

Foreign Founder Legal Status Matrix (2026)

Owning, living, and working in Turkey are three separate things. Find your row.

Each row is a legal status you might hold. Each column is something you might want to do. The key trap: owning a company and living here do not let you work in it — that needs a work permit.

Your legal status	Own shares in a TR company	Be a director	Actively work in your company	Live in TR >90 days	Bring spouse & children	Key 2026 requirement
No status / abroad <i>Never entered, or visa-free visit</i>	YES 100% ownership, remote	YES Passive director OK	NO Cannot work on the ground	NO 90/180 visa limit	NO	None — register via PoA
Short-term residence permit <i>İkamet, business-connection basis</i>	YES	YES Passive	NO Residence ≠ work right	YES Up to 2 yrs, renewable	SEPARATE Family applies on own basis	Apply from inside TR + TR health insurance
Work permit (çalışma izni) <i>As founder-owner of your company</i>	YES	YES Active	YES The whole point	YES Permit = residence (Art. 27)	YES Spouse & under-18 apply	500,000 TL capital + own ≥20% + 5:1 ratio after 6 mo
Turquoise Card (Turkuaz) <i>Highly qualified / investor category</i>	YES	YES	YES Exempt from 5:1 ratio	YES Indefinite after 3-yr transition	AUTO Family granted automatically	High bar: credentials or qualifying investment

YES = permitted · **NO** = not permitted · **SEPARATE / AUTO** = conditional (family applies separately, or is granted automatically for Turquoise). "Passive" director = listed but managing from abroad; "Active" = working on the ground in Turkey, which requires a work permit.

THE ONE TRAP THAT CATCHES EVERYONE

A residence permit lets you **live** in Turkey. It does **not** let you work in your own company. To actively run your business on the ground you need a work permit — which requires the company to hold 500,000 TL paid-in capital (ten times the LLC registration minimum) and you to personally own at least 20%. Budget for the "labour minimum," not just the "registration minimum," if you plan to move here and run the company yourself. The upside: the work permit also serves as your residence permit and opens the family route.

Şahin Tuhun, SMMM
Licensed Turkish Certified Public Accountant & Tax Advisor · 23 Years Experience

Website: sahintuhan.co/en · LinkedIn: linkedin.com/in/sahin-tuhan · Book a consultation: sahintuhan.co/en/contact

Reflects Turkish law and administrative practice as of July 2026, for general information only. Not immigration legal advice; immigration filings should be confirmed with a licensed Turkish immigration lawyer. Thresholds and government fees are revised at least annually — verify current figures before acting.