

International Tax Cyprus Highlights 2017



Investment basics:

Currency – Euro (EUR)

Foreign exchange control – There are no exchange controls.

Accounting principles/financial statements – IAS/IFRS. Financial statements must be prepared annually.

Principal business entities – These are the public and private limited liability company, partnership and branch of a foreign corporation.

Corporate taxation:

Residence – A company is resident in Cyprus if its management and control is exercised in Cyprus. Registration in the country is not decisive.

Basis – Resident companies are taxed on worldwide income. Nonresident companies are taxed only on Cyprus-source income. Branches are taxed in the same way as tax resident companies.

Taxable income – Corporation tax is imposed on business profits; interest and discounts; rents, royalties, remuneration or other profits from property; and net consideration in respect of trade goodwill. Expenses incurred for the production of taxable income are tax deductible if supported by invoices or relevant receipts. Losses carried forward or surrendered by other group companies (group relief) may be offset against taxable profits.

Taxation of dividends – Dividends received by a Cyprus resident company are exempt from corporation tax (whether received from a company located in Cyprus or abroad). Dividends received by a Cyprus resident company are exempt from the Special Contribution for

Defense (SCD), unless the dividends are paid out of profits that are more than four years old. Dividends received from a nonresident company also generally are exempt from SCD, although the exemption does not apply if more than 50% of the nonresident payer company's activities, directly or indirectly, lead to investment income and the foreign tax burden on the income of the nonresident payer is substantially lower than the tax burden of the company in Cyprus (i.e. less than 6.25%). If not exempt, dividends are liable to SCD at 17%.

As from 1 January 2016, dividends received by a Cyprus company from investments in hybrid instruments that are treated as a tax deductible expense in the country of the payer are treated as trading profits subject to income tax (i.e. they are not considered dividends exempt from SCD).

Capital gains – Gains derived from the sale of shares are tax-exempt. Capital gains tax at a rate of 20% is imposed on gains from the disposal of immovable property situated in Cyprus and on gains from the disposal of shares in an unlisted company that owns, directly or indirectly, immovable property situated in Cyprus.

Losses – Tax losses may be carried forward for five years for set off against future taxable profits. The carryback of losses is not permitted.

Rate – Companies and public corporate bodies are subject to corporation tax at 12.5%. Certain types of income are subject to SCD at 17% (dividends), 30% (interest) and 3% (rents).

Surtax – No

Alternative minimum tax – No

Foreign tax credit – A unilateral tax credit is granted for tax paid abroad, regardless of the existence of a tax treaty. The provisions of a relevant tax treaty will apply if they are more beneficial.

Participation exemption – See “Taxation of dividends” and “Capital gains.”

Holding company regime – There is no special holding company regime, but dividend income and capital gains generally are exempt from tax (see “Taxation of dividends” and “Capital gains”).

Incentives – Under an intellectual property (IP) regime, 80% of the net profit from the exploitation of IP is exempt from taxation. The net profit is calculated after deducting from the IP income all direct expenses associated with the production of the income, as well as capital allowances at 20%. Changes were made to the regime on 27 October 2016 to provide for a phase-out of the current IP regime and the introduction of a new IP regime that is in line with the recent developments on the taxation of IP income and OECD’S BEPS action plan. The main changes include the introduction of grandfathering provisions to limit new entrants to the current regime and ensure that the regime is phased out by 30 June 2021. The new IP regime adopts the “nexus” approach and it allows 80% of qualifying profits generated from qualifying assets is deemed to be a tax deductible expense. In calculating qualifying profits, the level of the qualifying profits is positively correlated to the extent the claimant performs research and development activities to develop the relevant asset. Most importantly, qualifying assets under the new regime include only patents, copyrighted software programs and other intangible assets that are non-obvious, useful and novel; trademarks and copyrights are not included.

Resident companies and nonresident companies with a permanent establishment in Cyprus are entitled to a notional interest deduction (NID) of up to 80% of their taxable income on new equity. Qualifying new equity includes share capital and share premium issued and settled on or after 1 January 2015.

Special taxation regimes exist for ship-owning, chartering and ship management companies that own, charter or manage a qualifying ship in a qualifying shipping activity.

Withholding tax:

Dividends – Dividends paid to a nonresident (company or individual) are not subject to withholding tax. Dividends paid to a resident company are not subject to withholding tax, subject to the four-year rule (see “Taxation of dividends” above), but dividends paid to a

resident and domiciled individual are subject to SCD at 17% (applied as a withholding tax).

Interest – No withholding tax is imposed on interest paid to a nonresident. Interest paid to a resident is subject to SCD deducted at source at a rate of 30%.

Royalties – Royalties paid to a nonresident for the use of rights in Cyprus are subject to a withholding tax of 5% on film royalties, and 10% on all other royalties. These rates may be reduced under a tax treaty or the EU interest and royalties directive. Royalties paid to a nonresident for the use of rights outside Cyprus are exempt from withholding tax. There is no withholding tax on the payment of royalties by one resident company to another.

Technical service fees – Technical fees paid to a nonresident are subject to a 10% withholding tax, unless the rate is reduced under a tax treaty. There is no withholding tax on the payment of technical fees by one resident company to another.

Branch remittance tax – No

Other – Rent paid by a Cyprus resident company or partnership, the government or any other local authority to a Cyprus tax resident is subject to a 3% SCD on 75% of the gross rental income. The tax is withheld at source.

Other taxes on corporations:

Capital duty – Capital duty of EUR 105, plus 0.6%, is payable on the nominal value of authorized share capital.

Payroll tax – Under the PAYE system, the employer is required to withhold personal tax on the salary of its employees.

Real property tax – The real property tax, which was imposed annually on the market value of immovable property on 1 January 1980, at rates ranging from 0.6% to 1.9%, is abolished as from 1 January 2017.

Social security – An employer must make social insurance contributions amounting to 9.5% of an employee’s gross salary, subject to a cap on the annual earnings on which the contributions are payable. An employer also is required to contribute 2% of all earnings of its employees to the social cohesion fund.

The special contribution imposed on an employee’s salary or pension at rates ranging from 0% to 3.5% (and shared equally by the employer and the employee) was abolished as from 1 January 2017.

Stamp duty – Stamp duty is payable on a document if it relates to property situated in Cyprus or to an act to be performed in Cyprus. Stamp duty on commercial contracts is charged at rates that vary according to the

contract amount. A ceiling of EUR 20,000 per document applies.

Transfer tax – The transfer of immovable property is subject to a transfer fee ranging from 3% to 8%, calculated on the market value of the property as estimated by the land registry department. A 50% reduction in the transfer fees, which initially applied for immovable property transfers up through 31 December 2016 was extended indefinitely, while a 100% exemption applies if the transfer of the immovable property is subject to VAT.

Other – The SCD is imposed on income derived by Cyprus resident companies and individuals resident and domiciled in Cyprus. The SCD is levied on dividends (17%), interest (30%) and rent (3%). Some exemptions apply (see “Taxation of dividends” above).

A basic levy of 0.15% (paid in four installments of 0.0375%) on specified deposits is payable by all credit institutions incorporated in Cyprus and by their foreign branches.

An annual company levy of EUR 350 is imposed on companies, capped at a total of EUR 20,000 for companies in a group. The levy is payable by 30 June of each year; penalties apply for late payment.

Anti-avoidance rules:

Transfer pricing – Transactions between related parties must be carried out at market value and on normal commercial terms.

Thin capitalization – No

Controlled foreign companies – No

Disclosure requirements – No

Other – A general anti-avoidance provision allows the Commissioner of Income Tax to disregard artificial/fictitious transactions and assess tax on the person concerned.

Compliance for corporations:

Tax year – The tax year is the calendar year. The accounts of a company may be closed on a date other than 31 December, in which case, taxable profits are apportioned on a time basis to the relevant tax years.

Consolidated returns – Taxation on a consolidated basis is not permitted and each company must submit a separate return. The setoff of group losses is possible provided there is a 75% parent-subsidiary relationship, including subsidiaries under the 75% control of a common parent company. Group loss relief is available between resident companies and companies resident in another EU member state.

Filing requirements – Electronic filing is mandatory for companies. The deadline for the electronic submission of the tax return is 31 March of the second year following the tax year of assessment. Companies must make two provisional payments of tax on 31 July and 31 December. If the income declared for the payment of the provisional tax is lower than 75% of the income as finally determined, an additional amount equal to 10% of the difference between the final and provisional tax is payable.

Penalties – Administrative penalties of EUR 100 or EUR 200 (depending on the circumstances) are imposed for the late filing of a tax return or the late submission of information requested by the tax authorities. Further, where the tax liability as per the tax return is not paid by the statutory deadline or the date in an assessment issued by the Commissioner, an additional 5% penalty on the tax payable is imposed. If a company fails to submit its tax return and settle its tax obligations within 30 days from the return submission deadline, an additional 5% tax on the amount of the unsettled tax is imposed. Interest for late payment is charged at 4% per annum.

Rulings – Rulings are available on matters of interpretation of the tax law. A fee of EUR 1,000 must be paid for a tax ruling by the Commissioner of Taxation (increased to EUR 2,000 if the taxpayer requests an expedited ruling, i.e. within 21 business days from the date the request was submitted).

Personal taxation:

Basis – A resident individual is subject to income tax on his/her worldwide income. A nonresident individual is taxed only on Cyprus-source income. Certain types of income are subject to SCD at 17% (dividends), 30% (interest) and 3% (rent).

Residence – An individual is resident in Cyprus for income tax purposes if he/she stays in Cyprus for a period or periods exceeding 183 days in the aggregate in a tax year. For SCD purposes, an individual is a resident if he/she also is domiciled in Cyprus.

An individual is “domiciled in Cyprus if he/she has a domicile of origin in Cyprus based on the provisions of the Wills and Succession Law (WSL) (i.e. domicile of the father at the time of birth), except in specified cases. An individual who is resident in Cyprus (as defined in accordance with the provisions of the Income Tax Law) for at least 17 out of the 20 years before the relevant tax year will be deemed to be domiciled in Cyprus, irrespective of his/her domicile of origin.

Filing status – Each individual is assessed on a separate basis; joint assessment of couples is not possible.

Taxable income – Personal income tax is imposed on income from an office or employment; business profits; discounts; pensions; charges or annuities; rents, royalties, remuneration or other profits from property; and net consideration in respect of trade goodwill. Benefits in kind are included in taxable income. If a company director or individual shareholder (or spouse or relatives (up to the second degree)) receives a loan or financial assistance from the company, he/she will be deemed to have received a benefit in kind equal to 9% per annum of the loan/assistance.

Capital gains – Gains derived from the sale of shares are tax-exempt. Capital gains tax at a rate of 20% is imposed on gains from the disposal of immovable property situated in Cyprus and on gains from the disposal of shares in an unlisted company that owns directly or indirectly immovable property situated in Cyprus.

Deductions and allowances – The most important personal deductions are: donations to approved charities; social insurance fund contributions (and similar contributions paid abroad); life insurance premiums; pension plan contributions; and medical fund contributions. Expenses incurred for the production of taxable income are tax deductible provided they are supported by invoices or relevant receipts.

Rates – The first EUR 19,500 is tax-free, with progressive tax rates up to 35% imposed on the remaining amount.

Other taxes on individuals:

Capital duty – No

Stamp duty – Stamp duty is payable on a document if it relates to property situated in Cyprus or to an act to be performed in Cyprus. Stamp duty on commercial contracts is charged at rates that vary according to the contract amount. A ceiling of EUR 20,000 per document applies.

Capital acquisitions tax – No

Real property tax – Tax is imposed annually on the market value of immovable property on 1 January 1980, at rates ranging from 0.6% to 1.9%.

Inheritance/estate tax – No

Net wealth/net worth tax – No

Social security – An employee is required to make social insurance contributions at 7.8% of his/her salary (subject to a maximum cap on salary of EUR 54,396 for 2016). Self-employed individuals contribute at 14.6%. The contribution is calculated on notional income, which varies according to the trade or profession.

The special contribution imposed on an employee's salary or pension at rates ranging from 0% to 3.5% (and shared equally by the employer and the employee) was abolished as from 1 January 2017.

Compliance for individuals:

Tax year – Calendar year

Filing and payment – The employer withholds tax on employment income under the PAYE system. A self-employed individual pays tax through the provisional and self-assessment systems.

The tax return must be filed by 30 April following the tax year for an employee; 30 June for a self-employed individual who is not required to file audited accounts; and 31 December for a self-employed person whose return is accompanied by audited accounts. Self-employed individuals with annual turnover of more than EUR 70,000 must submit their tax return electronically, but the deadline for electronic submission of the return is extended by three months to 31 March of the subsequent year following the tax year.

Penalties – Administrative penalties of EUR 100 or EUR 200 (depending on the circumstances) are imposed for the late filing of a return or late submission of information requested by the tax authorities. Further, where the tax liability as per the tax return is not paid by the statutory deadlines or the date in an assessment issued by the Commissioner, an additional 5% penalty on the tax payable will be imposed. In addition, if an individual fails to settle his/her tax obligations within 30 days from the return submission deadline, an additional 5% tax on the amount of the unsettled tax is imposed. Interest for late payment is charged at 4% per annum.

Value added tax:

Taxable transactions – VAT is levied on the sale of goods, the provision of services and the import of goods from outside the EU.

Rates – The standard rate is 19%, and there are reduced rates of 0%, 5% and 9%. Certain supplies are zero-rated or exempt.

Registration – The registration threshold for VAT purposes is EUR 15,600 (EUR 10,251 for intra-community acquisitions of goods). Additionally, all taxable persons making taxable supplies of goods or services to nontaxable persons must issue and deliver "legal receipts." Penalties apply for failure to comply.

Filing and payment – The deadline for submission of the quarterly VAT return and VAT payment is the 10th of the second month following the relevant period.

Source of tax law: Income Tax Law, Special Defense Contribution Law, Capital Gains Tax Law, VAT Law, Commissioners' circulars, court cases

Tax treaties: Cyprus has concluded 58 tax treaties

Tax authorities: Tax Department

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