

Italy



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1. Types of tax

1.1 Inheritance and gift tax

Law 286/2006 and Law 296/2006 reintroduced the inheritance tax and gift tax. The legislation brought back into force the inheritance rules (effective 3 October 2006), the gift rules (effective 29 November 2006) and most of the provisions of Law Decree 346/1990 (Inheritance and Gift Tax Code), which previously regulated inheritance and gift matters until late October 2001 (as of 25 October 2001, the inheritance and gift tax were repealed).

Law 286 introduced changes to the application of the inheritance and gift tax and the applicable tax rates. Law 296 then introduced some further minor changes.



Both inheritance and gift taxes apply to the worldwide estate (donation) when the deceased (donor) is resident in Italy at the time of death (gift). Taxation will apply only to Italian assets if the deceased (donor) was not resident in Italy.

The tax is levied on the net share of the inheritance or donation passing to the beneficiary (e.g., net of liabilities and deductible expenses, debts of the deceased, funeral and medical expenses), taking into consideration nontaxable threshold amounts that depend on the relationship between the transferor and recipient. These allowances are lifetime amounts, and a running total must be kept if an individual receives more than one gift from one donor. However, based on a decision of the Supreme Tax Court, the same rule is no longer applicable when an individual receives both a gift, as well as an inheritance, from the same donor.

The law provides specific rules for the determination of the taxable base for each kind of transferred asset (e.g., real estate, shares, bonds, investment funds and movable goods).

1.2 Real estate transfer tax

In addition to inheritance and gift taxes, if the inheritance or the endowment includes real estate or real estate rights, the following taxes are also due:

- Mortgage tax, which is 2% of the value of the property (this is necessary to proceed with the registration of the deed in the public registers of property)
- Cadastral tax, which is 1% of the value of the property (required for the registration of the transfer deed)

Instead of applying the above percentages on the value of the property in cases of inheritance or endowment of the “first house,” the beneficiary pays a fixed rate of EUR200 for mortgage and EUR200 for cadastral taxes.

1.3 Transfer duty

A transfer tax (register tax) is levied only on the transfer of real estate (in cases where there was no inheritance or endowment). The tax rate ranges from a fixed amount of EUR200 up to 9% of the value of the real estate depending on the specific features of the transfer and the kind of real estate subject to transfer (i.e., different rules are applied with reference to luxury real estate).

1.4 Net wealth tax

As of 2011, a wealth tax on financial assets held abroad by individuals resident in Italy applies at the rate of 0.1% per year on the value of the financial asset. Starting from 2014, this rate is 0.20%.

The Italian government also introduced, starting from tax year 2012, a wealth tax for real estate properties held abroad by Italian tax residents. This wealth tax is applied at a rate of 0.76% per year on the value of the property. Taxable value is equal to the purchase cost or, in the absence of this, to the fair market value (FMV) of the property, or, in some cases, to a notional value determined according to both Italian law and foreign law. It should be noted that different rules apply to real estate located in the European Union (EU) and some European Economic Area (EEA) countries, and properties held in other countries.

Under certain circumstances, taxpayers are entitled to claim a tax credit equal to the amount of wealth tax already paid in the country in which the property is located; a case-by-case analysis needs to be performed.

Italy has recently introduced a “new resident” regime (Art. 24-bis D.P.R. 22 dicembre 1986, n. 917) that is applicable to individuals that transfer residency for tax purposes in Italy, provided that other conditions are met and a ruling is issued by Italian tax authorities. Under this new regime, Italian “new resident” taxpayers are not subject to wealth taxation on financial assets and real estate held outside of Italy. In addition, reporting obligations are not applicable to “new resident” Italian taxpayers.

“New residents” are individuals who have been nontax resident in Italy for at least 9 years out of the 10 years preceding their transfer to Italy. They are able to pay a substitutive tax (EUR100,000) to their foreign income, and the regime may be extended to family members (paying EUR25,000 each member).

1.5 Real estate property tax

Starting from tax year 2020, Italy unified the former municipal taxes on real estate IMU and TASI, providing that TASI will be absorbed by IMU. The new tax will basically maintain the rules previously applicable to IMU and TASI in terms of real estate subject to tax, taxable basis and deadlines. In terms of applicable rates, tax has a base rate of 0.86% (however, each municipality has the right to increase the rate up to 1.14% and decrease the respective rate up to exempt from payment) per year on the value of the real estate. The taxable value for IMU is calculated based on the cadastral value (i.e., a notional value) attributed to each property by the local municipal offices.

Moreover, real estate used as a principal abode is excluded from property tax. However, if the principal abode is luxury real estate (i.e., A/1, A/8 and A/9 cadastral categories), tax is applied at a rate of 0.5% and a general tax discount of EUR200 (however, municipalities have the right to determine applicable rates in a range between 0% and 0.6%).

The taxable basis is subject to a reduction of 50% if the real estate property falls under the category of a site of cultural interest (for historical and/or artistic purposes). Because some legal conditions need to be met and a further analysis performed to apply this reduction, a case-by-case approach is recommended.

2. Who is liable?

Inheritance tax applies to the worldwide assets of Italian residents. All and only the Italian assets are subject to tax also if the deceased was not an Italian resident at the moment of death.

In practice, when the deceased person is a resident abroad, taxation in Italy is restricted to the property and rights located in Italy. When the deceased person is a resident in Italy, Italian inheritance tax is governed by the principle of territoriality, meaning that the taxable estate consists of all of the property and rights transferred *mortis causa*, including those located abroad.

However, the general rule stated above has been changed as a result of the special “new resident” regime. For individuals who qualify for this regime, only assets located in Italy are subject to inheritance and gift taxes once they are the deceased (in respect of inheritance tax) or the donor (in respect of gift tax). Therefore, the worldwide principle is not applicable to “new resident” taxpayers, and any assets held abroad do not fall under inheritance and gift taxation rules if the deceased or donor is subject to such special regime.

Similar to inheritance tax, gift tax applies to the worldwide assets of Italian residents, while assets based in Italy are subject to tax if the donor was not an Italian resident at the time of the donation.

2.1 Residency

An individual is considered to be a resident in Italy for tax purposes if, for the greater part of the tax period (more than 183 days in any calendar year), at least one of the following conditions is met:

- ▶ He or she is registered under the Italian Office of the Resident Population (*Anagrafe della Popolazione Residente*)
- ▶ He or she has his or her domicile in Italy, according to the Italian Civil Code (i.e., where an individual has established his or her place of business and family life)
- ▶ He or she has established his or her residence in Italy according to the Italian Civil Code (i.e., the place where the individual has his or her habitual abode)

The Italian tax authorities may take the following into account in order to define whether an individual is a resident in Italy or not:

- Moving to Italy with the family
- Transactions effected through bank accounts opened in Italy
- Renting a home for the entire year with normal levels of consumption of electricity, gas and telephone services that demonstrate a substantial period of presence in Italy
- Membership in social or sports clubs

The Italian tax authorities use a special intelligence group of the tax police to collect evidence to establish whether residence in Italy has been established. This group's main purpose is to demonstrate:

- The presence of an individual's business interests in Italy
- The presence of family life in Italy
- An individual's remittance to Italy of funds earned abroad

3. Rates

The new legislation has introduced new tax rates that are common to inheritance and gift taxes and mainly depend on the relationship between the deceased and the beneficiary.

As a general rule, the closer the relationship, the lower the tax rate applicable; these rates may vary from 4% to 8% and apply to the total value of the legacy or the gift, with some tax-exempt thresholds. On this matter, it has to be mentioned that, due to the entering into force of Law 76/2016, any rules previously applicable in case of marriage (i.e., between spouse of different sexes) have been directly extended to same-sex civil partnerships.

4. Exemptions and reliefs

The tax rates currently applicable and the tax-exempt thresholds are listed in the table below.

Beneficiary	Inheritance and gift tax and tax-exempt threshold
Spouse or linear relatives (descendant, ascendant)*	4% on the total assets' value with a tax-exempt threshold of EUR1 million for each heir or beneficiary
Brother or sister	6% on the total assets' value with a tax-exempt threshold of EUR100,000 for each heir or beneficiary
Other relatives (including uncles, aunts, nephews, nieces and cousins) and certain relatives by marriage	6% on the total assets' value with no tax-exempt threshold
Other persons or entities different from the ones listed above	8% on the total assets' value with no tax-exempt threshold
Persons with critical disablements within the meaning provided by the applicable Italian law	There is a tax-exempt threshold of EUR1.5 million for each heir or beneficiary, and over this threshold the same rates listed above apply depending on the relationship with the deceased

* Please note that, based on a recent decision of the Italian Supreme Court, certain kinds of minor transfers between spouses (e.g., wire transfer of cash) could be considered as a gift falling into the scope of gift tax, if it is significant enough to realize a stable increase in the assets of the donee and an impoverishment of the assets of the donor. Therefore, a case-by-case analysis would be necessary to verify the correct tax treatment.

In addition to inheritance and gift taxes, immovable properties are subject to mortgage tax and cadastral tax, which range from EUR200 to 3% of the property value.

Beneficiary	Mortgage tax	Cadastral tax
Spouse or linear relatives (descendant, ascendant)	EUR200 for the main dwelling 2% on the value* of other immovable properties	EUR200 for the main dwelling 1% on the value of other immovable properties
Brother or sister		
Other relatives (including uncles, aunts, nephews, nieces and cousins) and certain relatives by marriage		
Other persons or entities different from the ones listed above		
Persons with critical disabilities within the meaning provided by the applicable Italian law		

*Value is determined according to a specific formula established by the tax authorities.

It must be noted that for the applicability of the aforementioned tax-exempt thresholds with regard to inheritance rules, based on a recent decision of the Italian Supreme Court, it is no longer necessary to consider the donations made by the deceased person to the heirs during his or her life.

However, the rule is still applicable where an individual receives more than one gift from the same donor: as a consequence, the value of the donations made to an individual needs to be recorded any time a new gift is granted to check if the cumulative sum exceeds the amount of threshold.

With Law 130/2013 (so-called European Law 2013-bis), the Italian government has modified the taxable base of the Italian inheritance and gift tax. On the basis of new rules that entered into force as of 25 November 2014, two new exemptions have been introduced. First, transfers of assets to EU and EEA public entities, foundations or associations are expressly exempt from inheritance and gift tax. Moreover, the new provision established that the complete exclusion from the taxable base (already provided regarding Italian public securities) is now applicable, even in cases of EU and EEA public security transfers.

5. Filing procedures

An inheritance declaration must be submitted within one year from the date of the start of the inheritance, which usually coincides with the date of the taxpayer's death.

On 23 January 2017, the Italian tax authorities launched an online platform that enables the declaration to be filed electronically, and starting from 2019, electronic filing is the only allowed procedure.

Regarding inheritance declarations, Law Decree 175/2014 has established an exemption from filing requirements for spouses, civil partnership and linear relatives when the total asset value is lower than EUR100,000 and there are no rights on the real estate property. In this case, an inheritance declaration is not required.

If there is real estate in the inheritance, mortgage and cadastral taxes as well as stamp duty must be paid using a specific form before submitting the declaration of inheritance. Furthermore, within 30 days of the submission of the inheritance declaration, a request for transfer of the property must be submitted to the Inland Revenue office. Even if more than one person is obliged to submit the declaration, it is sufficient if it is submitted by just one of these persons.

Endowment deeds and other voluntary deeds must be registered electronically within 30 days of the stipulation of the deed if they are done through a public deed or an authenticated private agreement.

6. Assessments and valuations

The taxable base is determined by the heirs and legatees according to the specific rules provided by the inheritance law. For example:

- ▶ Real estate and rights from real estate: The evaluation of the property is done by multiplying the cadastral revenue by the relevant updated coefficients.¹
- ▶ Shares in the capital of a company: The value is given by the net equity.
- ▶ Companies: The value is given by the net equity without evaluating immovable goods and goodwill.

The taxes are self-assessed and paid by the heirs and legatees, or their legal representatives, before the filing of the inheritance declaration.

7. Trusts, foundations and private purpose funds

In 2007, the Italian government provided a first set of rules on the tax treatment of trusts. These provisions determine the tax residency of a trust and its taxation: taxation on the trust itself, if the beneficiaries are not identified (i.e., opaque trusts) vs. taxation on the identified beneficiaries of the trust (i.e., transparent trusts).

The criteria to determine whether a trust is resident have not been affected by the recent changes in legislation, which merely introduced rebuttable presumptions of residence for trusts (presumptions apply only to certain trusts settled in a country listed as an uncooperative tax haven by the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD), i.e., in a country not providing for effective exchange of information with Italy). The Italian tax authorities set forth clarifications regarding the application of corporate residence criteria for trusts (see Circular Letter no. 61 of 2010).

On 20 October 2022, Italian tax authorities published Circular Letter n. 34/E, which sets out the direct and indirect taxation rules for resident and nonresident trusts.

The Italian tax authorities confirmed that the settlement of goods and rights into a trust generally does not qualify as a taxable event; however, the settlement into a trust of (i) selected financial assets and (ii) goods or rights held by an entrepreneur may be subject to taxation so that a case-by-case analysis is always needed at the time of the trust is set up.

Furthermore, Italian tax authorities also confirmed that the distributions to Italian resident beneficiaries are, in most cases, not relevant for income tax purposes; however, Circular Letter no. 34/E of 2022 clarified with respect to opaque trusts that:

- ▶ The distributions from nonresident opaque trusts established in low-tax jurisdictions (if there is a nominal taxation level lower than 50% of the applicable rate in Italy) are presumed to be capital income; therefore, these distributions should be taxable with progressive rates (up to 43% plus between 2,54% and 3,33% of local taxes). The Italian tax authorities also clarified that it is possible to displace this presumption by demonstrating through account records and non-account records (i.e., financial statements) the distinction between income and capital.
- ▶ The distributions from commercial opaque trusts to Italian resident beneficiaries qualify as capital income, and the trusts, if Italian residents, should also apply the withholding tax to the capital gains distributed.

In case of identified beneficiaries (i.e., transparent trust), the income is subject to taxation at the time the taxable event occurs in respect of the trust itself (in case respective flows of income are not actually distributed). Therefore, as long as the same flows of income have been already taxed, the following pay-out to identified beneficiaries should not be relevant for income tax purposes.

Based on the above, a case-by-case analysis would be necessary to verify the correct tax treatment.

¹ With particular reference to real estate, the value declared in the inheritance declaration cannot be challenged by the tax authorities if it has been determined by applying the so-called "cadastral value" (i.e., a notional value determined by the local land offices).

8. Grants

This does not apply to Italy.

9. Life insurance

Italian tax law provides a very complex set of rules with respect to the taxation of income deriving from life insurance. The tax treatment depends on several factors (e.g., when the individual bought the insurance, specific terms and conditions of the contract and how the proceeds are paid out).

As a general rule, the policy owner is entitled to a tax credit of 19% of the premiums paid up to a certain threshold.

According to domestic tax law, financial insurance (life and capitalization insurance policies) is subject to the following tax treatment:

- If the capital is paid as a consequence of the death of the policyholder, no taxation occurs. However, if the insurance did not cover the “death risk” only (i.e., also included an investment purpose) please also refer to the following treatment.
- If the payment of capital is linked to savings/investment purposes, capital gains realized are taxed according to the following rates and depending on when the capital gain has been realized:
 1. Insurance policy purchased before 1 January 2000: a flat tax rate of 12.5% applies to the difference between the payment received and the sum of the insurance premiums paid. Taxable base is reduced by 2% for each year following the 10th year from the date set up of the policy.
 2. Insurance policy purchased after 1 January 2000: capital gains are subject to tax rate of:
 - 12.5% until 31 December 2011
 - 20% from 1 January 2012 to 30 June 2014
 - 26% from 1 July 2014

Even after 31 December 2011, the portion of gains deriving from State bonds will be taxed at 12.5%.

In cases where income from the insurance policy is paid to a nonresident of Italy, it will be necessary to verify the provisions of the double-tax treaty in place between the countries involved.

10. Civil law on succession

10.1 Estate planning

Italy has some interesting estate planning opportunities. Below, we briefly mention the favorable regime applicable to the transfer *inter vivos* (gift) or *mortis causa* (inheritance) of shareholdings in Italian resident corporations (in cases where the shareholding represents the majority of the voting rights in the general shareholders’ meeting).

In these cases, where the beneficiaries continue the business activity (maintaining control of the company) for at least five years, no inheritance and gift tax apply. If during the five-year blocking period the abovementioned requirement is not met (e.g., because the beneficiaries sell a line of business), taxes and penalties will apply.

10.2 Succession

The Italian succession law follows universal succession principles according to:

- The law of the deceased’s nationality
- Or
- The location of real or personal property

Heirs have universal succession, and unless he or she refuses to accept the inheritance, they are personally liable for the deceased's debt plus the total taxes due. These obligations are placed upon all the heirs jointly. The heir succeeds to the decedent in all aspects. However, his or her liability is limited to the value of the inheritance received in cases where the heir accepts the inheritance with the benefit of the separation of the property of the deceased from that of the heir (Article 512 of the Italian Civil Code). In such a case, the heir is obliged to make an inventory of property and present it for creditors when relevant.

A legatee under a will has only a personal claim against a compulsory heir (subject to forced heirship laws) and is not liable for a decedent's debts, although he or she is liable for relevant taxes on any legacy.

The main connecting factor for succession purposes is the citizenship of the decedent, as residence is relevant to tax liability. As noted above, and as a general rule, taxation will occur on the basis of worldwide assets if the deceased was an Italian resident, but if the deceased was considered to be a nonresident, taxes are due only for the assets located in Italy, subject to any applicable tax treaties.

10.3 Forced heirship

In the Italian legal system, according to Section 46§1, Law No. 218/1995, heirship of an Italian citizen is governed by Italian law.

The rules governing hereditary succession in Italy provide that certain persons, such as spouses, children and legitimate descendants, are considered forced heirs (*heres necessarius*).

This compulsory share or forced heirship is called *legittima*. Forced heirship applies to all of the deceased's assets and to all of the inheritance rights. If the deceased makes a disposition prejudicing the rights of any of these heirs, such dispositions can be challenged before an Italian court and the heirs can make a claim for the associated damages suffered. In the same way, lifetime gifts (donations) can be challenged before an Italian court, even if performed in favor of other legitimate heirs.

In practice, forced heirship rules restrict the ability to decide how assets should be distributed after death.

The following relatives are entitled to receive the following minimum statutory shares, it being further understood that neither burdens nor conditions can be imposed on such shares as listed in the table below.

Only one child and no spouse	One-half of the inheritance assets
Two or more children but no spouse	A total of two-thirds of the inheritance assets in equal shares
One or more <i>ascendenti</i> (ancestors)	Generally, parents, but no spouse and no children – one-third of the inheritance assets
Only a surviving spouse	One-half of the inheritance assets and the right to live in the house used as a family home and to use the furniture contained therein
A surviving spouse and a child	To the surviving spouse – one-third of the inheritance assets, the right to live in the house used as a family home and to use the furniture contained therein To the child – one-third of the inheritance assets

A surviving spouse and children	To the spouse – one-quarter of the inheritance assets, the right to live in the house used as a family home and to use the furniture contained therein To the children in equal shares – one-half of the inheritance assets
A surviving spouse and <i>ascendenti</i> but no children	To the spouse – one-half of the inheritance assets, the right to live in the house used as a family home and to use the furniture contained therein To the <i>ascendenti</i> – one-quarter of the inheritance assets
Separated spouse not charged with separation	Same provisions applying to non-separated spouse (also the right to live in the family house)
Separated spouse charged with separation	Living allowance if at the time of the succession the surviving spouse enjoyed support from the deceased spouse

Section 46§2, Law No. 218/1995 allows the person whose inheritance is at stake to opt – by express testamentary disposition – for his or her succession to be governed by the law of the country in which the latter resides, provided that he or she continues to reside in that country until he or she dies. Such a choice cannot infringe upon or jeopardize the rights of the forced heirs residing in Italy at the time of the death.

10.4 Matrimonial laws and civil partnerships

The Italian matrimonial law normally applicable to all property acquired during marriage is joint ownership. However, at any time the spouses can draw up an agreement (in the form of a public deed or specific declaration in case the choice is made on the day of the marriage) in order to elect for separation of property acquired during the marriage. Assets acquired before the marriage remain the separate (individual) property of each spouse.

For estate planning purposes, it is possible to set up a patrimonial fund (*fondo patrimoniale*). This may be a unilateral declaration of trust by either of the spouses or a trust formed by a third party in favor of the family by way of a transfer of assets to the spouses as trustees.

With regard to the trust, under certain circumstances the Italian tax authorities would likely consider this kind of arrangement to be equivalent to the setting up of “*vincoli di destinazione*” (i.e., creation of encumbrances or other restrictions on the use of certain assets) and, as a consequence, they would consider it subject to gift tax. Based on the above, a case-by-case analysis would be necessary to verify whether gift tax is applicable or not to a *fondo patrimoniale*.

As far as civil partnerships are concerned, a new law (Law No. 76 of 20 May 2016) entered into force in Italy providing for civil partnerships between same-sex individuals. Following this new law, partnerships previously not recognized by law are now subject to the main rules applicable to heterosexual married couples. As a result, references in the rules to “spouse” have been changed to “partner of a civil partnership.”

10.5 Intestacy

Under the Italian law of succession, a person may dispose of his or her property or estate for the time after death by will (*testamento*) or, alternatively, let the law deal with this matter.

When a person dies without a valid will, Italian law states who is going to inherit and how much (*successione legittima*). When a person dies leaving a valid will, the law will ascertain the validity of the will, provide a set of formalities to be complied with and, in some cases, taxes to be paid, and ensure that the will is implemented, and the relevant assets are legally transferred to the persons or beneficiaries entitled (*eredi* or *legatari*).

Italian law will also ensure that the immediate members of the deceased's family are not deprived of their minimum statutory share of the estate (see Section 10.3).

Under Italian law there are three ways to make a valid will:

1. Handwritten will (*testamento olografo*): This is a document handwritten by the person making the will (testator) and which is dated and signed. There is no need for witnesses and no attestation clause. It can be a very simple letter or document.
2. Formal will (*testamento pubblico*): This is a document drafted by an Italian notary upon the instructions of the testator, read by the notary to ensure that it complies with the wishes of the testator and signed by the testator in the presence of witnesses.
3. Secret will (*testamento segreto*): This is a will drafted and written by the testator and placed in a sealed envelope, which is then delivered to an Italian notary.

10.6 Probate

Italian law does not require executors to be appointed; however, when a person dies owning property (land or buildings), it may be necessary to collect documentation, organize certified translations of documents, appoint a local notary and follow special procedures.

After completing the probate procedure, it will be possible to re-register the immovable assets in the name of the heirs (the Italian legal procedure defined as *voltura*).

11. Estate tax treaties

11.1 Unilateral rules

Unilateral relief is available in Italy for residents and nonresidents with respect to foreign gift and inheritance taxes paid on assets situated abroad that are also liable to Italian inheritance and gift tax. The relief is by way of credit, up to a maximum of the Italian tax attributable to those assets.

11.2 Double-taxation treaties

Italy has concluded inheritance tax treaties with Denmark, France, Greece, Israel, Sweden, United Kingdom and United States of America.

The treaties mentioned above only cover inheritance taxes, with the exception of the Italy-France treaty, which covers gift tax as well.

12. Other

12.1 Indirect taxation on trust and similar structure

As mentioned above, Circular Letter n. 34/E, published on 20 October 2022, sets out indirect taxation rules on trust and similar structures.

More specifically, the Italian Tax Authority modified its previous interpretation that was set forth in Circular Letter n. 48/E of 2007, which had provided that gift tax is immediately applicable to the transfer of assets and rights from the settlor to the trust. The change in interpretation was to take into account recent decisions of the Italian Supreme Tax Court and confirms that:

- ▶ The transfer of rights and assets into a trust (regardless of whether the beneficiaries are identified or not) does not constitute an immediate transfer of ownership for the beneficiaries and so should be considered as tax neutral.
- ▶ The taxable event of gift tax shall occur at the time of transfer of property to the beneficiaries.
- ▶ The applicable tax rates and tax-exempt thresholds should be determined based on the relationship between the settlor and the beneficiaries (see Section 4).

In addition, the Italian Tax Authority clarified that, where gift taxes were already applied at the time of settlement of the asset into the trust, relying on the previous interpretation of the Italian Tax Authority, no further tax will be due at the time any assets are subsequently transferred to the beneficiaries.