

# Italia Startup Visa&Hub

4<sup>th</sup> quarterly report, 2018

Summary of main findings up to 31 December 2018



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

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## Overview

The Italia Startup Visa (ISV) programme ([italiastartupvisa.mise.gov.it](http://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 December 2018, ISV has recorded **419 applications**. Of these, **224** (53.5%) 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 Among the others, **150** applications (35.7%) were unsuccessful and **25** were withdrawn<sup>1</sup>.

Moreover, **20** applications are still **under evaluation**: eleven require further documentation to be examined, while the remaining nine 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 **51** cases.

In a number of cases, the same individual applied for a startup visa more than once – in most cases, following an earlier rejection by the ISV Committee.<sup>2</sup> The number of applicants for Italia Startup Visa is therefore equal to **385**.

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<sup>1</sup> 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.

<sup>2</sup> 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

Among the 224 individuals whose application was approved, 21 have voluntarily informed the Ministry that they have changed their plans about moving to Italy. As a result, currently there are **203 potential startup visa holders** on the records.

A total of **21** applications were received during the last quarter of 2018. This value is lower than that recorded in the previous three months (34), but generally in line with that observed in the rest of the year (Q1 2018: 24; Q2 2018: 23)

The grand total of applications for 2018 stands again above the '100' mark, at **102**. While being similar to that seen in 2016 (99 applications) this number is significantly smaller than in 2017, when the ISV Committee assessed no fewer than 156 startup visa requests.

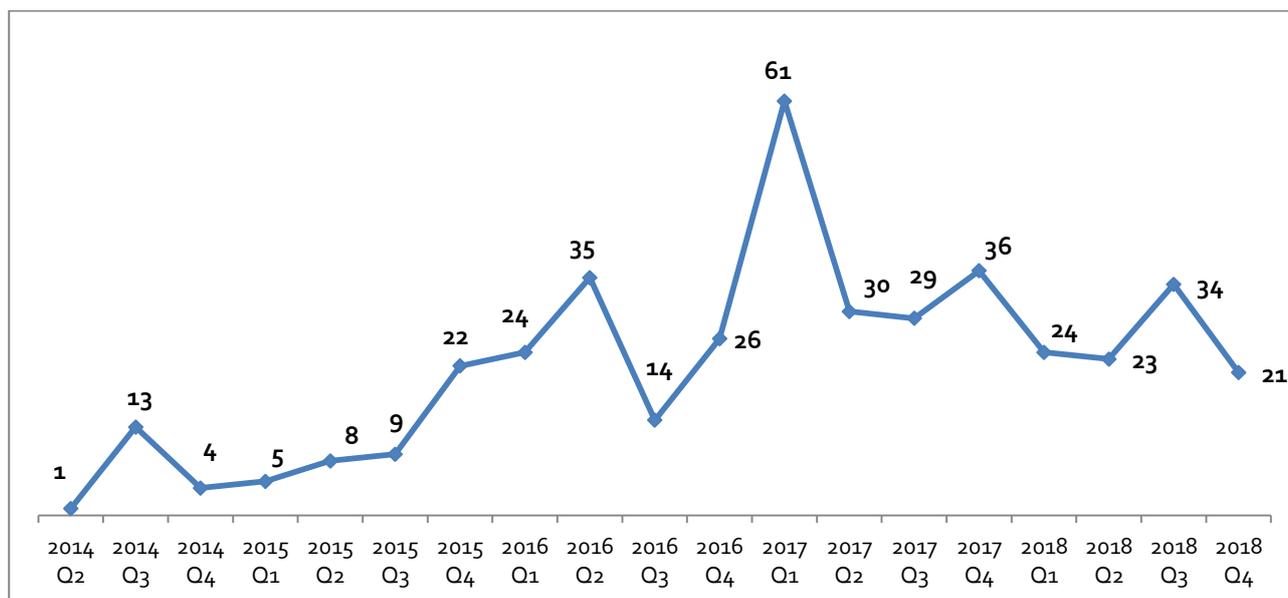
The gap between 2017 and 2018 can be attributed in its entirety to the almost complete absence, in the latter year, of applications to join Italian startups already in existence (for more details, see further on in this report). In 2018, only three applications have been submitted for this typology, as opposed to the 58 recorded in 2017 only.

This is presumably the effect of two closely related regulatory developments, which started to unfold their effects in the first months of 2018. On the one hand the latest update of the programme **guidelines** (dated 20 March 2018) made the requirements for this type of applications more stringent. On the other hand, early 2018 saw the entry into force of a specific "visa for investors", which provides a special channel for investors in innovative startups (**Investor Visa for Italy**).

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application, as they no longer held a valid permit to stay in Italy. Nine of those "multiple applications" have been ultimately successful.

Figure 1: Applications to ISV received per quarters (2<sup>nd</sup> quarter 2014 – 4<sup>th</sup> quarter 2018)



A vast majority of applications were sent by the candidates independently (378), 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 **73** teams have sent an application so far: 38 from teams of two people, 21 of three people, 12 of four people, and 2 of five people. As a result, **193** non-EU citizens<sup>3</sup> sent their ISV application as part of an entrepreneurial team, **a majority (50.1%) of all candidates**. A total of **51** out of 73 team applications were successful.

<sup>3</sup> 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 in the latter programme, the number of team applicants is 197.

Finally, **74** applicants<sup>4</sup> 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. As anticipated above, 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**).

In 48 cases the application has been successful. 64 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.

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<sup>4</sup> 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**.

## The applicants

A total of 266 startup visa applicants are male (69.1%), while 119 are female (30.9%). The average age is **36.6 years**, which falls to 36.1 when only successful applicants are considered. 40.8% 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, 33.6% are aged between 35 and 44, with a non-negligible share being 45 or older – the oldest was 65 at time of submission.

166 candidates have an entrepreneurial background, whereas a majority (208) last worked as 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 144 candidates (37.4%) is a Bachelor's degree, while in 130 cases it is an equivalent of the Italian 2-year Master's degree (33,8%). In addition, 58 candidates have achieved a different postgraduate qualification: 16 of them hold a PhD, and 42 have completed some other form of postgraduate education, including 31 Masters' in Business Administration (MBAs). This implies that **332** applicants (86.2%) 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 55.4% (124 out of 224) of successful candidates have an educational qualification equivalent or higher than the Italian second-level university degree; more in general, **92%** 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 (55 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 **46 different countries**, with : **Somalia** entering the list in the last three months. 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**, with **89** applicants on the records by the reference date (23,1% of the total). **China** follows suit, with **80** applicants<sup>5</sup> (20.8%). Respectively, 79.7% of Russian applicants and 49.4% Chinese applicants have received an approval by the Committee.

As in the past quarter, **Pakistan** is in third place, with 34 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 above average, with 23 visas granted.

Three more countries record more than ten applicants each: **Iran**, with 27 (12 approved); **Ukraine**, with 22 (20 approved); and **India**, with 20 (five approved).

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<sup>5</sup>Taking 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	Applications received	Applications approved
Russia	88	70
China	78	44
United States	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 Nigeria DR Congo	3	0
Australia Moldova	2	2

Country of origin	Applications received	Applications approved
Argentina		
Azerbaijan		
South Korea	2	1
Philippines		
Serbia	2	0
Armenia		
Belarus		
Canada		
Israel		
Libya	1	1
Morocco		
Nepal		
New Zealand		
Taiwan		
Thailand		
Bolivia		
Colombia		
Comoros		
Ecuador		
Hong Kong	1	0
Kosovo		
Lebanon		
Syria		
Somalia		
Uzbekistan		
	<b>385</b>	<b>224</b>

Figure 2: Number of applicants by country

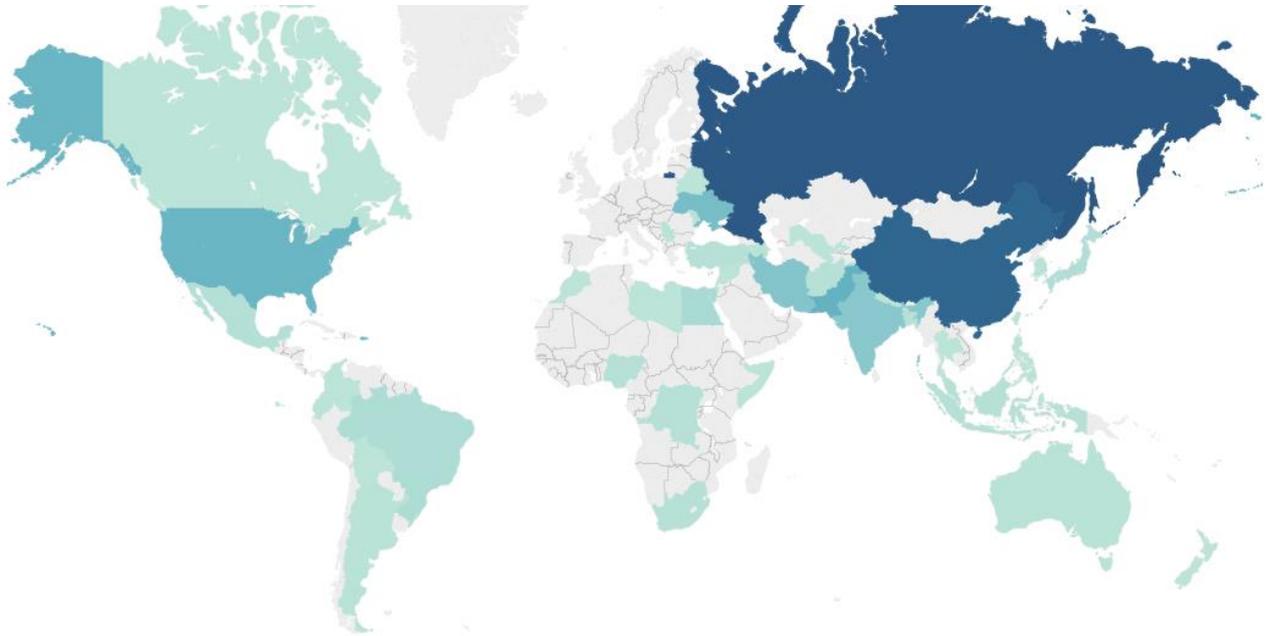
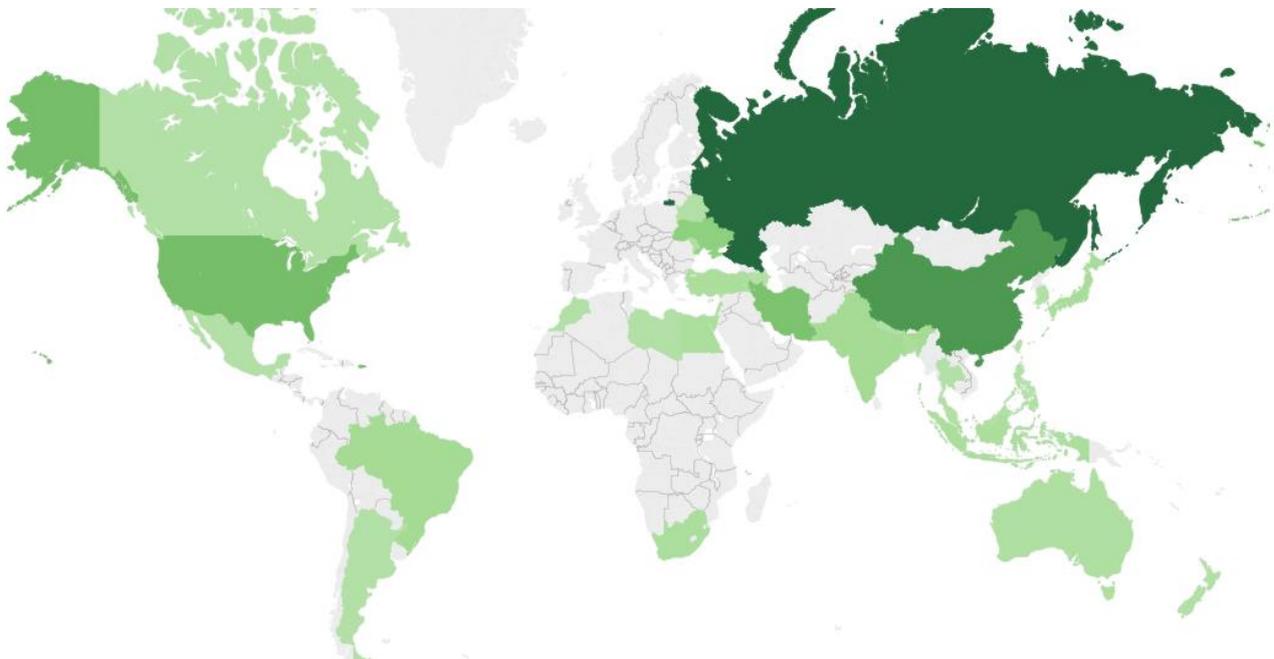


Figure 3: Number of approved applications by country



## Destinations

The 203 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	6
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**

Regione	#
Lombardia	85
Veneto	31
Lazio	27
Piemonte	15
Toscana	9
Friuli-Venezia Giulia, Liguria	7
Puglia, Emilia-Romagna, Trentino-Alto Adige	4
Marche	3
Abruzzo	2
Calabria, Campania, Molise, Sardegna, Umbria	1

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Lombardy	85
Veneto	31
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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

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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](http://italiastartuphub.mise.gov.it).

**Sixteen** applications have been received so far, one more than those on the records three months ago – and **eight** overall in 2018. **Thirteen** 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 32.5, are about three years and a half younger than their Italia Startup Visa peers. The breakdown by gender is rather similar to that seen for ISV (ten men, three 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-)university degree, with the purpose to start 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	3	2
South Korea		
Iran	2	2
Russia		
Algeria		
Australia		
Bolivia	1	1
India		
Malaysia		
Albania		
Indonesia	1	0
	<b>16</b>	<b>13</b>

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	7	Lombardy	7
Bologna		Piedmont	2
Cosenza		Calabria	
Rome		Emilia-Romagna	
Sassari	1	Lazio	1
Verbano-Cusio-Ossola		Sardinia	
Turin			

## For further information:

### Visit:

- [italiastartupvisa.mise.gov.it](http://italiastartupvisa.mise.gov.it)
- [italiastartuphub.mise.gov.it](http://italiastartuphub.mise.gov.it)

### Write to:

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

## To apply:

- [italiastartupvisa@mise.gov.it](mailto:italiastartupvisa@mise.gov.it)
- [italiastartuphub@mise.gov.it](mailto:italiastartuphub@mise.gov.it)