

Italia Startup Visa&Hub

4th quarterly report, 2017

Summary of main findings up to 31 December 2017



Italian Ministry of Economic Development
Directorate General for Industrial Policy, Competitiveness and SMEs

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Italia Startup Visa

Overview

The Italia Startup Visa (ISV) programme (italiastartupvisa.mise.gov.it) was launched by the Italian Ministry of Economic Development on 24 June 2014. ISV's mission is to facilitate the issue of self-employment visas to non-EU citizens who wish to establish, individually or as a team, an innovative startup company in Italy, as defined by the **Italian Startup Act**.

For this purpose, ISV introduces an entirely new procedure, which can be described as:

- **fast-track:** it never takes more than 30 days;
- **centralised:** the applicant can communicate with the Italian public offices through a single contact point;
- **digitised:** the procedure takes place entirely online;
- **bilingual:** applications can be submitted both in Italian and in English;
- **free-of-charge:** no fees are required to apply for ISV.

Up to 31 December 2017, ISV has recorded **316 applications**¹. Of these, **176** (55,7%) have received a **positive evaluation** from the **Italia Startup Visa&Hub Technical**

¹ Twenty-one applicants whose submission had been turned down at a first evaluation (or withdrawn) have submitted a new application again a few months later. Two of them have applied for the programme three times. Six of those multiple applications have been ultimately successful. For this reason, the number of applications (316) is higher than the **number of applicants (293)**.

Committee, resulting in a Certificate of No Impediment to the visa. Among the others, **110** applications (34,8%) were unsuccessful and **14** were withdrawn².

Moreover, **16** applications are still **under evaluation**: 2 require further documentation to be evaluated, while the remaining 14 are currently being examined by the **ISV&H Committee**.

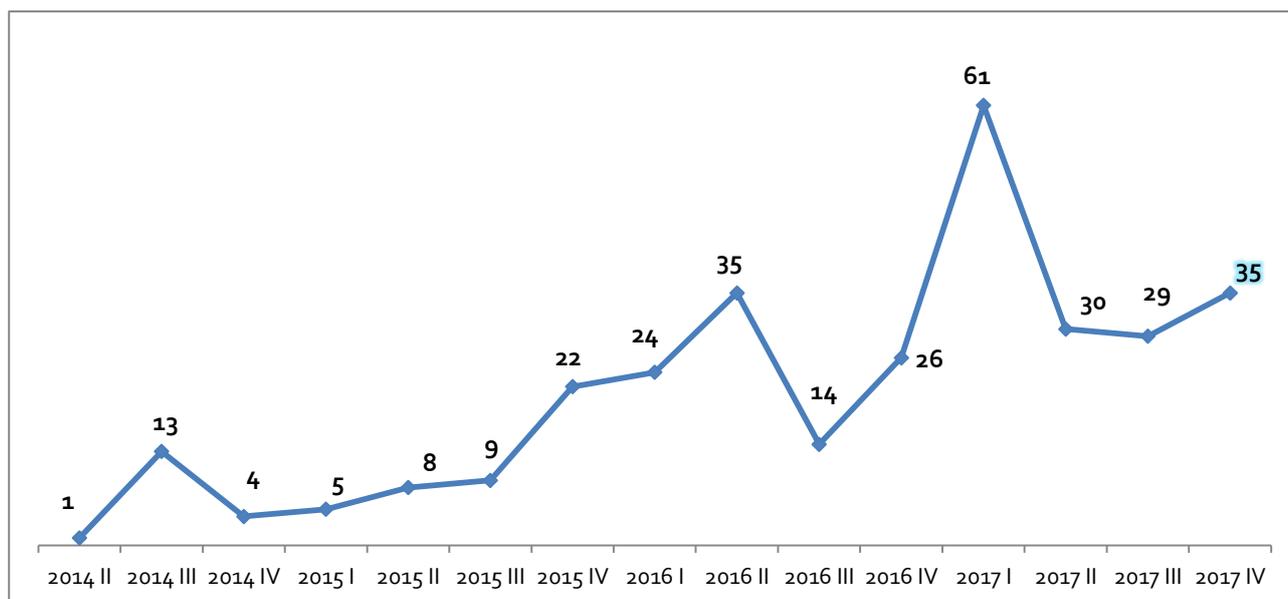
Chaired by the Director General for Industrial Policy of the Ministry, the Committee is formed by the presidents (or their delegates) of five key associations of the Italian innovation ecosystem: **PNICube** representing university incubators, **IBAN** for business angels, **AIFI** for venture capital investors, **APSTI** for science and technology parks, and **Netval** for technology transfer offices.

The main reason for rejection was the weakness of the business model proposed (43 rejections), closely followed by a lack of **innovative value** of the business model proposed, which applied to **39** cases.

Among the 176 individuals whose application was approved, 16 have informed the Ministry that they have changed their plans about moving to Italy. As a result, currently there are **158 startup visa holders** on the records.

A total of **35** applications were received during the last quarter of 2017. The value has slightly increased compared to the previous three-month periods: 29 applications were recorded between July and September 2017, and 30 between April and June. Overall, this quarter has seen the second-highest number of submissions in the history of the programme, being only second to the 61 received in the previous quarter (see data in Figure 1 below).

² As established in the **Guidelines** of the Italia Startup Visa programme (page 13), an application is considered to be implicitly withdrawn when the applicant fails to provide further documents within 60 days from the relevant request made by the ISV Secretariat.

Figure 1: Applications to ISV received per quarters (2nd quarter 2014 – 4th quarter 2017)

Overall, **155 applications** were submitted in 2017. This is a new record for the Italia Startup Visa programme: for a comparison, 99 submissions were received in all of 2016, a yearly growth of **56.6%**. It follows that just under half of all ISV applications received (49.1%) were submitted in the last 12 months, which indicates a pattern of exponential growth started about two years ago.

A vast majority of the submissions were sent directly from the applicants (280), while 36 of them have been backed by a **certified incubator**. In 31 cases the hosting incubator was **H-Farm** (Roncade, province of Treviso), in 3 cases the **Technopole** in Pordenone, in one case each **Working Capital** (Rome) and **tzi** (Rovigo office).

The Italia Startup Visa programme not only accepts individual applications, but also joint ones submitted by **entrepreneurial teams**. A total of **54** of these have been recorded so far: 33 from teams of two people, 13 of three people, and 8 of four people. As a result, **136³** non-EU citizens sent their ISV application as part of an

³ The 54 entrepreneurial teams include a two-person team composed by an Italia Startup Visa applicant and an Italia Startup Hub applicant, hence the total number of ISV team applicants is 136.

entrepreneurial team, **43% of all candidates**. A total of **36** out of 54 team applications were successful.

Finally, **71⁴** applicants applied for ISV to **join a company already established in Italy and recognised as an innovative startup** under the Italian Startup Act. In fact, the ISV programme is accessible also for non-EU citizens who wish to become shareholders and play an entrepreneurial role in an innovative startup incorporated by third parties, as provided for by standard Italian regulations on self-employment visas (for reference see p. 22 of the programme's **Guidelines**). 62 applications of this kind came from Chinese citizens (35 approved). In the remaining cases the business plan presented to the ISV&H Committee envisioned the creation from scratch of an innovative startup in Italy.

⁴ Six startup visa applicants, after being turned down a first time, have submitted an application to join an existing Italian startup a second time. The second application was approved in three cases. As a result, while the number of applicants to join an Italian startup is 71, the number of applications of this kind is **77**.

The applicants

A total of 196 candidates are male (66.9%), and 97 are female (33.1%). The average age is **36.8 years**: the youngest was 20 years old at the time of application, the oldest was 65.

132 candidates have an entrepreneurial background, whereas a majority (154) have only worked as employees. Among their professional areas, the most common are IT (software development in particular), marketing, consulting, management and engineering. A few applicants are serial startup entrepreneurs, i.e. they have had several experiences in founding and managing startups.

The highest educational attainment of 119 candidates (40.6%) is a Bachelor's degree, while in 86 cases it is a Master's degree or equivalent. In addition, 46 candidates have achieved at least one postgraduate qualification: 14 of them hold a PhD, and 32 have completed some other form of postgraduate education, including 20 Masters' in Business Administration (MBAs). This implies that **251** applicants (85.7%) are college graduates. The remaining part does not hold any university degree, having achieved, for example, vocational training or a high- or middle-school diploma as their highest educational attainment.

A total of 51.1% (90 out of 176) of successful candidates have an educational qualification equivalent or higher than the Italian second level university degree; furthermore, **90.9%** of successful applicants (160) are university graduates.

The most frequent educational backgrounds are IT, management and business administration, marketing, and various branches of engineering, the latter representing the most recurrent one with 58 cases.

Countries of origin

The applicants come from **39 different countries**. Compared to three months ago, three more nations joined the list: Azerbaijan, Bangladesh, and Colombia. Considering only successful candidates, **25** different countries are represented.

As in the previous quarter, the largest share of applications (88⁵, making 27.8% of all applications) were submitted from citizens of **China**, 17 more than three months ago.

Russia is in second position, with 62 applications. However, this country remains the first in terms of number of accepted applications (53, with an approval rate of 85.5%), while only 36 applicants from China have been granted a Certificate of No Impediment (40.9% approval rate).

The third country in terms of number of applications is the **United States**, with 29 (19 approved) and **Pakistan**, with 27 (only 5 approved). Other countries that have seen more than 10 submissions are **Iran** (19, 12 approved), **Ukraine** (17, all but one approved), and **India** (12, 4 approved). Among other countries, only Brazil and Japan exceed 4 applications.

⁵ Taking into account multiple submissions, the number of Chinese citizens that have applied for ISV is **76**. Another country that registers a significant gap between applications submitted and number of applicants is Pakistan (27 applications from 22 people). Table 1 breaks down the distribution of the number of *applicants* to the programme per country, and of the number of *applications* that were actually accepted.

Table 1: Number of applicants and applications approved by country of origin

Country of origin	Number of applicants	Applications approved
China	76	36
Russia	62	53
United States	27	19
Pakistan	22	5
Iran	19	12
Ukraine	17	16
India	12	4
Brazil	5	4
Japan	4	4
Indonesia	3	3
South Africa	3	3
Egypt	3	1
Afghanistan	3	0
Bangladesh	3	0
DR Congo	3	0
Australia	2	2
Moldova	2	2
Turkey	2	2
Argentina	2	1
South Korea	2	1
Malaysia	2	0
Serbia	2	0

Country of origin	Number of applicants	Applications approved
Armenia	1	1
Azerbaijan	1	1
Canada	1	1
Israel	1	1
Nepal	1	1
New Zealand	1	1
Taiwan	1	1
Thailand	1	1
Colombia	1	0
Ecuador	1	0
Philippines	1	0
Hong Kong	1	0
Comoros	1	0
Kosovo	1	0
Lebanon	1	0
Nigeria	1	0
Uzbekistan	1	0
	293	176

Figure 2: Number of applicants by country

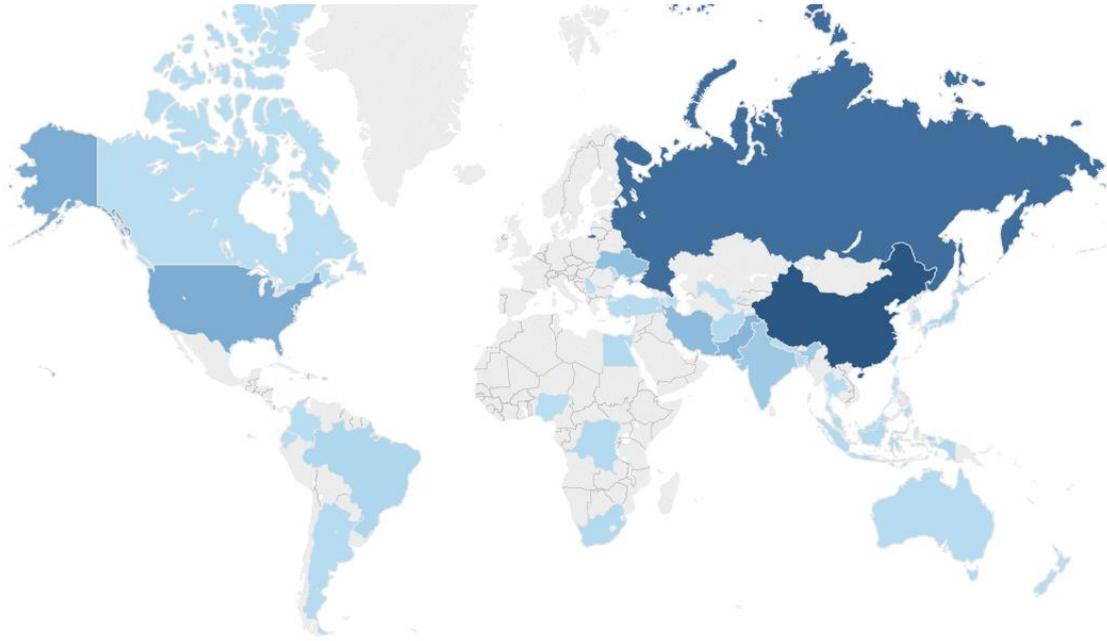
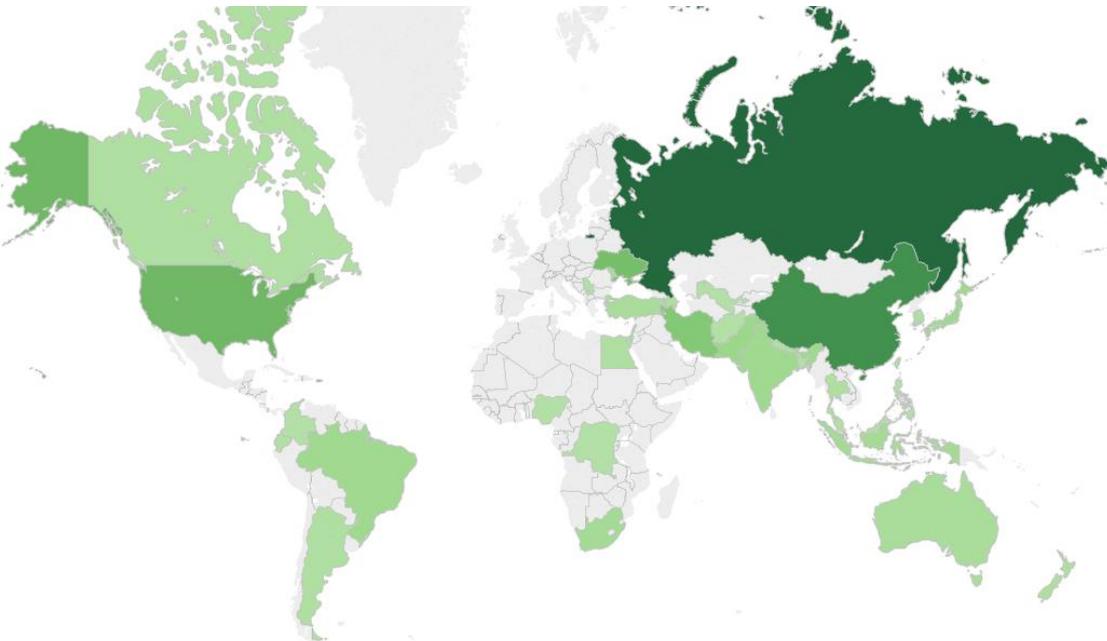


Figure 3: Number of approved applications by country



Destinations

The 158 startup visa holders currently on the records have indicated the following territories as their destination:

Table 2a-2b: Province and region of destination of Italia Startup Visa holders

Province	#
Milan	40
Rome	23
Treviso	12
Varese	10
Savona, Verona	7
Biella, Brescia, Como, Trieste	4
Bergamo, Grosseto, Padua, Pordenone, Torino, Trento	3
Bari, Fermo, Florence, Foggia, Lucca, Novara, Pescara	2
Bologna, Cosenza, Cuneo, Forlì-Cesena, Massa-Carrara, Perugia, Rovigo, Salerno, Sassari, Siena, Vicenza	1

Region	#
Lombardy	61
Veneto	24
Lazio	18
Piedmont	10
Tuscany	9
Friuli-Venezia Giulia, Liguria	7
Apulia	4
Trentino-Südtirol	3
Abruzzo, Emilia-Romagna, Marche	2
Calabria, Campania, Sardinia, Umbria	1

Startups established or joined

So far, at least **21** new innovative startups have been created from scratch by startup visa holders and registered in the dedicated section of the Business Register:

- **Appsconda s.r.l.s.,**
- **Audaces Europe s.r.l.,**
- **Centafarm s.r.l. ;**
- **DCS s.r.l.;**
- **Finalrentals Group s.r.l.;**
- **Generma s.r.l.;**
- **Genuine Education Network s.r.l.;**
- **Fueguia s.r.l.;**
- **Gymbag s.r.l.;**
- **Indexcode s.r.l.;**
- **Ital.io s.r.l.s.;**
- **ItQui s.r.l.;**
- **Jetware s.r.l.;**
- **LabQuattrocento s.r.l.;**
- **Plasmolifting Italia s.r.l.;**
- **Per Vigore s.r.l.;**
- **Quainted s.r.l.;**
- **Recyclinnova s.r.l.s.;**
- **Routes software s.r.l.;**
- **SCdB s.r.l.,**
- **Size4Me s.r.l.**

Moreover, 13 existing innovative startups recorded the entry of a non-EU partner (**Artemest s.r.l.**; **Argumented Commerce s.r.l.**; **Avanix s.r.l.**; **Connexun s.r.l.**; **EasyRain s.r.l.**; **Innovaetica s.r.l.**; **Lookcast s.r.l.**; **Nuwa Technologies s.r.l.s.**; **Portrait Eyewear s.r.l.**; **Pubcoder s.r.l.**; **Travel Appeal s.r.l.**; **WalletSaver s.r.l.**; **Warda s.r.l.**). Other cases are still in progress and their development is being constantly monitored.



Italia Startup Hub

The same fast-track procedure applicable to startup visas has been extended to conversion of residence permits. Launched on 23 December 2014, the Italia Startup Hub programme allows non-EU citizens who already hold a residency permit to convert it into a self-employment type, should they wish to prolong their stay in Italy for starting up an innovative business. Dedicated guidelines (in [English](#) and [Italian](#)) and specific [application forms](#) are available on the web portal italiastartuphub.mise.gov.it.

Eight applications have been received so far, **two more** than those on the records three months ago. Seven of them were successful, leading to the conversion of the residence permit previously held by the applicant into a “startup self-employment” type.

The applications

A joint application by two Korean citizens (one male, one female, 35 and 34 years), who were already in Italy for study purposes (both hold a Master's degree). They want to set up an innovative startup in the tech-fashion sector.

An Iranian citizen (male, 34 years old, holding a Master's degree), who sent his application through a certified incubator (Working Capital). Alongside an Italian colleague, he launched an innovative startup to monitor underground energy networks, [Armnet s.r.l.](#)

A citizen of the United States (male, 38 years old, holder of a Bachelor's degree).

An Iranian citizen (male, 32 years old, holding a PhD), who presented his application jointly with another Iranian citizen, who instead used the ISV procedure. Their innovative startup deals with the transformation of waste into re-usable chemical materials, [Recyclinnova s.r.l.s.](#)

A Malaysian citizen, 31 years old, fashion and marketing student in Milan and holder of a residence permit for study reasons. Her innovative startup, **Interverso Crosseat s.r.l.**, aims at launching a matching platform in the fashion and fitness sector.

A citizen of Bolivia, 31 years old, graduate in mechanical engineering, and founder of the innovative startup **Nextis4us s.r.l.**, which developed a new cocktail-making machine.

Destinations

Table 3a-3b: Province and region of destination of Italia Startup Hub holders

Province	#	Region	#
Milan	3	Lombardy	3
Bologna		Calabria	
Cosenza	1	Emilia-Romagna	1
Sassari		Sardinia	
Verbano-Cusio-Ossola		Piedmont	

For further information:

Visit:

- italiastartupvisa.mise.gov.it
- italiastartuphub.mise.gov.it

Write to:

- info.italiastartupvisa@mise.gov.it
(for both Italia Startup Visa and Italia Startup Hub)

To apply:

- italiastartupvisa@mise.gov.it
- italiastartuphub@mise.gov.it