

# Italia Startup Hub

The policy of the Italian Government to favour the *retention* of innovative talents from all over the world

## Guidelines

Ministry of Economic Development  
Ministry of Interior  
Ministry of Labour and Social Policies

## Italia Startup Hub: origins and objectives

In the last years, the Italian Government has put forward an intense policy action aimed at facilitating the build-up of the country's innovative entrepreneurship ecosystem. The most significant steps on this path have been "Growth Decree 2.0" ([Decree-law 18 October 2012, n. 179](#), converted with amendments into Law 24 March 2015, n. 33), which has introduced a wide array of support measures to ease the creation and the development of new *innovative* enterprises (***innovative startups***), and "Investment Compact" ([Decree-law 24 January 2015, n. 3](#), converted with amendments into Law 24 March 2015, n. 33), which has extended most of such measures to all small and medium enterprises (SMEs) evidencing innovative characters; hence, not just startups, but also those having reached a later maturity stage.

Acknowledging that immigration constitutes a crucial factor for the development of a competitive and innovative entrepreneurial fabric, the Ministry of Economic Development, with the cooperation of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, the Ministry of Interior and the Ministry of Labour and Social Policies, has launched in June 2014 the ***Italia Startup Visa*** programme. The programme has the underlying objective of favouring openness, renewal and reinforcement of the national ecosystem of innovative entrepreneurship, facilitating the *attraction* of human and financial capital from all over the world.

Pursuing the aforementioned goals, the Italia Startup Visa programme has revolutionised the ordinary procedure to grant entry visas for self-employment, by introducing a significant **simplification** for non-EU citizens which either intend to launch an innovative startup in Italy, or to invest in a pre-existing one, joining it as working shareholders. The application process is based on clear rules (described in English on the website [italiastartupvisa.mise.gov.it](http://italiastartupvisa.mise.gov.it)), takes place exclusively online, has the Ministry of Economic Development as the only referral – the Ministry also takes care of the coordination with the Police authorities for security purposes – and leads to a final evaluation in no more than 30 days.

Being recognised that the *retention* of innovative talents of foreign origin is as important as their *attraction*, the will for internationalising the Italian ecosystem of innovative startups has then found realisation in a new government policy initiative.

Jointly launched in December 2014 by the Ministries of Economic Development, Interior, and Labour and Social Policies, and largely based on Italia Startup Visa, the **Italia Startup Hub** programme ([italiastartuphub.mise.gov.it](http://italiastartuphub.mise.gov.it)) has extended the procedural simplification above mentioned to the **conversion of residence permits**: non-EU citizens, *already residing in Italy*, who decide to extend their residency period to create an innovative startup, or to join as working shareholders a pre-existing innovative startup, can convert their expiring permit – obtained, for instance, for study reasons – in a “permit for startup self-employment” without leaving Italy, and enjoying the simplified track normally granted to startup visas.

## Legal references

With the ambitious goal to transform Italy in a full-fledged innovation hub, the Decree of the President of the Council of Ministers, enacted on 11 December 2014 (known as “[Flows Decree 2015](#)”) set the legal ground required to facilitate the continued residency in the country of foreign talents who intend to create a new innovative enterprise with high technological value. The orientation has been confirmed in [Flows Decree 2016](#), which at article 3, section 2, sets a quota of 1,500 residence permits for study, internship and training purposes and 350 permits for EC long-term residents which can be converted into self-employment permits.

Indeed, as specified in the [circular](#) attached to the decree (see paragraph “Management of the procedures”, letter c) non-EU citizens who already hold a regular residence permit will be able to convert it in a “residence permit for startup self-employment” in the event they want to begin an innovative startup or to join, as working shareholders, a pre-existing one; they will benefit from the same fast-track, largely online procedure granted by the Italia Startup Visa programme, with no need to return to their country of origin to request a new startup visa.

The definition of “innovative startup” relevant for the ISV and ISH programmes is that laid out in Growth Decree 2.0. The [executive summary of the policy on innovative startups](#) offers an encompassing description of the requirements demanded by the law, in addition to the benefits that the law itself grants to this particular kind of enterprises.

It is important to underline that, if the non-EU citizen demonstrates to have obtained from a certified incubator an “availability to guest” his or her future innovative startup, the process is even faster: a formal evaluation of the business plan, otherwise carried out by the ISV&H Committee – coordinated by the Ministry of Economic Development – does not take place, since it is assumed that the approval from a certified incubator is a sufficient guarantee of the suitability of the proposal. Giving to certified incubators a key role in the selection procedure, there is an attempt to coalesce around a well-defined number of safe havens – or, indeed, hubs – the function of attractors of

foreign talents. The special section of the Company Registry dedicated to **certified incubators**, updated on a weekly basis, can be downloaded for free at this address: <http://startup.registroimprese.it/report/incubatori.zip>.

As a final point, and as already mentioned several times, the programme does not only apply to non-EU citizens who want to start a new innovative startup from scratch, but also to those who wish to join, as working shareholders, a **pre-existing innovative startup**. It is then an opportunity for Italian startups themselves, as a way to acquire new expertise and new capital. It is possible, clicking on the following link, to download a weekly-updated list of all innovative startups included in the Company Registry: [startup.registroimprese.it/report/startup.zip](http://startup.registroimprese.it/report/startup.zip). The download is free-of-charge, and the file has an open licence.

## Filing cabinet

Application documents for Italia Startup Hub (ISH):

1. Application form for ISH
2. Cover letter for proof of financial resources<sup>1</sup>
3. Undertaking by incubator to host startup
4. Facsimile certificate of no impediment for the purpose of conversion/update of the previous residence permit into a self-employment residence permit to begin an innovative startup – ISH (direct application)
5. Facsimile certificate of no impediment for the purpose of conversion/update of the previous residence permit into a self-employment residence permit to begin an innovative startup – ISH (startup backed by incubator)

Introduction to Italia Startup Hub and to the Italian Startup Act:

1. Guidelines to the ISH programme (English)
2. Guidelines to the ISH programme (Italian)
3. [Summary of the Italian Startup Act](#)
4. [Annual Report to Parliament on progress made under the Italian Startup Act](#)
5. [Dedicated section of the Business Register for innovative startups](#)
6. [Dedicated section of the Business Register for certified incubators](#)

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<sup>1</sup> The financial means amounting at 50,000 euros devoted to the innovative startup may include: funding granted from venture capital firms or other investors; own resources; funding obtained through *equity crowdfunding* portals, as defined in art. 50 *quinquies* and 100 *ter* of the Single Text of the provisions on financial matters (Legislative Decree 24 February 1998, no. 588); other financing granted by governmental or non-governmental entities, Italian or foreign; any combination of the former. The documentation proving the availability of the minimum means allowed shall consist of one or more certification letters released by the banks where those funds are deposited and/or confirmation letters of the financing issued by venture capital funds, other investors and/or equity crowdfunding portals. In case of financing coming from certified incubators, it may also be included in the total amount the gross value of services in-kind that the incubator intends to provide to the future innovative startup. The documentation is completed through a declaration of the applicant, by means of which she commits to use the collected funds for the establishment and the operations of the innovative startup.

## The procedure

The Italia Startup Hub conversion procedure ([website](#)) closely recalls the modalities proper of the Italia Startup Visa programme ([website](#), [guidelines](#)).

In a similar way, non-EU citizens whose residence permit is about to expire, or who nonetheless intends to continue his residency in Italy with the goal of launch or join as shareholder an innovative startup, are required to send to <mailto:italiastartuphub@mise.gov.it> an accurate description of their business plan, and documentation certifying sufficient financial means amounting at **50,000 euros** at least, to be invested in the creation of the new enterprise.

The **Italia Startup Visa & Hub Committee**, composed of representatives of five among the prime association of the national innovation ecosystem,<sup>2</sup> and coordinated by the Directorate General for Industrial Policy, Competitiveness and SMEs of the Ministry of Economic Development, will evaluate the quality of the applications received, and will release, in case of a positive judgement, a certificate of no impediment which will enable the conversion/update of the residence permit.

Unlike what happens in the Italia Startup Visa context, the Committee is not required to acquire any preliminary advice from the competent Police Authority (*Questura*) before issuing the certificate of no impediment; since the foreign citizen already holds a residence permit, his or her position is already held as lawful and secure. It follows that, following ISH procedures, the Committee will be able to release a final judgement on an even faster timeframe than the 30-day limit of Italia Startup Visa.

Italia Startup Hub is targeted at the **holders of any kind of residence permit**. These include, *inter alia*:

- ✓ residence permit for study, internship and/or training,
- ✓ EC long-term residence permit, released by another EU member state,
- ✓ residence permit for dependent employment,

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<sup>2</sup> AIFI, Italian Association for private equity and venture capital; APSTI, Association of Italian Scientific and Technological Parks; IBAN, Italian Business Angels Network; NetVal, Network for the promotion of academic research; PNICube, network of academic incubators and business plan competitions.

- ✓ residence permit for self-employment
- ✓ residence permit for family reasons.

According to the type of residence permit held by the non-EU citizen, the certificate of no impediment, if applicable, will be aimed at:

- ✓ its *conversion*, at the competent **Single Desk for Immigration**, in case of residence permit for education purposes, or EC long-term residence permit released by another EU member state;
- ✓ its *update*, at the competent **Central Police station (Questura)**, in case of a residence permit for dependent employment, self-employment or family reasons.

In both cases, the conversion and update process will result in the transformation of the previous permit in a **residence permit for self-employment to constitute an innovative startup**, which does not constitute a self-standing typology of residence permit; it thus falls into the previously mentioned quotas for self-employment residence permits.

The following section is devoted to a detailed analysis of the procedures connected to the two different cases.

### **Procedure aimed at students, trainees, and long term residents (so-called *conversion of residence permit*):**

1. The non-EU citizen holding a residence permit for study, internship and/or training reasons, or an EC long-term residence permit released by another EU member state, writes to [italiastartuphub@mise.gov.it](mailto:italiastartuphub@mise.gov.it) attaching:
  - a. application form, where she describes her academic and professional background, and illustrates the kind of innovative business she intends to start or to join as working shareholder; in case of an application through a certified incubator, she should present the “declaration of availability to

guest” undersigned by the legal representative of the incubator (in this case the Committee will not undertake any business plan examination)

- b. copy of a valid passport or Italian ID;
  - c. copy of residence permit held at time of application;
  - d. documentation proving sufficient financial means, amounting at no less than 50,000 euros.
2. The Italia Startup Visa & Hub Committee evaluates the application in no more than 20 days. If the evaluation is positive, it issues the certificate of no impediment to the Italia Startup Hub conversion.
3. Obtained the Certificate of No Impediment, the non-EU citizen must reserve on [this website](#) (registration required) a meeting with the competent Single Desk for Immigration. After clicking on “*sportello unico immigrazione*”, and then on “*richiesta moduli*”, she must fill Form Z (“*Domanda di verifica della sussistenza di una quota per lavoro autonomo e di certificazione attestante il possesso dei requisiti per lavoro autonomo*” → “*Soci, amministratori di società*”). After having sent the request, she will receive a confirmation email; she must then wait for the Single Desk for Immigration to set a date for a meeting. More information is available on the websites of the local Prefectures.
4. She must hand, in person, to the Single Desk for Immigration:
- a. copy of the ISH Certificate of No Impediment
  - b. residence permit presently held
  - c. documentation proving suitable accommodation (e.g. hotel booking)
  - d. documentation proving an income above the minimum level set by law for the exemption from the participation to National Health Service expenses (8,500 euros)
  - e. passport or Italian ID
  - f. A 16 euro fiscal stamp (*marca da bollo*)

5. Obtained from the Single Desk for Immigration the authorisation to conversion, in an authorised post office (“Sportello Amico”, list downloadable [here](#)) she will receive the “conversion kit” (Model 209), which she must fill and then send to the competent Central Police office (*Questura*). At the same post office, it will also be set the date for the final meeting with the competent Central Police office, when the residence permit will be released.
6. On the set date, the competent Central Police office invites the non-EU citizen for a meeting, and the self-employment residence permit is ultimately released.

**Procedure aimed at subordinate workers, self-employed workers, relatives of holders of a residence permit (so-called *update of residence permit*):**

1. The non-EU citizen holding a residence permit for study, internship and/or training reasons, or an EC long-term residence permit released by another EU member state, writes to [italiastartuphub@mise.gov.it](mailto:italiastartuphub@mise.gov.it) attaching:
  - a. application form, where she describes her academic and professional background, and illustrates the kind of innovative business she intends to start or to join as working shareholder; in case of an application through a certified incubator, she should present the “declaration of availability to guest” undersigned by the legal representative of the incubator (in this case the Committee will not undertake any business plan examination),
  - b. copy of a valid passport or Italian ID;
  - c. copy of residence permit held at time of application;
  - d. documentation proving sufficient financial means, amounting at no less than 50,000 euros.
2. The Italia Startup Visa & Hub Committee evaluates the application in no more than 20 days. If the evaluation is positive, it issues the certificate of no impediment to the Italia Startup Hub conversion.

3. Obtained the Certificate of No Impediment, she fills the *conversion kit* (model 209) available in any authorised post office (“Sportello Amico”, list downloadable [here](#)). The post office then transfers it to the local Central Police office; at the same time, it will also be set the date for the final meeting with the Police station, when the residence permit will be released.
4. On the set date, the competent Central Police office invites the non-EU citizen for a meeting, and the self-employment residence permit is ultimately released.

## Italia Startup Visa and Italia Startup Hub: a comparison

	<i>#ItaliaStartupVisa</i>	<i>#ItaliaStartupHub</i>	<i>=/≠</i>
<i>Is aimed at...</i>	<i>Non-EU citizens living abroad, who want to move to Italy to create an innovative startup, as defined by Decree-law 179/2012, art. 25, 2), or to join as working shareholders a pre-existing innovative startup.</i>	<i>Non-EU citizens who already live in Italy, hold a residence permit of any kind, and want to extend their residency to create an innovative startup, as defined by Decree-law 179/2012, art. 25, 2), or to join as working shareholders a pre-existing innovative startup.</i>	<i>≠</i>
<i>The evaluation is carried out by...</i>	<i>Italia Startup Visa&amp;Hub Committee</i>	<i>Italia Startup Visa&amp;Hub Committee</i>	<i>=</i>
<i>Documentation to be sent to the Committee:</i>	<i>Application form including CV and business plan + demonstration of financial means amounting at no less than 50,000 euros</i>	<i>Application form including CV and business plan + demonstration of financial means amounting at no less than 50,000 euros</i>	<i>=</i>
<i>Email address</i>	<i>italiastartupvisa@mise.gov.it</i>	<i>italiastartuphub@mise.gov.it</i>	<i>≠</i>
<i>Must the Committee trigger a security check?</i>	<i>Yes: the Committee defers, through Posta Elettronica Certificata, the applicant's details to the competent Central Police office for a security check on the applicant.</i>	<i>No: the applicant already holds a residence permit.</i>	<i>≠</i>

<i>Evaluation deadline</i>	<i>No more than 30 days</i>	<i>No more than 20 days</i>	<i>≠</i>
<i>Output finale</i>	<i>Release of a “self-employment startup visa”</i>	<i>Conversion/update of the previous residence permit into a “residence permit for startup self-employment”</i>	<i>≠</i>
<i>Released by...</i>	<i>Competent Embassy or Consulate in the country of origin</i>	<i>Single Desk for Immigration/Central Police office</i>	<i>≠</i>
<i>Fast-track procedure through certified incubator</i>	<i>Yes</i>	<i>Yes</i>	<i>=</i>
<i>Website</i>	<i><a href="http://italiastartupvisa.mise.gov.it">italiastartupvisa.mise.gov.it</a></i>	<i><a href="http://italiastartuphub.mise.gov.it">italiastartuphub.mise.gov.it</a></i>	<i>=</i>