



Fall | 21



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ESTABLISHING A BUSINESS ENTITY IN CHILE



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## ESTABLISHING A BUSINESS ENTITY IN CHILE



### *“Establishing a Business Entity in Chile”*

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### I. Types of Business Entities

#### 1. Description of the types of entities available

In Chile, there are different types of entities available to establish a business. The most common entities for foreign investment are: (i) Limited Liability Partnership or Company (*Sociedad de Responsabilidad Limitada*, “SRL”); (ii) Corporation (*Sociedad Anonima*, “SA”); and (iii) Stock Company (*Sociedad por Acciones*, “SpA”).

##### **a) Sociedad de Responsabilidad Limitada**

The SRL has a minimum of two partners and a maximum of fifty. There is no restriction on foreign partners. There cannot be less than two partners, as the partnership is automatically dissolved if there is only one partner. Each partner’s liability is limited either to the amount they contributed to the capital or an upper amount specified in the partnership deed. This company differs from the next two (SA’s and SpA’s) in its character as “persons corporation”, where the identity of the partners and the relation between them is essential to the validity of the company, in such length that the names of the partners are included in the bylaws.

The deed must contain certain minimum requirements established by law in order to be valid, such as the company’s name, domicile, corporate purpose, capital, etc. and any other relevant terms agreed to by the partners.

**Capital and Partnership Rights.** There are no minimum capital requirements for the incorporation or the operation of an SRL. The partners may pay the stock capital in cash, assets, or by their work or activity. There are no restrictions regarding the distribution of profits, so the partner may freely agree on any percentage in the bylaws. If the bylaws do not regulate the distribution of the profits, the law mandates to distribute them in the same proportion of their contribution to the stock capital.

Given that the transfer of partnership rights requires the amendment of the SRL’s bylaws, the partner willing to sell its rights needs to obtain the prior consent of the others.

**Management.** The partners have the freedom to choose how to manage the SRL. Usually, the partners will manage the partnership by their own, or through one or more representatives, elected by unanimity, of which at least one must be domiciled in Chile. The partners may also entrust the management to a board of directors or a single director, both to be chosen by unanimous agreement. An SRL is not subject to the control of a regulatory authority and there is no obligation to publish or file accounts.

##### **b) Sociedad Anónima**

An SA is a company formed by a common fund provided by two or more shareholders who are responsible only for their respective capital contributions. There cannot be less than two shareholders. In opposition to what was mentioned regarding SRL’s being persons corporations, SA’s (and SpA’s) are “capital corporations”, being the contribution of capital the main interest in this type of entities.



The deed must contain certain minimum requirements established by law in order to be valid, such as the company's name, domicile, corporate purpose, capital, etc. and any other relevant terms agreed to by the shareholders. It must also contain the by-laws of the company.

**Capital and Shares.** In general, there are no minimum capital requirements for the incorporation or operation of an SA. Nonetheless, there are some exceptions regarding determined types of businesses, where a special law requires a minimum capital for its constitution and ongoing operation, such as banks and insurance companies. The capital of a SA may be paid with cash or assets. According to the law, the initial capital must be fully subscribed and paid within three years counted as of the incorporation of the corporation. If the capital is not subscribed within this term, it will be automatically reduced to the amount effectively subscribed and paid.

An SA may be publicly traded or closely held. If it is publicly traded, the shares are publicly traded at the stock market, either as a legal requirement or voluntarily. In this case, the corporation is subject to the supervision by the Commission for the Financial Market (*Comisión para el Mercado Financiero*, "CMF") and, therefore, the shares must be registered in the Securities Register of this regulatory body. Shares of closely held SAs are privately traded.

Shareholders of a SA may freely transfer their shares without the consent of the other shareholders, and without amending the corporation's bylaws.

Distribution of profits in closed SA's is ruled by the bylaws. If there are no provisions on point, distribution is ruled by the general rules affecting open corporations, under which at least 30 percent of net profits must be distributed in cash, unless otherwise agreed by

all shareholders. In case of accumulated losses, the profits of the period must be used first to cover said losses.

**Management.** SAs are managed by a board of directors of at least three members, who are essentially revocable. The chairman and CFO of the company are elected by the same directors. The board of directors is vested with ample managing powers and can represent the SA before third parties.

#### *c) Sociedad por Acciones*

An SpA is fairly similar to a SA, but simpler. Besides certain minimum provisions set forth in the law, the shareholders are free to agree upon any rules in their bylaws. It seeks to combine the flexibility in management of an SRL, with the structure of rights and obligations of a SA.

Unlike the prior companies, SpA's may have one single shareholder for all the duration of the entity. They are therefore preferred by Venture Capital Companies and other companies with an intention to incorporate partners in the future.

**Capital and Shares.** There are no minimum capital requirements for the incorporation or the operation of a SpA. The shareholders may pay the stock capital in cash, assets, or the contribution of personal work (which is not allowed under an SA structure). The initial capital and capital increases must be fully subscribed and paid within the term fixed by the shareholders, or a maximum of five years counted from the incorporation or the capital increase date if such term is not set forth in the bylaws.

The bylaws can establish that the SpA may issue different kinds of shares, such as non-voting preferred shares, limited-voting shares, or with multiple votes.



In general, shareholders of a SpA may freely transfer their shares without the consent of the other shareholders and without amending the bylaws.

If an SpA reaches 500 (five hundred) or more shareholders or, at least, 10% of the nominal capital belonging to a minimum of 100 (one hundred) shareholders, during more than 90 (ninety) days, the entity will be transformed into a SA *ipso facto* and will be submitted to the SA regulations over their bylaws. The next shareholders meeting held will have to make the corresponding adaptations and chose the members of the board.

**Management.** The SpA's obligations are basically two: appoint a general manager and to hold ordinary shareholder meetings. Shareholders are free to decide on the management structure, and they can designate a single manager or a board of directors.

## 2. Matters to be considered when choosing a business entity type

There are several advantages and disadvantages related to each type of entity. When choosing, it is vital to consider the following elements:

### a) *Sociedad de Responsabilidad Limitada*

- It has a minimum of two partners and a maximum of fifty.
- All partners may be foreigners.
- The responsibility of the partners is limited to its capital contribution.
- Its management is simpler compared to an SA.
- The partners have the flexibility to agree on the terms of the bylaws. There are no limitations regarding the capital, its payment, and the distribution of profits.

- Partners need unanimity to adopt all types of decisions.
- Partners that want a relationship of trust, fewer formalities, and simplified management, prefer this entity.

### b) *Sociedad Anónima*

- There is no limitation for the transfer of the shares.
- Foreign entities can hold 100% of an SA's shares.
- Generally, there are no minimum capital requirements.
- The creditors have rights over the assets of the corporation, not over the property of the shareholders.
- They have a complex management organization (board of directors + shareholders meetings).
- They can operate in the stock market.
- If they are publicly traded, they have reporting duties towards the CMF.
- Businesses requiring large amounts of capital prefer the S.A. corporate structure.

### c) *Sociedad por Acciones*

- It may be constituted by one or more shareholders, without limitations.
- There is almost complete flexibility in agreeing upon the bylaws of the company.
- Foreign entities can hold 100% of an SpA's shares.
- It is flexible in its administration.
- Shares trading is simpler.



- The shareholders can determine the number and types of shares that constitutes the capital.
- The shareholder's responsibility is limited.
- Enterprises seeking to attract venture capital prefer the SpA corporate structure.

## II. Steps and Timing to Establish

### 1. Brief overview of steps to incorporate/constitute each entity

#### a) *Sociedad de Responsabilidad Limitada*

The constitution of an SRL requires a public deed granted before a notary public by at least two partners. Within the next sixty days, the partners must register an excerpt of the document in the Register of Commerce corresponding to its domicile and publish it in the Official Gazette.

Any amendment to the bylaws requires the agreement of all the partners, recorded in a public deed. An excerpt of it must be recorded in the Register of Commerce and published in the Official Gazette within 60 days.

#### b) *Sociedad Anonima*

The establishment of a SA requires the same process as the one described for the SRL. In the case of an amendment to the bylaws, an extraordinary meeting of the shareholders, in the presence of a notary public, is required. Besides certain particular matters which require the approval of two-thirds of the shareholders with voting rights (transformation into a different type of company, reductions of capital, sale of more than 50% of the assets, et al), ordinary amendments require majority of shareholders to be approved. The shareholders must record a brief of the meeting into a public deed, and, within the next sixty days, an

excerpt containing the amendment must be filed at the Register of Commerce and published in the Official Gazette.

#### c) *Sociedad por Acciones*

The incorporation of an SRL requires a public deed, or a private document signed by all the shareholders, in which case a public notary must verify and legalize it. Within a month as of the date of the incorporation document, its excerpt must be registered at the Register of Commerce and published in the Official Gazette.

Any amendment to the SRL's bylaws requires the approval of the shareholders in a meeting as described for SA's. Nevertheless, this is not necessary if all shareholders appear granting such amendment in a public deed or a private instrument before a public notary. Within a month as of the date of the amendment document, its excerpt must be registered at the Register of Commerce and published in the Official Gazette.

## 2. Other Formalities

**Tax Number:** After the legal constitution is completed, all entities must obtain a Tax Number (RUT) before the Internal Revenue Service (*Servicio de Impuestos Internos*, "SII"). Foreign investors that wish to hold a share in a local entity must also obtain a Tax Number and appoint a legal representative on their behalf with domicile or residence in Chile. For these effects, the SII will require (i) the appointment of a local representative, with domicile in Chile with sufficient authorities to represent the foreign investor; and (ii) evidence of existence of the foreign investor (in case of an individual, a legalized copy of its passport; and, in the case of a legal entity, a copy of its bylaws and a certificate of good standing, duly legalized and translated into Spanish).



There are two alternatives to obtain the Tax Number. The standard procedure and the simplified procedure. The standard procedure may be undertaken by the foreign investor or through a legal representative domiciled or with residence in Chile. If the foreign investor undertakes the procedure, he/she will have to fill out the Form F-4415 (Registration of RUT and Sworn Declaration of Start of Activities). If the legal representative undertakes it, he/she will have to be given a power of attorney granted before a public notary in Chile, or in a foreign country, and legalize it per the Apostille Convention of The Hague or by the Chilean Consulate of the corresponding jurisdiction. The simplified procedure is carried out directly by authorized banks and stockbrokers who can obtain the Tax Number for customers who invest in Chile.

**Starting Activities.** If the investment implies the exercise of an economic activity in Chile, the investor will have to "initiate activities" before the SII. This procedure requires a sworn statement in which the taxpayer informs the intention to initiate economic activities in the country, and that they may be taxable. It can be filed electronically on the web page of the SII.

**Municipal Licenses and Permits.** According to the nature of the economic activity involved, certain permits and municipal licenses may be required. Municipal licenses authorize the entity to undertake a specific economic activity within the municipal territory.

### III. Governance, Regulation and Ongoing Maintenance

#### 1. Summary of regulation of each type and ongoing maintenance, reporting requirements

The partners of an SRL may mandate the administration to one or more partners or a third party, or parties, appointed in the

company's bylaws. If the partners do not delegate a decision to the administrator, it must be taken unanimously by the partners.

Administration of an SA is entrusted to a Board of Directors. The shareholders' meeting elects the members of the Board by the majority of the shareholders. The bylaws of the SA will determine an invariable number of directors that will integrate the Board and the term of their mandate, that may not exceed three years. The shareholders will meet in ordinary meetings once a year following the bylaws, and extraordinarily if required.

In case of a SpA, the shareholders may agree to manage the company through one or more administrators (like in the case of a SRL), or a board (like in the case of a SA). The bylaws must consider this agreement.

#### 2. Requirements for local shareholders/directors

In Chile, there are no requirements for companies to have a local shareholder.

Though the directors of SA's and SpA's may be fully integrated by foreigners, these companies, together with SRL's must have at least one local representative, authorized to respond before and be notified by local authorities.

It should be noted that directors of SA's and SpA's hold a fiduciary duty toward the company, which contemplates certain attributions such as full access to all business of the company, but also duties of care and confidentiality. Directors are joint and severally responsible before the company and its shareholders for any damages caused to them due to the infringement of said duties.

#### 3. Minority shareholders' rights and protection

Chilean corporate law establishes a withdrawal right in favor of the minority shareholders



when the controller acquires more than 95% of the shares of a publicly traded SA. The minority shareholder must exercise this right within 30 days counted from the date in which the shareholder reached more than 95% of the shares.

#### IV. Foreign Investment, Residency and Material Visa Restrictions

##### 1. Any significant barriers to entry for an offshore party

In general, there are no restrictions for the development of economic activities. More specifically, as the economic activity is not limited to the State or a Chilean natural person or legal entity, there are no limitations for offshore parties. Save as mentioned below, all the economic activities are open to the private sector, and foreign parties may develop most of them.

There are some activities that subject to certain restrictions. for example:

- **Border areas:** Some territories located in border regions of the country cannot be acquired by natural persons from a neighboring country or by legal entities with their headquarters in a neighboring country unless they count with the authorization of the President of the Republic.
- **Aquaculture and fishing:** There are several activities regarding aquaculture and fishing that are restricted only for national natural persons or entities.
- **Hydrocarbons, lithium, and deposits in Chilean waters:** Mining concessions located in areas classified as vital for national security cannot be awarded to foreigners.
- **Domestic shipping:** Only Chilean boats are permitted to transport passengers

and freight along the coast, rivers, or lakes. However, foreign merchant vessels may undertake these activities in the case of cargo volumes exceeding 900 tons.

- **Insurances and Reinsurances:** These businesses can only be developed in Chile by national corporations.

##### 2. Foreign investment

Chapter XIV of the Central Bank's Compendium of Foreign Exchange Regulations regulates the entry of foreign capital into Chile. All operations involving loans, deposits, investments, or capital contributions for over US\$10,000.-, or its equivalent in other currencies, are subject to this mechanism. Any of these operations must be done through a formal foreign exchange market, such as banks and currency exchange offices authorized by the Central Bank. This administrative system operates through commercial banks or entities, which reports the entry of the capital directly to the Central Bank. Any other operation which involves the entry of foreign currency must be reported directly to the Central Bank by the investor or by the recipient of the investment.

##### 3. Any special business or investment visa issues

In Chile, a foreign person needs a visa if he/she is willing to stay and develop economic activity. The main types of visa are issued by Chile are: tourist visa; visa subject to work contract; and temporary residence visa. The temporary residence visa is relevant for business and investment purposes. It is granted to foreigners who have family ties in Chile, interests in the country, or whose residence is considered useful or advantageous and allows the holder to reside temporarily in Chile, to work, study or undertake commercial activities.





There are different types of temporary residence visa, according to the motivation for which it is requested. There is a special visa for foreign investors, entrepreneurs, or traders who intend to remain in the country for more than 90 days for business purposes. These people may apply for a Businessperson and Investor Temporary Residence Visa. The application should accompany the information regarding the investment project and the capital involved.

These visas may be processed at the Chilean Consulate in the country of origin or Chile. Nonetheless, we recommend processing it outside the country because most of the times it is faster. They are awarded for a maximum of one year and can be renewed. After that, if the foreign wants to remain in the country, he/she must apply for permanent residence.

Notwithstanding the above, please note that a new Immigration and Foreigners Law was passed on April 11<sup>th</sup>, 2021. However, said Law will come into force only after its regulation is also passed by the Chilean legislative authority, which has not yet happened.

#### **4. Any restrictions on remitting funds out of the jurisdictions (withholdings, etc.)**

Remittances of profits abroad are subject to a 35% tax, whether in countries with or without an Agreement to Avoid Double Taxation with Chile. If the remittance is subject to Additional Tax, the company paying the tax may charge, as a credit, the First Category Tax paid, against the Additional Tax. The amount of the credit will be equivalent to 100% or 65%, depending on its nature, and the country of residence of the receptor. Chilean tax regime has been subject to successive reforms and numerous administrative regulations over the law are still pending to be issued. Therefore, tax advice must be sought on a case-to-case basis.