

Italia Startup Visa&Hub

3rd quarterly report, 2018

Summary of main findings up to 30 September 2018



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

Table of contents

Italia Startup Visa	4
Overview	4
The applicants	8
Countries of origin	9
Destinations	13
Startups established or joined	14
Italia Startup Hub	16
The applications	16
Countries of origin and destinations	17

This report is a product of the Directorate General for Industrial Policy, Competitiveness and SMEs of the Ministry of Economic Development. Its authors are: Debora Camaione, 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 for ISV.

Up to 30 September 2018, ISV has recorded **398 applications**¹. Of these, **222** (55.8%) 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, **142** applications (37.1%) were unsuccessful and **23** were withdrawn².

Moreover, **11** applications are still **under evaluation**: six require further documentation to be examined, while the remaining five 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 (**58** rejections), closely followed by a lack of **innovative value** of the business model proposed, which applied to **49** cases.

Among the 222 individuals whose application was approved, 20 have voluntarily informed the Ministry that they have changed their plans about moving to Italy. As a result, currently there are **202 potential startup visa holders** on the records.

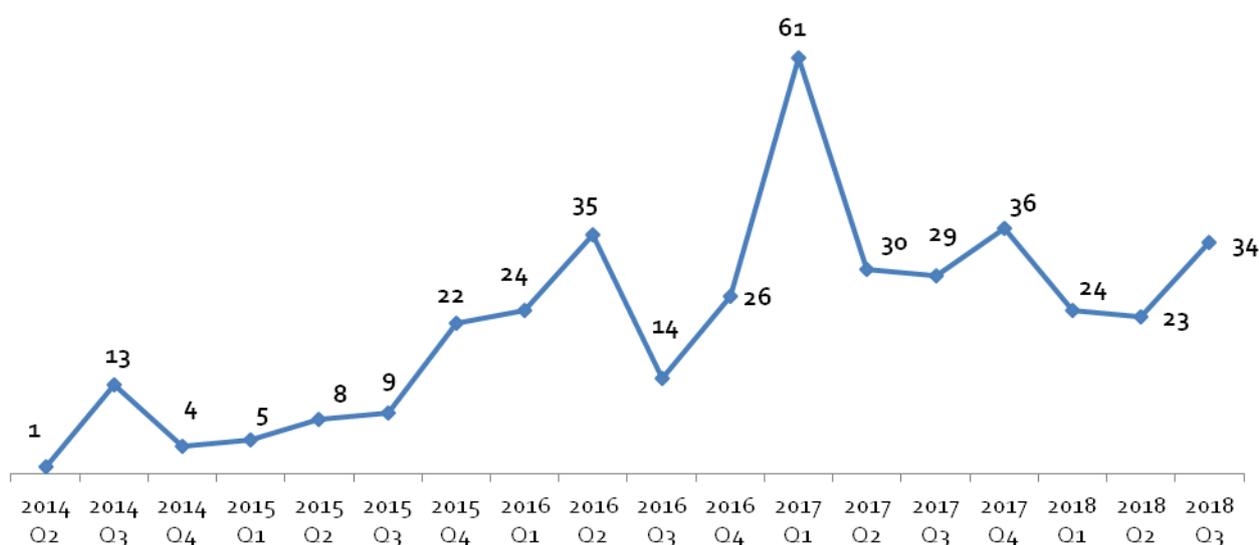
¹ Thirty-two applicants whose submission had been turned down at a first evaluation (or withdrawn) have submitted a new application again a few months later. Two of them have applied for the programme three times. Nine of those multiple applications have been ultimately successful. For this reason, the number of applications (398) is higher than the **number of applicants (366)**.

² As established 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 the relevant request made by the ISV Secretariat.

A total of **34** applications were received during the third quarter of 2018, compared to 24 and 23 during the first and the second quarter respectively: the overall number of applications recorded in 2018 is **81**. This is a lower figure than that recorded in 2017 by the same date, when the total number of applications had already reached 120 (see Figure 1).

This decrease is entirely explained by the almost total absence, in the last 9 months, of applications to join Italian startups already in existence, a common occurrence all across 2017 (for more details, see further on in this report). This is presumably the effect, on the one hand, of the more stringent provisions for this type introduced with the latest update of the programme **guidelines** (dated 20 March 2018), and, on the other hand, of the entry into full operations in early 2018 of a specific "visa for investors", which provides a special channel for investors in innovative startups (**Investor Visa for Italy**).

Figure 1: Applications to ISV received per quarters (2nd quarter 2014 – 3rd quarter 2018)



A vast majority of applications were sent directly from the applicants (360), while 38 of them were 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), **t2i** (Rovigo office), **Trentino Sviluppo** (Trento) and **The Hive** (Ancona)..

The Italia Startup Visa programme not only accepts individual applications, but also joint ones submitted by **entrepreneurial teams**. A total of **69** of these have been recorded so far: 37 from teams of two people, 20 of three people, 10 of four people, and 2 of five people. As a result, **180³** non-EU citizens sent their ISV application as part of an entrepreneurial team, **49.2% of all candidates**. A total of **51** out of 69 team applications were successful.

Finally, **72⁴** 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 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, as provided for by standard Italian regulations on self-employment visas (for reference see p. 26 of the programme's **Guidelines**).

In 48 cases, the application has been successful. 62 applications of this kind came from Chinese citizens (41 approved). In the remaining cases the business plan presented to the ISV Committee envisioned the creation from scratch of an innovative startup in Italy.

³ The 63 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. Consequently, the number of individuals applying for ISV/ISH as part of a team is 184.

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 71, the number of applications of this kind is 77.

The applicants

A total of 247 candidates are male (67.5%), while 119 are female (32.5%). The average age is **36.7 years**: the youngest was 18 years old at the time of application, the oldest was 65. Approximately 40.2% of visa applicants fall in the 25-34 age group; 33.6% are aged between 35 and 44.

160 candidates have an entrepreneurial background, whereas a majority (196) 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 136 candidates (37.2%) is a Bachelor's degree, while in 123 cases it is a Master's degree or equivalent (33,6%). In addition, 56 candidates have achieved at least one postgraduate qualification: 16 of them hold a PhD, and 40 have completed some other form of postgraduate education, including 31 Masters' in Business Administration (MBAs). This implies that **315** applicants (86.1%) are university graduates. The remaining part does not hold any university degree, having achieved, for example, vocational qualifications or a high- or middle-school diploma as their highest educational attainment.

A total of 53.1% (118 out of 222) of successful candidates have an educational qualification equivalent or higher than the Italian second-level university degree; furthermore, **92%** of successful applicants (204 overall) are university graduates.

The most frequent educational backgrounds are in science and technology related domains, such as IT and in particular various branches of engineering, which is the most common degree of all (42 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 **45 different countries**. Compared to three months ago, two more nations joined the list: **Libya** and **Morocco**. Considering only successful candidates, **31** different countries are represented.

The distribution by number of visa applicants and accepted applications is presented in Table 1. From this three-month period, the first country by number of ISV candidates is **Russia**: **88** applications were submitted by the reference date (24% of the total).

Russia has thus overtaken **China**, which led for most of the last year, now standing still at **78** applications⁵ (21.3%). Respectively, 76.9% of applications from Russian citizens and 48.9% of applications from Chinese citizens have been approved by the Committee.

As in the past quarter, the **United States** are in third place, with 32 applications sent and 23 Nulla Osta granted. **Pakistan** is ranked fourth, with 30 applicants; however, only five of them have received a Nulla Osta by the ISV Committee.

Three more countries record more than ten applicants each: **Ukraine**, with 22 (20 approved); **Iran**, with 20 (12 approved); and **India**, with 19 (five approved). Among others, only Egypt (eight), Brazil (six) and Japan (five) are above five applications.

⁵ Taking into account multiple submissions by the same individual, the number of applications sent by Chinese citizens is significantly higher, standing at **90**. Another country that registers a significant gap between applications submitted and number of applicants is Pakistan (36 applications from 30 people).

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

Country of origin	Applications received	Applications approved
Russia	88	70
China	78	44
United States of America	32	23
Pakistan	30	5
Ukraine	22	20
Iran	20	12
India	19	5
Egypt	8	3
Brazil	6	5
Japan	5	4
Bangladesh Indonesia South Africa Turkey	3	3
Malaysia	3	1
Afghanistan DR Congo	3	0
Australia Moldova	2	2
Argentina Azerbaijan South Korea Philippines	2	1

Country of origin	Applications received	Applications approved
Mexico		
Nigeria	2	0
Serbia		
Armenia		
Belarus		
Canada		
Israel		
Libya	1	1
Morocco		
Nepal		
New Zealand		
Taiwan		
Thailand		
Bolivia		
Colombia		
Ecuador		
Hong Kong		
Comoros	1	0
Kosovo		
Lebanon		
Syria		
Uzbekistan		
	366	222

Figure 2: Number of applicants by country

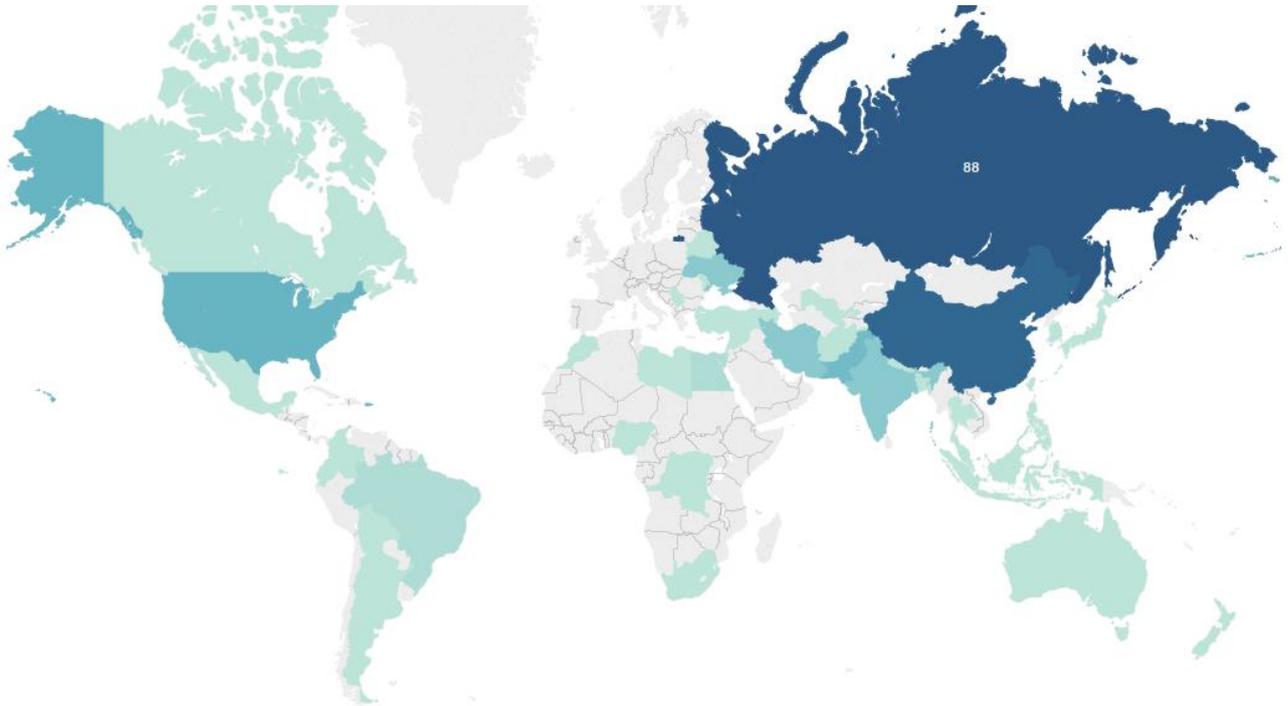


Figure 3: Number of approved applications by country



Destinations

The 202 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	63
Rome	27
Treviso	16
Varese	10
Verona	8
Savona	7
Cuneo, Brescia	5
Biella, Como, Padua, Trento, Trieste	4
Bergamo, Grosseto, Pordenone, Turin	3
Bari, Fermo, Florence, Foggia, Lucca, Modena, Novara, Pescara, Vicenza	2
Ancona, Bologna, Campobasso, Cosenza, Forlì-Cesena, Massa-Carrara, Perugia, Rovigo, Salerno, Sassari, Siena	1

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

Region	#
Lombardy	85
Veneto	31
Lazio	27
Piedmont	14
Tuscany	9
Friuli-Venezia Giulia, Liguria	7
Puglia, Emilia-Romagna, Trentino-Alto Adige/Südtirol	4
Marche	3
Abruzzo	2
Calabria, Campania, Molise, Sardinia, Umbria	1

Startups established or joined

So far, at least **28** 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.;**
- **Finalrentals Group s.r.l.;**
- **Generma s.r.l.;**
- **Genuine Education Network 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.;**
- **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.;**
- **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 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.

Fifteen applications have been received so far, three more than those on the records three months ago – and **seven** overall in 2018. **Twelve** of them were successful, leading to the conversion of the residence permit previously held by the applicant into a “startup self-employment” type. More details about these applications are described in the following

The applications

The beneficiaries of the Italia Startup Hub programme, whose average age is 33.1, are about three and a half years younger than the participants in Italia Startup Visa. The breakdown by gender is rather similar to that seen for ISV (3 women, 9 men; but the rate of women increases to 33% considering rejected applications).

All participants in the program 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-)university degree, with the purpose to start an innovative startup.

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

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	3	2
South Korea		
Iran	2	2
Russia		
Australia		
Bolivia	1	1
India		
Malaysia		
Albania	1	0
Indonesia		
	15	12

At the date of filling the 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 3a-3b: Province and region of destination of Italia Startup Hub holders

Province	#	Region	#
Milan	7	Lombardy	7
Bologna		Calabria	
Cosenza		Emilia-Romagna	
Rome	1	Lazio	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