

Italia Startup Visa&Hub

2nd quarterly report, 2018

Summary of main findings up to 30 June 2018



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

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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 June 2018, ISV has recorded **364 applications**¹. Of these, **200** (54.9%) 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.

¹ Twenty-five applicants whose submission had been turned down at a first evaluation (or withdrawn) have submitted a new application again a few months later.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 (364) is higher than the **number of applicants (339)**.

Among the others, **135** applications (37.1%) were unsuccessful and **21** were withdrawn².

Moreover, **8** applications are still **under evaluation**: six require further documentation to be evaluated, while the remaining two are currently being examined 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 (**57** rejections), closely followed by a lack of **innovative value** of the business model proposed, which applied to **44** cases.

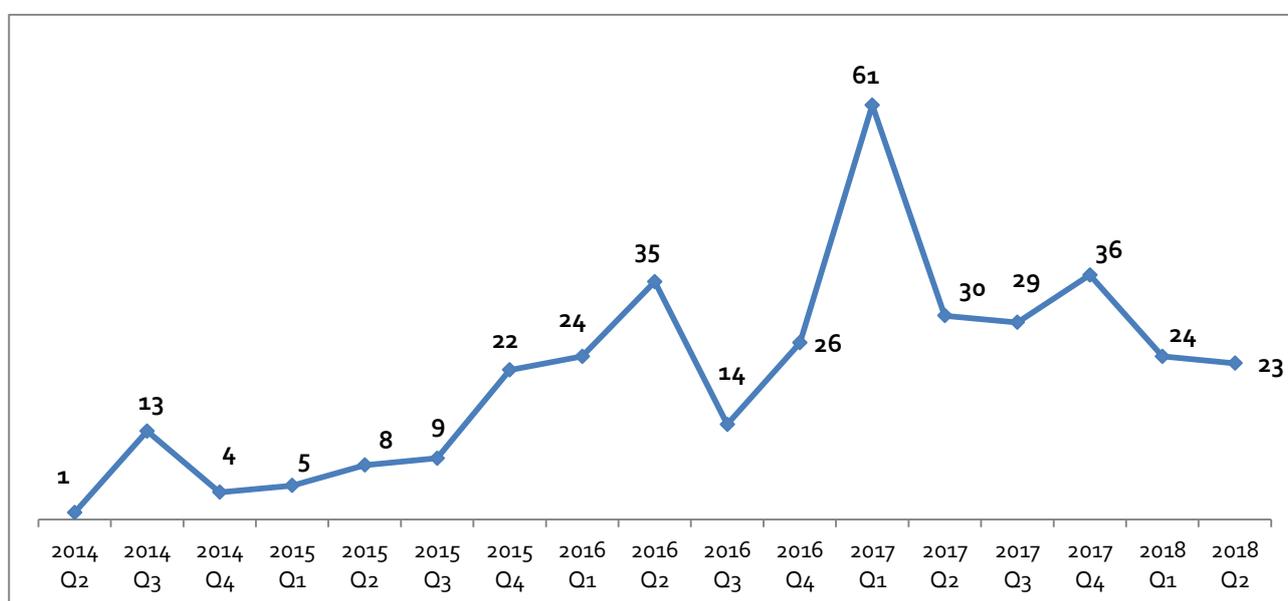
Among the 200 individuals whose application was approved, 19 have voluntarily informed the Ministry that they have changed their plans about moving to Italy. As a result, currently there are **181 potential startup visa holders** on the records.

A total of **23** applications were received during the first quarter of 2018. The value appears to be in line with that recorded in the previous quarter (24), bringing the total for 2018 to **47**. This is a lower value than that recorded in 2017 by mid-year, when the total number of applications had already reached 90 (see Figure 1).

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.

This decrease is entirely explained by the almost total absence, in the last 6 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 – 1st quarter 2018)



A vast majority of applications were sent directly from the applicants (328), while 36 of them have been 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) and **tzi** (Rovigo office).

The Italia Startup Visa programme not only accepts individual applications, but also joint ones submitted by **entrepreneurial teams**. A total of **63** of these have been recorded so far: 37 from teams of two people, 15 of three people, 10 of four people,

and 1 of five people. As a result, **160³** non-EU citizens sent their ISV application as part of an entrepreneurial team, **44% of all candidates**. A total of **41** out of 63 team applications were successful.

Finally, **71⁴** 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 as part of a team is 160, and not 164.

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 228 candidates are male (67.3%), while 111 are female (32.7%). The average age is **36.9 years**: the youngest was 20 years old at the time of application, the oldest was 65. Approximately 40% of visa applicants fall in the 25-34 age group; 34% are aged between 35 and 44.

149 candidates have an entrepreneurial background, whereas a majority (181) 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 129 candidates (38%) is a Bachelor's degree, while in 112 cases it is a Master's degree or equivalent. In addition, 50 candidates have achieved at least one postgraduate qualification: 15 of them hold a PhD, and 35 have completed some other form of postgraduate education, including 26 Masters' in Business Administration (MBAs). This implies that **291** applicants (85.8%) 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% (106 out of 200) of successful candidates have an educational qualification equivalent or higher than the Italian second-level university degree; furthermore, **92%** of successful applicants (184 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 (63 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 **43 different countries**. Compared to three months ago, two more nations joined the list: **Mexico** and **Belarus**. Considering only successful candidates, **28** 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**: **79** applications were submitted by the reference date (23.3% of the total).

Russia has thus overtaken **China**, which led for most of the last year, now standing still at **76** applications⁵ (22.4%). Respectively, 82.9% of applications from Russian citizens and 47.7% of applications from Chinese citizens have been approved by the Committee.

Pakistan is ranked third, with 30 applicants; however, only five of them have received a Nulla Osta by the ISV Committee. As in the past quarter, the **United States** are in fourth place, with 29 applications sent and 19 Nulla Osta granted.

Three more countries record more than ten applicants each: **Ukraine**, with 21 (16 approved); **Iran**, with 19 (12 approved); and **India**, with 16 (five approved). Among others, only Egypt (six), Brazil and Japan 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 **88**. 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	Number of applicants	Applications approved
Russia	79	63
China	76	42
Pakistan	30	5
United States	29	19
Ukraine	21	17
Iran	19	12
India	16	5
Egypt	6	1
Brazil	5	4
Japan	5	4
Bangladesh	3	3
Indonesia	3	3
South Africa	3	3
Turkey	3	3
Afghanistan	3	0
DR Congo	3	0
Australia	2	2
Moldova	2	2
Argentina	2	1
South Korea	2	1
Philippines	2	1
Malaysia	2	0

Country of origin	Number of applicants	Applications approved
Nigeria	2	0
Serbia	2	0
Armenia	1	1
Azerbaijan	1	1
Belarus	1	1
Canada	1	1
Israel	1	1
Nepal	1	1
New Zealand	1	1
Taiwan	1	1
Thailand	1	1
Bolivia	1	0
Colombia	1	0
Ecuador	1	0
Hong Kong	1	0
Comoros	1	0
Kosovo	1	0
Lebanon	1	0
Mexico	1	0
Syria	1	0
Uzbekistan	1	0
	339	200

Figure 2: Number of applicants by country

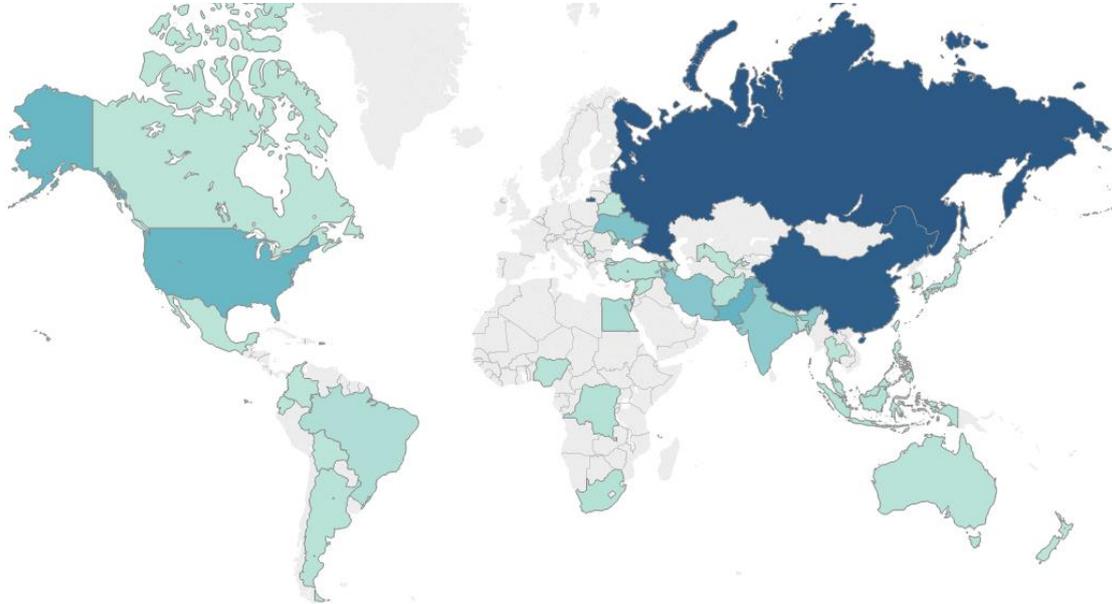
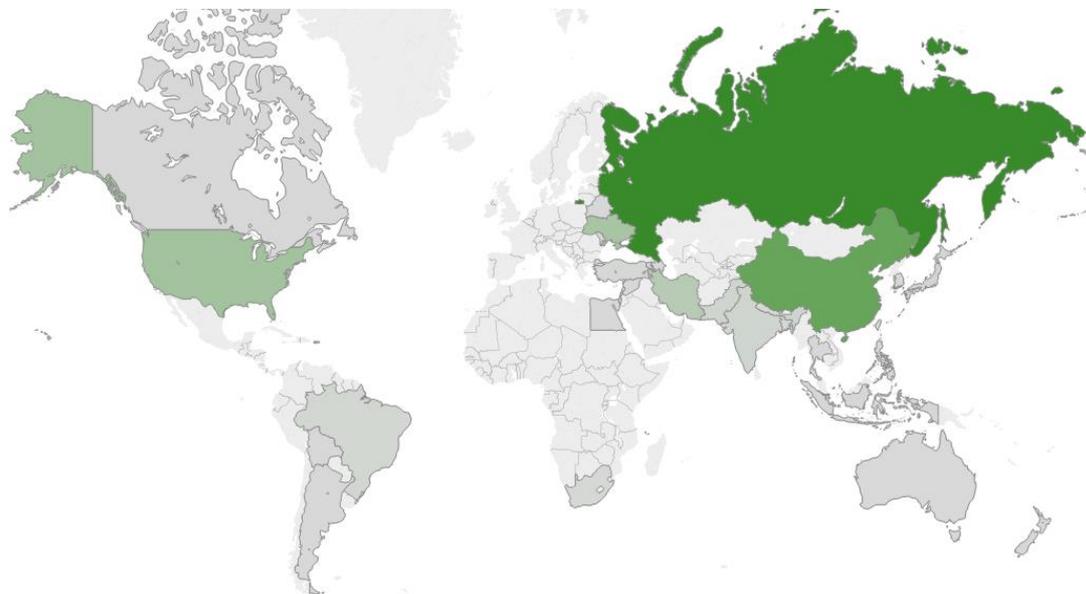


Figure 3: Number of approved applications by country



Destinations

The 181 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	52
Rome	27
Treviso	14
Varese	10
Savona	7
Verona	7
Biella	
Brescia	
Como	4
Padua	
Trieste	
Bergamo	
Grosseto	
Pordenone	3
Turin	
Trento	
Bari	
Fermo	
Florence	
Foggia	
Lucca	2
Modena	
Novara	
Pescara	
Vicenza	
Bologna, Campobasso, Cosenza, Cuneo, Forli-Cesena, Massa-Carrara, Perugia, Rovigo, Salerno, Sassari, Siena	1

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

Region	#
Lombardy	73
Veneto	28
Lazio	27
Piedmont	10
Tuscany	9
Friuli-Venezia Giulia	7
Liguria	7
Apulia	4
Emilia-Romagna	4
Trentino-South Tyrol	3
Abruzzo	2
Marche	2
Calabria	
Campania	
Molise	1
Sardinia	
Umbria	

Startups established or joined

So far, at least **26** 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. ;**
- **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.

Thirteen applications have been received so far, three more than those on the records three months ago – and **five** overall in 2018. **Nine** 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

A joint application by two Korean citizens (one male, one female, 35 and 34 years), who were already in Italy for study purposes (both hold a Master's degree). They want to set up an innovative startup in the tech-fashion sector.

An Iranian citizen (male, 34 years old, holding a Master's degree), who sent his application through a certified incubator (Working Capital). Alongside an Italian colleague, he launched an innovative startup to monitor underground energy networks, [Armnet s.r.l.](#)

A citizen of the United States (male, 38 years old, holder of a Bachelor's degree).

An Iranian citizen (male, 32 years old, holding a PhD), who presented his application jointly with another Iranian citizen, who instead used the ISV procedure. Their

innovative startup deals with the transformation of waste into re-usable chemical materials, [Recyclinnova s.r.l.s.](#)

A Malaysian citizen, 31 years old, fashion and marketing student in Milan and holder of a residence permit for study reasons. Her innovative startup, **Interverso Crosseat s.r.l.**, aims at launching a matching platform in the fashion and fitness sector.

A citizen of Bolivia, 31 years old, graduate in mechanical engineering, and founder of the innovative startup [Nextis4us s.r.l.](#), which developed a new cocktail-making machine.

A citizen of India, 23 years old, Master's student in nano-engineering, with another Iranian citizen, who used the ISV procedure.

The last application on the records, approved in May 2018, came from a 30-year-old US citizen, holder of a residence permit for study purposes, and resident in Milan.

Destinations

Table 3a-3b: Province and region of destination of Italia Startup Hub holders

Province	#	Region	#
Milan	5	Lombardy	5
Bologna	1	Calabria	1
Cosenza		Emilia-Romagna	
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