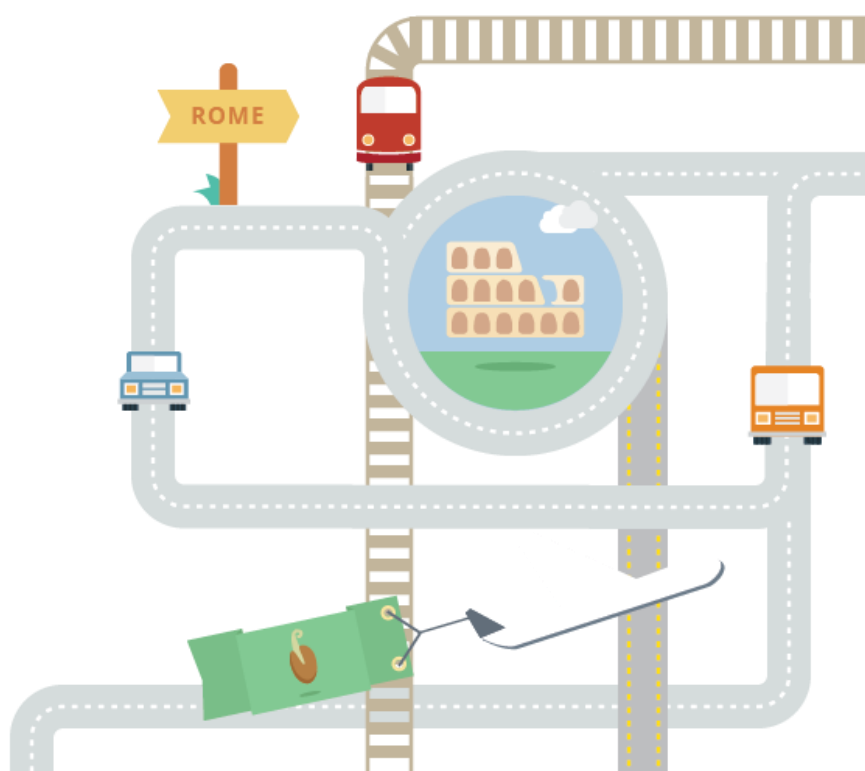


# Italia Startup Visa & Hub

Fourth quarterly report 2019



Summary of main findings up to 31 December 2019



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

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This report is a product of the Directorate General for Industrial Policy, Innovation and SMEs of the Ministry of Economic Development. Its author is Emanuele Parisini, in collaboration with Paolo Carnazza.



# Italia Startup Visa

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## ISV programme

The Italian Ministry of Economic Development launched the Italia Startup Visa (ISV) programme ([italiastartupvisa.mise.gov.it](http://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 in 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;
- **digital:** the procedure takes place entirely online;
- **bilingual:** applications can be submitted both in Italian and in English;
- **free-of-charge:** no fees for the application.

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.

## The numbers: 31 December 2019

Up to 31 December 2019, ISV recorded **481 applications**.

More into details, **250** (51.9%) received a **positive evaluation** from the **Italia Startup Visa Committee**, resulting in a Certificate of No Impediment (in Italian, “*Nulla Osta*”) to the entry visa. Considering the remaining applications, **184** of them (38.3%) were unsuccessful, while **47** (9.8%) were withdrawn<sup>1</sup>.

The main reasons for the rejection are the **weakness of the business model** proposed (**83** rejections), and the lack of **innovative value** of the business project proposed (**69** 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.<sup>2</sup> For this reason and compared to the total amount of applications, the number of *single applicants* for Italia Startup Visa is **442**.

Among the 250 successful applicants, 27 of them informed the Ministry that they changed their plans about moving to Italy. As a result, there are currently **223 potential startup visa holders** on the records.

During the fourth quarter of 2019, ISV recorded **10** applications, a number slightly lower than the average of the last quarters, but similar to the trend of the last

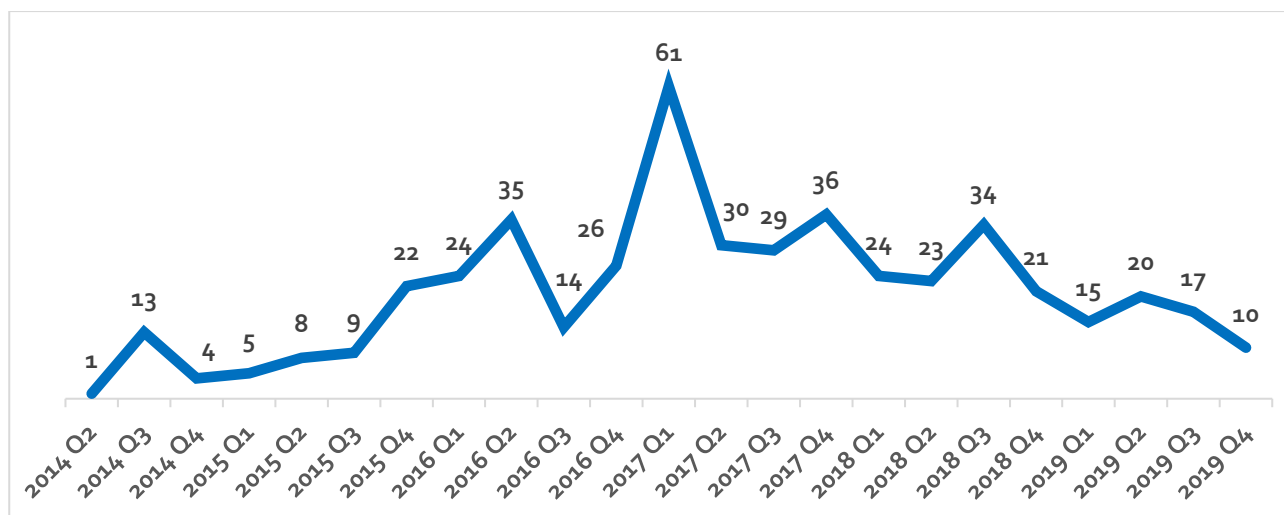
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<sup>1</sup> As set out in the **Guidelines** of the Italia Startup Visa programme, the Secretariat considers an application as a tacit withdrawal when the applicant fails to provide further documents within 60 days from a request made by the ISV Secretariat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

<sup>2</sup> Thirty-Five applicants whose application had been rejected at the first evaluation (or withdrawn) submitted a new application a few months later. Four of them applied to ISV three times. **Twelve** of those “multiple applications” were successful.

quarters of each year. As shown in **Figure 1**, the average number of applications received in 2019 is about 16 per quarter.

**Figure 1: Applications to ISV received per quarters  
(2<sup>nd</sup> quarter 2014 – 4<sup>th</sup> 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) and in 1 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 also accepts joint applications submitted by **entrepreneurial teams**. So far, **91 teams** submitted an application, including **238 (49.4%)** non-EU citizens as members of an entrepreneurial team. As a result, **57** out of 91 team applications were successful.

Finally, **82** applicants applied for a startup visa to **join a company already established** 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 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 [50 cases](#), the application to join an existing startup was approved by the ISV Committee.

## The applicants

Italia Startup Visa applicants is a varied group of people, but they have common aspects to explore and describe.

Among all the candidates, **women** are 149 (31%), whereas **men** are 332 (69%).

**The average age** at the time of the application stands at **36.9 years old**. On the one hand, the **majority** of the applicants, 38.9%, is between **25-34 years old**, while 6% is 24 or younger – the youngest candidate turned 18 only a few days before submitting the application. On the other hand, 34.3% is between 35 and 44 years old, and 20.8% is 45 or older – the eldest was 65 at time of submission.

More than four candidates out of ten (42.4%) claimed to have already an **entrepreneurial background**. Some of them founded more than one startup. The majority of the applicants (54.4%) 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 degree** for 181 candidates (37.6%) is a Bachelor's degree, whereas in 161 cases it is an equivalent of the Italian 2-years **Master's degree** (33.5%). In addition, 72 candidates hold a different **postgraduate qualification**: 22 of them hold a **PhD**, and 50 completed other forms of **postgraduate education**, including 37 **Masters in Business Administration (MBAs)**. This means that **414** applicants (86.1%) are university graduates. The other candidates do not hold any university degree: most obtained vocational qualifications or a high/middle-school diploma as their highest educational qualification.

Considering only successful applicants, 54.8% (137 out of 250) of successful candidates hold an educational qualification equivalent or higher than the Italian Master's degree; **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 latter being the most common one (89 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**. Regarding only successful candidates, 35 different countries are represented.

The distribution by number of visa applicants and accepted applications is provided in **Table 1**<sup>3</sup>. The first country by number of ISV candidates is **Russia**, with **107** applicants on the records at the reference date (22.2% of the total). **China** follows, with **99** applicants (20.6%). Respectively, 68.2 % of Russian applicants and 44.4 % of Chinese applicants **received the approval of the Committee**.

**United States** and **Pakistan** applications are in third place, with 44 applications both. Yet, Americans lead with an acceptance rate of 63.6%, with 28 visas granted.

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<sup>3</sup> Data also include people that applied again with another entrepreneurial project after the first refusal.



**Pakistan** successful applicants are fewer, as only 5 of them received a Nulla Osta by the ISV Committee.

Three more countries have more than ten applicants each: **Iran** with 33, **India** with 27 and **Ukraine** with 26.

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

| Country of origin | Number of applications | Applications approved |
|-------------------|------------------------|-----------------------|
| Russia            | 107                    | 73                    |
| China             | 99                     | 44                    |
| United States     | 44                     | 28                    |
| Pakistan          | 44                     | 5                     |
| Iran              | 33                     | 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        | 4                      | 3                     |

| Country of origin   | Number of applications | Applications approved |
|---|------------------------|-----------------------|
| <b>Azerbaijan</b>   |                        |                       |
| <b>Malaysia</b>   | <b>3</b>               | <b>1</b>              |
| <b>Nigeria</b>  |                        |                       |
| <b>Australia</b>  |                        |                       |
| <b>Moldova</b>  | <b>2</b>               | <b>2</b>              |
| <b>Yemen</b>  |                        |                       |
| <b>South Korea</b>  |                        |                       |
| <b>Philippines</b>  | <b>2</b>               | <b>1</b>              |
| <b>Serbia</b>   | <b>2</b>               | <b>0</b>              |
| <b>Other Countries</b><br>(Armenia, Belarus, Canada,<br>Israel, Libya, Morocco,<br>Nepal, New Zealand,<br>Taiwan, Thailand)                         | <b>1</b>               | <b>1</b>              |
| <b>Other Countries</b><br>(Algeria, Bolivia, Colombia,<br>Ecuador, Jordan, Hong Kong,<br>Comoros<br>Kosovo, Lebanon, Syria,<br>Somalia, Uzbekistan) | <b>1</b>               | <b>0</b>              |

## Destinations

The 250 potential startup visa holders currently on the records indicated the following cities and regions as their destination ([Table 2a, 2b](#)):

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

| Province  | #  |
|---|----|
| Milan   | 71 |
| 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,<br>Novara, Pescara, Salerno, Siena, Vicenza  | 2  |
| Ancona, Bologna, Bolzano, Campobasso, Catania, Cosenza,<br>Forlì-Cesena, Genova, Lecco, Massa-Carrara, Naples,<br>Rovigo, Sassari | 1  |

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

| <b>Regione</b>                             | <b>#</b>  |
|--|-----------|
| <b>Lombardia</b>                           | <b>95</b> |
| <b>Veneto</b>                              | <b>36</b> |
| <b>Lazio</b>                               | <b>34</b> |
| <b>Piemonte</b>                            | <b>20</b> |
| <b>Toscana</b>                             | <b>17</b> |
| <b>Liguria</b>                             | <b>12</b> |
| <b>Friuli-Venezia Giulia</b>               | <b>7</b>  |
| <b>Trentino-Alto Adige, Emilia-Romagna</b> | <b>5</b>  |
| <b>Puglia</b>                              | <b>4</b>  |
| <b>Campania, Marche, Umbria</b>            | <b>3</b>  |
| <b>Abruzzo</b>                             | <b>2</b>  |
| <b>Calabria, Molise, Sardegna, Sicilia</b> | <b>1</b>  |

## Startups established or joined

Up to date, **40 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.**
- **Ephoria 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.**
- **Icarus Tech s.r.l.**
- **Indexcode s.r.l.**
- **Ital.io s.r.l.s.**
- **Itqui s.r.l.**
- **Jetware s.r.l.**
- **La La Sport s.r.l.**
- **LabQuattrocento s.r.l.**
- **Lanp s.r.l.**
- **Matchdog 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.**
- **Raian T Rayan**
- **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.; Menoz2percento 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

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

So far, ISH recorded **21 applications**, two more compared to three months ago. The **successful applications** leading to the conversion of the residence permit previously held by the applicant into a “startup self-employment” type are **17**.

### The applicants

The beneficiaries of the Italia Startup Hub programme, whose **average age is 34 years old**, are three years younger than the Italia Startup Visa beneficiaries. The breakdown by gender is rather similar to the ISV one: **7 women** (33.3%) and **14 men** (66,7%).

**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 13 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     | 5                     | 3                     |
| India             | 2                     | 2                     |
| Iran              |                       |                       |
| South Korea       |                       |                       |
| Russia            |                       |                       |
| Algeria           | 1                     | 1                     |
| Australia         |                       |                       |
| Bolivia           |                       |                       |
| Brazil            |                       |                       |
| Malaysia          |                       |                       |
| Serbia            |                       |                       |
| Albania           | 1                     | 0                     |
| Indonesia         |                       |                       |
|                   | 21                    | 17                    |

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 holders<sup>4</sup>**

| Province             | #  | Region         | #  |
|----------------------|----|----------------|----|
| Milan                | 10 | Lombardia      | 10 |
| Padua                | 2  | Lazio          | 2  |
| Rome                 |    | Piemonte       |    |
| Bologna              | 1  | Veneto         |    |
| Cosenza              |    | Calabria       | 1  |
| Florence             |    | Emilia-Romagna |    |
| Sassari              |    | Sardegna       |    |
| Verbano-Cusio-Ossola |    | Toscana        |    |
| Torino               |    |                |    |

<sup>4</sup> One candidate did not indicate his destination while applying.

## For further information

Visit:

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

Write to:

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

## To apply

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