

Italia Startup Visa & Hub

Third quarterly report, 2019

Summary of main findings up to 30 September 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 author is Emanuele Parisini, in collaboration with Paolo Carnazza.



Italia Startup Visa

Overview

The Italian Ministry of Economic Development launched the Italia Startup Visa (ISV) programme (italiastartupvisa.mise.gov.it) 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, with the following features:

- **fast-track:** it never takes more than 30 days;
- **centralised:** the applicant can communicate with the Italian public offices through a single contact point;
- **digitalised:** 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.

Chaired by the Director General for Industrial Policy of the Ministry, the Italia Startup Visa Committee consists of 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.

Up to 30 September 2019, ISV recorded **471 applications**. Among these, **241** (51.2 %) 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, **175** applications (37.1 %) were unsuccessful and **44** were withdrawn¹.

Moreover, **11** applications are still **under evaluation**: three require additional documentation to be examined, while the **ISV Committee** is currently assessing the other eight.

The main reasons for rejection were the **weakness of the business model** proposed (**74** rejections), and the lack of **innovative value** of the business model proposed (**61** rejections).

In some cases, the same candidate applied for a startup visa more than once, in most cases after an earlier rejection by the ISV Committee.² For this reason and compared to the number of applications, the number of *applicants* for Italia Startup Visa is equal to **433**.

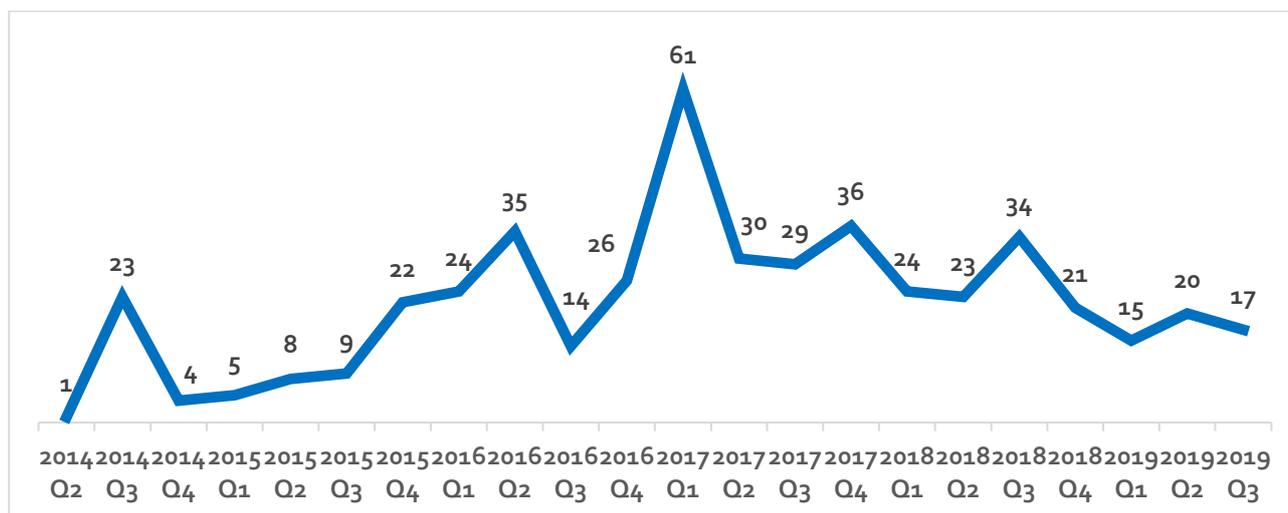
Among the 241 successful applicants, 27 of them informed the Ministry that they changed their plans about moving to Italy. As a result, there are currently **214 potential startup visa holders** on the records.

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

² Thirty-Four applicants whose application had been rejected at the first evaluation (or withdrawn) submitted a new application a few months later. Three of them applied to ISV three times. Moreover, two applicants who obtained an ISV Nulla Osta in the past later submitted a new ISV application, as they no longer held a valid permit to stay in Italy. Twelve of those “multiple applications” were successful.

Seventeen applications were received during the third quarter of 2019, a number slightly lower than the average of the last quarters. As shown in **Figure 1**, the average number of applications received in 2018 is about 25 per quarter.

Figure 1: Applications to ISV received per quarters (2nd quarter 2014 – 3rd quarter 2019)



The majority of the applications were submitted directly (426), while 45 of them were backed by a **certified incubator**. In 31 cases the incubator was **H-Farm** (Roncade, province of Treviso), in 3 cases the **Technopole** in Pordenone, in 2 cases **Nana Bianca** (Florence) and **ComoNEXt** (Como), in one case each **Working Capital** (Rome), **Pi Campus** (Roma), **tzi** (Rovigo office), **Trentino Sviluppo** (Trento), **The Hive** (Ancona), **Campania NewSteel** (Naples) and **PoliHub** (Milano).

The Italia Startup Visa programme not only accepts individual applications, but also joint applications submitted by **entrepreneurial teams**. Overall, **90** teams submitted an application so far: **50** coming from 2-people teams, **26** from 3-people teams, **11** from 4-people teams, and **3** from 5-people teams. As a result, **237** non-EU citizens³

³ The 90 entrepreneurial teams take into account three teams – 2 of two people, 1 of three people – that included both Italia Startup Visa and Italia Startup Hub applicants (namely, 4 ISH applicants). Therefore, excluding ISH participants, the number of ISV team applicants is 233, and not 237.

submitted their ISV application as members of an entrepreneurial team, **the majority of all candidates (50.3%)**. **Fifty-five** out of 90 team applications were successful.

Finally, **76** applicants ⁴ applied for a startup visa to **join a company already established in Italy** and recognised as an innovative startup under the Italian Startup Act. The ISV programme also addresses 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 interested in investing their capital in an Italian startup, a specific 2-years "visa for investors" is available as of late 2017 (**Investor Visa for Italy** programme). This scheme provides a special channel for investors in innovative startups (**more info here**).

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

⁴ Six startup visa applicants, after being rejected at the first application, submitted another application to join an existing Italian startup. The second application was approved in five cases. As a result, while the number of applicants to join an Italian startup is 76, the number of applications of this kind is **82**.

The applicants

Among all the candidates, 288 startup visa applicants are men (69 %), while 146 are women (31 %). The average age is **36.9 years old**, which falls to 36.3 when only successful applicants are considered. On the one hand, 38,9 % of candidates are between 25-34 years old, and 6.2% are 24 or younger – the youngest candidate turned 18 only a few days before submitting the application. On the other hand, 34,4 % are between 35 and 44 years old, and 20,6 % are 45 or elder – the oldest was 65 at time of submission.

More than four candidates out of ten (42.7 %) claimed to have an entrepreneurial background. Some of them founded more than one startup. The majority of the applicants (54%) worked as salaried employees in their last job. The most common professional backgrounds are IT (software development in particular), marketing, consulting, management, and engineering.

The highest university qualification for 176 candidates (37.4 %) is a Bachelor's degree, whereas in 158 cases it is an equivalent of the Italian 2-years Master's degree (33,6 %). In addition, 69 candidates achieved a different postgraduate qualification: 20 of them hold a PhD, and 49 completed other forms of postgraduate education, including 36 Masters in Business Administration (MBAs). This implies that **403** applicants (85.6 %) are university graduates. The others do not hold any university degree: some obtained vocational qualifications or a high/middle-school diploma as their highest educational qualification.

Considering successful applicants, 55.6 % (134 out of 241) of successful candidates have an educational qualification equivalent or higher than the Italian second-level university degree; more in general, **92.1%** of startup visa holders are university graduates.

The most represented educational backgrounds are science and technology domains, such as IT and engineering, the most common degree of all (84 cases). Also economics and business studies (e.g. marketing, business administration), design, and social science (e.g. international relations) are quite spread.

Countries of origin

The applicants come from **49 different countries**. Considering only successful candidates, **34** different countries are represented (one more than three months ago).

The distribution by number of visa applicants and accepted applications is provided in **Table 1**⁵. The first country by number of ISV candidates is **Russia**, with **101** applicants on the records at the reference date (21.4% of the total). **China** follows, with **99** applicants (21 %). Respectively, 72.2 % of Russian applicants and 44.4 % of Chinese applicants received the approval of the Committee.

United States applications are in third place, with 43 applicants and an acceptance rate of 65.1 %, with 28 visas granted. **Pakistan** is in fourth place with 43 applications, but only five of them received a Nulla Osta by the ISV Committee.

Three more countries have more than ten applicants each: **Iran**, with 32 (12 approved); **India**, with 27 (six approved) and **Ukraine**, with 26 (21 approved).

⁵ Data also include people that applied again with another entrepreneurial project after the first refusal.

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

Country of origin	Number of applications	Applications approved
Russia	101	73
China	99	44
United States	43	28
Pakistan	43	5
Iran	32	12
India	27	6
Ukraine	26	21
Egypt	9	3
Brazil	6	5
Turkey	6	4
Indonesia	6	3
Japan	5	4
Mexico	5	3
South Africa	5	3
Argentina	4	3
Afghanistan	4	0
DR Congo	4	0
Bangladesh	3	3
Azerbaijan	3	1
Malaysia	3	1
Nigeria	3	1
Australia	2	2
Moldova	2	2
Yemen	2	2
South Korea	2	1
Philippines	2	1
Serbia	2	0

Country of origin	Number of applications	Applications approved
Armenia		
Belarus		
Canada		
Israel		
Libya		
Morocco	1	1
Nepal		
New Zealand		
Taiwan		
Thailand		
Algeria		
Bolivia		
Colombia		
Ecuador		
Jordan		
Hong Kong		
Comoros	1	0
Kosovo		
Lebanon		
Syria		
Somalia		
Uzbekistan		
	471	232

Destinations

The 241 potential startup visa holders currently on the records indicated the following cities as their destination:

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

Province	#
Milan	70
Rome	34
Treviso	19
Varese	10
Verona	8
Savona	7
Cuneo, Padua, Torino	6
Brescia, Florence, Grosseto	5
Biella, Como, Trento, Trieste	4
Bergamo, Perugia, Pordenone	3
Bari, Fermo, Foggia, Imperia, Lucca, Modena, Novara, Pescara, Salerno, Siena, Vicenza	2
Ancona, Bologna, Bolzano, Campobasso, Catania, Cosenza, Forlì-Cesena, Genova, Lecco, Massa-Carrara, Naples, Rovigo, Sassari	1

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

Region	#
Lombardia	92
Veneto	36
Lazio	34
Piemonte	18
Toscana	15
Liguria	10
Friuli-Venezia Giulia	7
Trentino-Alto Adige	5
Puglia, Emilia-Romagna	4
Campania, Marche, Umbria	3
Abruzzo	2
Calabria, Molise, Sardegna, Sicilia	1

Startups established or joined

So far, at least **36** new companies have been founded by startup visa holders and registered in the special section of the National Business Register reserved to innovative startups:

- **Appsconda s.r.l.s.**
- **Audaces Europe s.r.l.**
- **Cantyna s.r.l.**
- **Carpe That Diem 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.**
- **Fueguia s.r.l.**
- **GDO Software s.r.l.**
- **Generma s.r.l.**
- **GenuineEducationNetwork 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.**
- **Outdoor Factory International s.r.l.**
- **Per Vigore s.r.l.**
- **Plasmolifting Italia 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.**
- **Size4.Me s.r.l.**
- **Smart Business s.r.l.s.**
- **Tree Talk s.r.l.**
- **Viagea s.r.l.**
- **Virtual Reality s.r.l.**
- **World Marketing s.r.l.**

Moreover, 19 existing innovative startups were joined by 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 are constantly monitored.



Italia Startup Hub

The same fast-track procedure applicable to startup visas had 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 extend their stay in Italy to establish an innovative startup. Dedicated guidelines (in [English](#) and [Italian](#)) and specific [application forms](#) are available on the web portal italiastartuphub.mise.gov.it.

Nineteen applications have been received so far, two more compared to 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 years old, are about four years younger than the Italia Startup Visa beneficiaries. The breakdown by gender is rather similar to the ISV one (ten men, four women).

All successful applicants have a university degree or higher qualification: in most cases, ISH candidates 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 twelve 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		
India	2	2
Algeria		
Australia		
Bolivia	1	1
India		
Malaysia		
Albania		
Indonesia	1	0
	17	14

Up to now, four startups founded by ISH participants are 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 holders⁶

Province	#	Region	#
Milano	9	Lombardia	9
Padova	2	Piemonte	2
Bologna		Veneto	

⁶ One candidate did not indicate his destination while applying.

Cosenza	1	Calabria	
Firenze		Emilia-Romagna	
Roma		Lazio	1
Sassari		Sardegna	
Verbano-Cusio-Ossola		Toscana	
Torino			

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