax returns, payments and collection
Commercial registry and guichet unique	RCS registration, filings, beneficial owners
CCISM	Chamber of commerce, trades and agriculture
Préfecture	Residence permits and State services
URSSAF network	Social contributions
Labour inspectorate	Labour standards and work authorisations
ACPR and IEDOM	Banking supervision and central bank functions
Tracfin	Anti-money laundering reporting
CNIL	Data protection (GDPR)

Key filing dates

When	What
Monthly	TGCA return and payment (quarterly for small amounts); DSN and social contributions
30 June (15 July in 2026)	DLCP declaration, payment and 50% advance
30 November	DLCP balance
Spring (21 June in 2026)	Personal income tax return for the previous year
Annually	Corporate income tax return and instalments under the local code
Within 6 months of year-end	Approve annual accounts; file them with the registry

Dates change from year to year; the tax service publishes extensions. Late filing and payment attract penalties and interest.

Anti-money laundering

Financial institutions and designated professions, including estate agents, notaries, accountants and dealers in high-value goods, must meet French anti-money laundering rules and report suspicions to Tracfin.

ACTION PLAN

10 Your first 90 days: checklist

Use this checklist to track the essential steps from decision to first trading day.

Days 1–30: establish

- [ ] Agree business plan, structure and ownership
- [ ] Take advice on the five-year residence rule
- [ ] Gather KYC documents for managers and owners
- [ ] Draft by-laws and deposit capital
- [ ] Register through the guichet unique
- [ ] Receive RCS entry and SIREN number
- [ ] File beneficial ownership information
- [ ] Apply to open business bank accounts

Days 31–60: register and license

- [ ] Register with the local tax service for IS and TGCA
- [ ] Declare the DLCP
- [ ] Apply for sector authorisations
- [ ] Apply for work authorisations for non-EU staff
- [ ] Assess LODEOM and local tax relief
- [ ] Lease premises and confirm planning rules
- [ ] Arrange insurance, including hurricane cover

Days 61–90: operate

- [ ] Set up accounts under French standards
- [ ] Set up payroll, DSN and social contributions
- [ ] Issue written employment contracts
- [ ] Build the tax and filing calendar
- [ ] Put GDPR and AML policies in place
- [ ] Agree year-end arrangements

Ongoing

- [ ] Monthly TGCA and DSN filings
- [ ] DLCP advance and balance
- [ ] Annual tax return and accounts
- [ ] File annual accounts with the registry
- [ ] Renew authorisations and permits on time

YOUR PARTNER

11 How Dawgen Global helps

From the first conversation to your first year-end, one Dawgen Global team supports you through our Caribbean Service Desk in Kingston.

Market entry and structuring

Choice of vehicle, group and tax structuring, feasibility studies and business plans.

Incorporation and corporate secretarial

Company formation, statutory registers, annual filings and beneficial ownership.

Tax advisory and compliance

Corporate tax, TGCA, DLCP and residence questions, through our Caribbean Tax Service Desk.

Accounting and payroll outsourcing

Bookkeeping, management accounts, payroll support and a Virtual CFO.

Audit and assurance

Reviews and group reporting for lenders and parent companies.

HR, immigration and legal support

Employment contracts, HR policies, work authorisations and legal process support, with our panel of attorneys where needed.

Risk and compliance

AML programmes, GDPR compliance, internal audit and governance.

Technology and cyber

Systems selection, digital transformation, cybersecurity and AI governance.

Incentive applications

Local tax relief and LODEOM assessments, applications and compliance.

Start with a conversation

Tell us your plans for Saint Martin, and we will set out the steps, timeline and costs. Some regulated services are performed by affiliated firms; we will advise you of the arrangements when you make a request. Fees are tailored to each client's circumstances and set out in an engagement letter. Email **saintmartin@dawgen.com** or **info@dawgen.global**, or call (876) 926-5210.

Talk to the Saint Martin Caribbean Service Desk

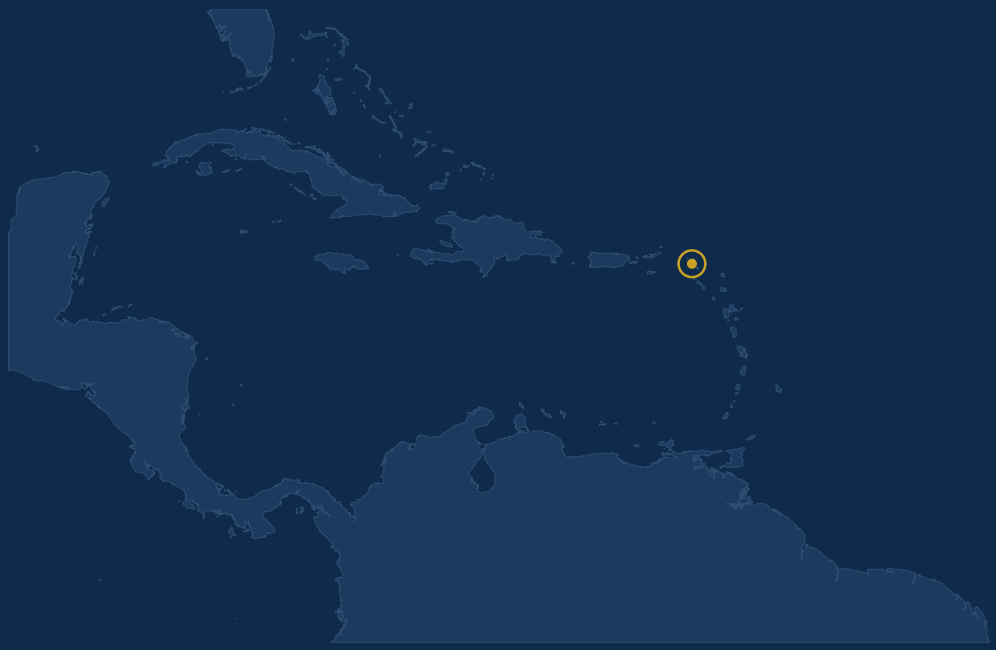
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Key official sources

- Collectivité de Saint-Martin (com-saint-martin.fr)
- Saint-Martin tax service (impots-saint-martin.fr)
- French tax administration, France–Saint-Martin tax convention (impots.gouv.fr)
- URSSAF (urssaf.fr)
- Préfecture de Saint-Barthélemy et de Saint-Martin (saint-barth-saint-martin.gouv.fr)
- IEDOM, Saint-Martin annual report (iedom.fr)
- French labour ministry (travail-emploi.gouv.fr)
- CNIL (cnil.fr)



This publication contains general information only, current to October 2026, and is not professional advice. Saint Martin (French side) sets many of its own taxes, and rates, thresholds and procedures change frequently; confirm the current position with Dawgen Global or the relevant authority before acting. Some regulated services are performed by affiliated firms; we will advise you of the arrangements when you make a request.
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