

Italia Startup Visa&Hub

1st quarterly report, 2019

Summary of main findings up to 31 March 2019



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

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This report is a product of the Directorate General for Industrial Policy, Competitiveness and SMEs of the Ministry of Economic Development. Its authors are Mattia Corbetta and Roberto Volpe.



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.

Up to 31 March 2019, ISV has recorded **434 applications**. Of these, **230** (53%) have received a **positive evaluation** from the **Italia Startup Visa Technical Committee**, resulting in a Certificate of No Impediment (in Italian, "*Nulla Osta*") to the visa. Among the others, **165** applications (38%) were unsuccessful and **32** were withdrawn¹.

Moreover, **7** applications are still **under evaluation**: three require further documentation to be examined, while the remaining four are currently being assessed by the **ISV 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 (**66** rejections), closely followed by a lack of **innovative value** of the business model proposed, which applied to **60** cases.

In a number of cases, the same individual has applied for a startup visa more than once – in most cases, following an earlier rejection by the ISV Committee.² For this

¹ As set out in the **Guidelines** of the Italia Startup Visa programme, an application is considered to be implicitly withdrawn when the applicant fails to provide further documents within 60 days from a request made by the ISV Secretariat.

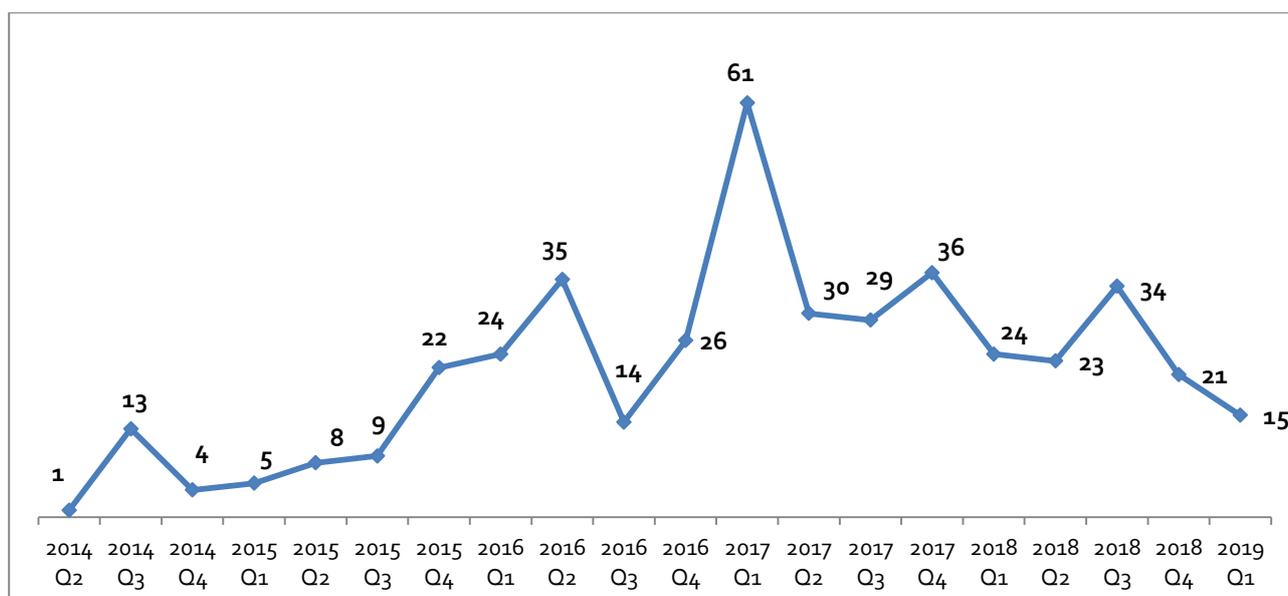
² Thirty-two applicants whose submission had been turned down at a first evaluation (or withdrawn) have submitted a new application again a few months later. Two of them have applied for the programme three times. Moreover, two individuals who had successfully obtained an ISV Nulla Osta in the past later submitted a new startup visa application, as they no longer held a valid permit to stay in Italy. Nine of those "multiple applications" have been ultimately successful.

reason, as opposed to the number of applications, the number of *applicants* for Italia Startup Visa is equal to precisely **400**.

Among the 230 individuals whose application was approved, 23 have voluntarily informed the Ministry that they have changed their plans about moving to Italy. As a result, there are currently **208 potential startup visa holders** on the records.

A total of **15** applications were received during the first quarter of 2019, the lowest tally recorded in the last two and a half years. For a comparison, as it can be seen in Figure 1 below, the average number of applications received in 2018 was about 25 per quarter.

Figure 1: Applications to ISV received per quarters (2nd quarter 2014 – 1st quarter 2019)



A vast majority of applications were sent independently by the applicants (393), while 41 of them were backed by a **certified incubator**. In 31 cases the hosting incubator was **H-Farm** (Roncade, province of Treviso), in three cases the **Technopole** in Pordenone, in two cases **Nana Bianca** (Florence), in one case each

Working Capital (Rome), **tzi** (Rovigo office), **Trentino Sviluppo** (Trento), **The Hive** (Ancona), and **Campania NewSteel** (Naples).

The Italia Startup Visa programme not only accepts individual applications, but also joint ones submitted by **entrepreneurial teams**. A total of **75** teams have sent an application so far: 39 from teams of two people, 22 of three people, 12 of four people, and 2 of five people. As a result, **198** non-EU citizens³ sent their ISV application as part of an entrepreneurial team, **almost a majority (49.5%) of all candidates**. A total of **52** out of 75 team applications were successful.

Finally, **74** applicants⁴ requested a startup visa in order to **join a company already established in Italy** and recognised as an innovative startup under the Italian Startup Act. The ISV programme can be accessed also by non-EU citizens who wish to become shareholders and play an entrepreneurial role in an innovative startup incorporated by third parties, in compliance with the conditions set out in Italian immigration law on self-employment visas (for reference see p. 26 of the **ISV Guidelines**). Should foreign nationals be only interesting in investing their capital in an Italian startup, a specific 2-year "visa for investors" has been in force since late 2017 (**Investor Visa for Italy** programme). Within this framework, a special channel for investors in innovative startups is provided (**more info here**).

³ The 73 entrepreneurial teams include three teams – 2 of two people, 1 of three people – that are composed by both Italia Startup Visa and Italia Startup Hub applicants. If we include participants the latter programme, the number of team applicants is therefore 197.

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 five cases. As a result, while the number of applicants to join an Italian startup is 74, the number of applications of this kind is **80**.

In 48 cases the application to join an existing startup was approved by the ISV Committee. In all remaining cases, successful applications envisioned the creation from scratch of an innovative startup in Italy.

The applicants

A total of 276 startup visa applicants are male (69%), while 124 are female (31%). The average age is **36.8 years**, which falls to 36.1 when only successful applicants are considered. 40.3% of candidates fall in the 25-34 age group, and 6.5% are 24 or younger – the youngest overall turned 18 only a few days before submitting their application. Conversely, 32.3% are aged between 35 and 44, with a non-negligible share being 45 or older – the oldest was 65 at time of submission.

More than four candidates in ten (43%) have an entrepreneurial background, whereas a majority (54%) last worked as salaried employees. The most common professional backgrounds 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 150 candidates (37.5%) is a Bachelor's degree, while in 130 cases it is an equivalent of the Italian 2-year Master's degree (33,5%). In addition, 60 candidates have achieved a different postgraduate qualification: 16 of them hold a PhD, and 44 have completed some other form of postgraduate education, including 31 Masters' in Business Administration (MBAs). This implies that **344** applicants (86%) are university graduates. The remaining part do not hold any university degree, having obtained, for example, vocational qualifications or a high- or middle-school diploma as their highest educational attainment.

A total of 55.2% (127 out of 230) of successful candidates have an educational qualification equivalent or higher than the Italian second-level university degree; more in general, **92.2%** of startup visa holders are college graduates.

The most frequent educational backgrounds are in science and technology related domains, such as IT and in particular various branches of engineering, the most common degree of all (78 occurrences). Rather common are also economics and business studies (e.g. marketing, business administration), design, and to a lesser extent also humanities and social science (e.g. international relations).

Countries of origin

The applicants come from **47 different countries**, with **Jordan** joining the field in the last quarter. Considering only successful candidates, **33** different countries are represented (two more than three months ago).

The distribution by number of visa applicants and accepted applications is presented in Table 1. The first country by number of ISV candidates is **Russia**, with **90** applicants on the records at the reference date (22.5% of the total). **China** follows suit, with **85** applicants⁵ (21.2%). Respectively, 78.9% of Russian applicants and 51.8% of Chinese applicants received the approval of the Committee.

As in the past quarter, **Pakistan** is in third place, with 35 applicants; however, only five of them have received a Nulla Osta by the ISV Committee. The **United States**, in fourth place with 34 applications, show instead an acceptance rate of about 70%, with 24 visas granted.

Three more countries record more than ten applicants each: **Iran**, with 28 (12 approved); **Ukraine**, with 23 (21 approved); and **India**, with 21 (five approved).

⁵Taking into account instead the number of applications sent by Chinese citizens– i.e. including multiple submissions by the same individual – the value is significantly higher, standing at **92**. Another country that registers a significant gap between applications submitted and number of applicants is Pakistan (40 applications from 34 people).

Among others, only Egypt (eight), Brazil (six) and Japan (five) are above five applications.

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

Country of origin	Number of applicants	Applications approved
Russia	90	71
China	85	44
Pakistan	35	5
United States	34	24
Iran	28	12
Ukraine	23	21
India	21	5
Egypt	8	3
Brazil	6	5
Japan	5	4
Mexico		
Turkey	4	3
Bangladesh		
Indonesia	3	3
South Africa		
Argentina	3	2
Malaysia		
Nigeria	3	1
Afghanistan		
DR Congo	3	0
Australia		
Moldova	2	2
Azerbaijan		
South Korea	2	1
Philippines		
Serbia	2	0

Country of origin	Number of applicants	Applications approved
Armenia		
Belarus		
Canada		
Israel		
Libya	1	1
Morocco		
Nepal		
New Zealand		
Taiwan		
Thailand		
Bolivia		
Colombia		
Ecuador		
Jordan		
Hong Kong		
Comoros	1	0
Kosovo		
Lebanon		
Syria		
Somalia		
Uzbekistan		
	400	230

Figure 2: Number of applicants by country

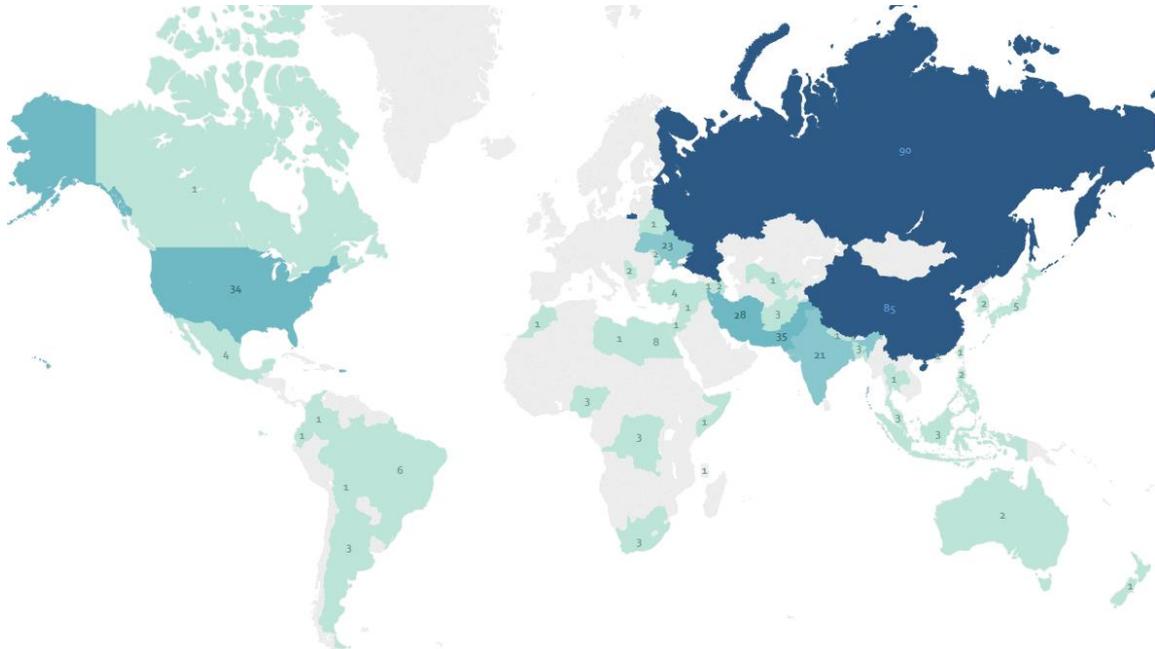
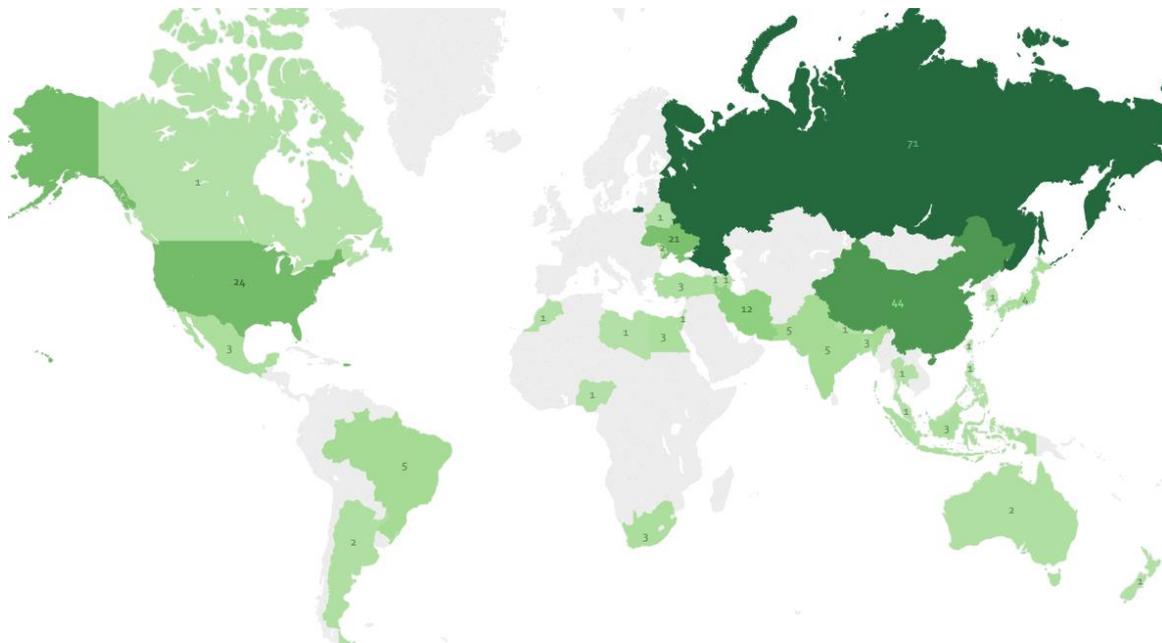


Figure 3: Number of approved applications by country



Destinations

The 208 potential startup visa holders currently on the records have indicated the following territories as their destination:

Table 2a: Province of destination of Italia Startup Visa holders

Province	#
Milan	64
Rome	26
Treviso	16
Varese	10
Verona	8
Savona	7
Cuneo	6
Brescia	5
Biella, Como, Florence, Padua, Trento, Trieste	4
Bergamo, Grosseto, Pordenone, Turin	3
Bari, Fermo, Foggia, Lucca, Modena, Novara, Pescara, Vicenza	2
Ancona, Bologna, Campobasso, Cosenza, Forlì-Cesena, Lecco, Massa-Carrara, Naples, Perugia, Rovigo, Salerno, Sassari, Siena	1

Table 2b: Region of destination of Italia Startup Visa holders

Region	#
Lombardia	87
Veneto	31
Lazio	26
Piemonte	15
Toscana	11
Friuli-Venezia Giulia, Liguria	7
Puglia, Emilia-Romagna, Trentino-Alto Adige	4
Marche	3
Abruzzo, Campania	2
Calabria, Molise, Sardegna, Umbria	1

Region	#
Lombardy	85
Veneto	31
Lazio	27
Piedmont	15
Tuscany	9
Friuli-Venezia Giulia, Liguria	7
Apulia, Emilia-Romagna, Trentino-Alto Adige	4
Marche	3
Abruzzo	2
Calabria, Campania, Molise, Sardinia, Umbria	1

Startups established or joined

So far, at least **32** new companies have been founded by startup visa holders and duly registered in the section of the Business Register reserved to innovative startups:

- [Appsconda s.r.l.s.](#)
- [Audaces Europe s.r.l.](#)
- [Centafarm s.r.l.](#)
- [DCS s.r.l.](#)
- [Despina s.r.l.](#)
- [DevKit s.r.l.](#)
- [Extremum s.r.l.](#)
- [Finalrentals Group s.r.l.](#)
- [Generma s.r.l.](#)
- [GenuineEducationNetwork s.r.l.](#)
- [Fueguia s.r.l.](#)
- [GDO Software 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.](#)
- [Lanp s.r.l.](#)
- [Plasmolifting Italia s.r.l.](#)
- [Per Vigore s.r.l.](#)
- [Ptype 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.](#)
- [SMETRO Europe s.r.l.](#)
- [TreeTalk s.r.l.](#)
- [Viagea s.r.l.](#)
- [Virtual Reality s.r.l.](#)
- [World Marketing s.r.l.](#)

Moreover, 19 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.](#); [Fashion Technology Accelerator s.r.l.](#); [Foodquote s.r.l.](#); [Innovaetica s.r.l.](#); [La Comanda s.r.l.](#); [Lookcast s.r.l.](#); [Meno22percento s.r.l.](#); [Mida Più s.r.l.](#); [Nuwa Technologies s.r.l.s.](#); [Portrait Eyewear s.r.l.](#); [Pagita s.r.l.](#); [Pubcoder s.r.l.](#); [Travel Appeal s.r.l.](#); [WalletSaver s.r.l.](#); [Warda s.r.l.](#)).

Other applicants are still in the process of setting up their startup: their progress 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, Italia Startup Hub allows non-EU citizens who already hold a residency permit to convert it into one of 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.

Seventeen applications have been received so far, one more than those on the records three months ago. **Fourteen** 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

The beneficiaries of the Italia Startup Hub programme, whose average age is 33.9, are about two years younger than their Italia Startup Visa peers. The breakdown by gender is rather similar to that seen for ISV (ten men, four women).

All successful applicants have a university degree or higher qualification: in most cases, ISH recipients are international students who decided to stay in Italy after obtaining a (post-)graduate degree, with the purpose to set up an innovative startup.

Candidates for the Italia Startup Hub programme come from eleven different countries, listed in Table 3.

Countries of origin and destinations

Table 3: Number of candidates and applications accepted Italy Startup Hub by country of origin

Country of origin	Applications received	Applications approved
United States	4	3
South Korea		
Iran	2	2
Russia		
Algeria		
Australia		
Bolivia	1	1
India		
Malaysia		
Albania	1	0
Indonesia		
	17	14

At the date of compiling this report, four startups founded by ISH participants were on the records: [Armnet s.r.l.](#), [Recyclinnova s.r.l.s.](#), [Interverso Crosseat s.r.l.](#), [Nextis4us s.r.l.](#)

The destinations indicated by the visa beneficiaries at the time of application are indicated in Table 4a-4b below.

Table 4a-4b: Province and region of destination of Italia Startup Hub holders

Province	#	Region	#
Milan	8	Lombardy	8
Bologna		Piedmont	2
Cosenza		Calabria	
Rome	1	Emilia-Romagna	1
Sassari		Lazio	
Verbano-Cusio-Ossola		Sardinia	
Turin			

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