

How to apply for visa to Italy

An easy guide for the main possibilities to get a visa
and live in the most wonderful country in the world.



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Visa Italy for non-EU citizens

The phenomenon of migration is a defining social event of our epoch.

While international migration has been a reality in Italy for more than 20 years, in the past five Italy has become one of the most important EU countries to annually welcome people from all over the world, **benefitting its entire economic and social system**.

In an increasingly **global context**, with ever more integrated markets and heightened international competition, every part of the ecosystem must be global, beginning with the individuals who take part in it.

It becomes crucial for a foreign citizen to understand which documents to request and what administrative paperwork must be completed in order to fully participate in the economic and social life of our country.

Differences between EU and non-EU citizens

Citizens of countries that are **members of the European Union** have the right to enter and reside freely in Italy without any administrative formalities if their stay is **less than three months**. A stay of more than three months is permitted when the foreign national, alternatively, is working, has the economic resources necessary to support himself, is attending a course of study or is a family member of a European citizen who has the right to stay for more than three months. In addition, the subject is required to register with the registry office of the municipality of residence.

Non-EU citizens, on the other hand, require an entry visa in order to be able to stay and work in our country.

A visa is an administrative document, issued by the Italian Representations abroad, which authorizes the foreigner to enter our country and can be granted for various reasons, including work, study and family.

Are you a non-EU citizen wishing to live in Italy? Then we suggest you continue reading and find out how.

Investor visa for Italy

Italy: a country where you can invest

Italy is recognized worldwide as one of the best countries in which to live. Just think of the many UNESCO world heritage sites, the marvelous artistic and natural sites, and all the products of excellence that contribute to making the “made in Italy” brands among the most appreciated and desirable in the world.

A recent survey by USNews confirms that Italy, besides being an excellent place in which to live, is also a perfect place in which to invest.

In fact, thanks to excellent know-how in sectors such as fashion, technology, industrial machinery, and food and biological products, Italy is placed in sixth place in the classification of best countries for capital investment.

The classification was drawn up on the basis of eight parameters, considered in equal measure: corruption, dynamics, economic stability, entrepreneurialism, favorable fiscal regime, presence of an innovative and qualified labor force, and technological competence. In Tuscany alone, there are more than 500 established multinationals in the region; 420 of these are foreigners.

So if you are a non-EU citizen who wishes to live and invest in Italy, the Investor visa is an opportunity that you should know about.

What is the Investor visa for Italy?

This is a **visa for foreign investors**, whose regulation was introduced in our statutes with the 2017 Budgetary Law, inserted into the Single Text on Immigration, article 26-bis (modified subsequently by D.L. 34/2020).

How much to Invest

In order to increase its ability to attract investments into the country, Italy allows release of a **two-year renewable visa for non-EU citizens** who make:

- An investment of at least **2,000,000 euros in Italian securities**;

- A **philanthropic donation of at least 1,000,000 euros** to support a project of public interest, in the sectors of culture, instruction, management of immigration, scientific research, and restoration of cultural or landscape heritage.

As an alternative to these requirements, it is possible to invest in instruments representing a business' capital. The amount has been reduced to half by the Relaunch Decree (D.L. 34/2020) and currently amounts to:

- 500,000 euros for quoted or non-quoted capital corporations set up and operating in Italy;
- **250,000 euros for innovative start-ups** set up and operating in Italy.

With l. n. 190/2020, the possibility of receiving the visa is also extended to **legal representatives of non-EU legal entities** carrying out one of the above-mentioned investments.

Duration of the Investor Visa for Italy

Unlike the tourism visa and the visa for business or work-related travel, the Investor Visa has an **initial duration of 2 years**, which can be **extended for another 3 years** when it expires. It is also possible to convert it into an EU **permit to stay for a long period**, once 5 years have passed from the time it was first released, on the condition that the investment is maintained.

This visa allows to travel to other European Union countries and to stays of up to 90 days every 6 months, allowing you to continue to live and work in your own country of origin and guaranteeing maximum freedom of movement, thanks to the possibility of entering and staying in Italy as often as you wish. If the applicant wants to renew the visa when it expires, it is sufficient to have the shrewdness of staying in Italy for a period superior to half of the period of validity of the permit to stay.

The Investor Visa, besides, permits you to **carry out work activity** on Italian soil.

The above-cited benefits can be extended to the **beneficiary's family members** (spouse, minor children, dependent adult children, dependent parents).

The procedure for obtaining the Investment visa

The procedure for obtaining the Investment Visa is explained step by step at the website of the [Ministry of Economic Development](#) . This can be synthesized in two parts:

1. Obtaining the **Nulla Osta** (authorization) for release of the visa;
2. Granting of the Investor Visa and entrance into Italy

1) *Nulla Osta* (Authorization)

The request for authorization for granting of the visa should be sent online through the [appropriate channel](#) made available by the **MISE**. To complete this **centralized** and completely **digitized** procedure, it is necessary to supply a series of information and documents, including indication of the type of investment that the applicant intends to make and attesting to the legitimacy and ownership of the amounts allocated for this purpose.

Once the documentation has been submitted, after a preliminary formal control by the **Committee Secretary**, the members of the **Investor Visa Committee** meet to evaluate the conformity of the request for authorization to the requirements established by law. The outcome of the evaluation is communicated **within 30 days**, and in the case of a **favorable outcome**, the formal visa authorization is granted.

2) Granting of the Investor Visa and entrance into Italy

Once authorization has been obtained, the applicant has **six months of time** in which to request granting of the visa, at the Italian **Embassy or Consulate** of their country of origin.

The Embassy or Consulate, having carried out the required investigation, will then grant the **visa for entrance for investors**, with a duration of 2 years. This can be renewed for another 3 years, upon request made at the competent police headquarters at least 60 days before the permit to stay expires.

Within 8 days of arrival in Italy, the foreign citizen is required to present the request for the Investor Visa permit to stay to the police headquarters where they are living, along with the necessary administrative documentation.

Finally, the applicant must make the previously-communicated investment **within 3 months** of the date of entrance, otherwise the procedure will be nullified.



City center, Milan.

Startup visa

The Italia Startup Visa is an instrument of the Italian government designed to attract innovative business owners and highly qualified workers to our country.

It introduces a bilingual, digital, centralized, and accelerated procedure to facilitate granting of **entrance visas for talented business owners** who want to base their **innovative business** in Italy. Read how:

Innovative Startups are growing in Italy

At the end of 2020, according to a report by [InfoCamere](#), there were 12,068 **innovative startups** in Italy, an **increase of 572 units** compared to the preceding trimester (+ 5% during the trimester).

The growing success of this type of business has been enhanced by recent Italian economic policies aimed at supporting the creation and development of innovative business in our country, such as **Smart & Start, Equity Crowdfunding, and investment detraction**. These have made Italy **a desirable and safe place** in which to create an innovative startup.

If you are from a **non-EU country** and wish to create your own innovative startup, the **Italia Startup Visa** represents an opportunity that you should not miss.

What is the Italia Startup visa?

Italia Startup Visa is a **visa for autonomous work**, one year in duration, renewable, for non-EU citizens who intend to set up an innovative startup on Italian soil.

This was introduced by the Italian government with the so-called **Decreto Flussi** (Decree of Flow) of 2013, and was renewed in the same form for all the successive annual Flow Decrees issued by the President of the Council of Ministries.

Compared to the ordinary procedure for obtaining the autonomous work visa, the Startup Visa **request is simplified, accelerated, and totally digitalized, with rapid concession** of the *Nulla Osta* (declaration of no obstacle).

The steps for obtaining the visa can be synthesized in **three phrases**:

1. submitting the application
2. accelerated evaluation of the request and release of the Nulla Osta
3. granting of the visa and entry into Italy

1) Submitting the application

The application to the Italia Startup Visa program should be sent **via email** to the address indicated by the MISE. To be complete and to pass the **formal controls of the Segretariat**, the application should consist in three required parts:

- The **application form**, which besides showing the personal data and curriculum of the person making the request, should furnish detailed information about the innovative startup **project** that the applicant intends to set up.
- Certification of availability of **financial resources of at least 50,000 euros**, along with a letter attesting that the sum will be used for the establishment and functioning of the innovative startup.
- Copy of valid **passport**, so that the competent Police headquarters of the place where the applicant intends to live can carry out a preliminary examination.

In the case of an applicant who has received assistance by a **Certified Incubator**, on the other hand, it is enough to present documentation attesting the availability of financial resources and signed testimony by the legal representative of the Incubator certifying their availability to assist the non-EU citizen in setting up the innovative startup.

2) Accelerated evaluation of the request and release of the nulla osta

Once the **Italia Visa Startup Committee** expresses itself in favor of the innovative business project that has been presented, the **Nulla Osta** is released, within 30 days of the date the request was presented.

The Nulla Osta can then be used for granting the visa for autonomous work, within **3 months** of the date of its emission.

3) Granting of the visa and entrance into Italy

To pick up the visa, the applicant must appear personally at the competent **Embassy or Consulate** in their country of residence, presenting, besides the Nulla Osta and the **originals** of all documentation already sent to the Committee, all the further administrative documents required.

Once the diplomatic/consular office has received the request and the documentation, after carrying out the controls under its authority, it grants the **visa for autonomous startup workers**, with **annual duration**, impacting the **quotas** established by the Flow Decree for the year of reference.

Once the non-EU citizen has received the visa, they have 6 months of time to move to Italy, and **within 8 days of their entrance**, to request a one-year **permit to stay** from the competent Police headquarters, presenting the necessary administrative documentation.

Duration of the visa up to a maximum of 5 years

The permit to stay for autonomous startup worker has an **annual duration**.

Up to 60 days before its expiration, the permit can be **renewed for 2 years**, and is again renewable, at expiration, for a maximum of 2 more years.

After 5 years the non-EU citizen can apply for a long stay permit, valid for an **unlimited time period**.

For the renewal procedure, the applicant must present the innovative startup **visura** (certification) and demonstrate **earnings superior to the minimum required by law**.

Startup Hub

Several European countries have recognised that the ability to **attract and retain highly skilled foreign workers and innovative entrepreneurs** is a key factor in increasing their competitiveness in international markets.

The achievement of this objective, however, is linked to the adoption of **measures that make it easier to obtain residence permits for individuals** with skills and knowledge that can improve the economic structure of the country.

What is the Italia Startup Hub programme

The Italian government has addressed this issue by introducing, with the *Decreto Flussi* 2015, the **Italia Startup Hub programme** with which it has provided a digitised, centralised and accelerated procedure to allow **international talent** already living in our country to obtain a **residence permit for self-employed workers**.

While Italia Startup Visa is aimed at those non-EU citizens who intend to move to Italy and base their innovative business there, the **Italia Startup Hub** programme is aimed at those who are **already on Italian territory for reasons other than entrepreneurial activity** and who wish to set up their own **innovative startup** and, at the same time, **convert their residence permit** into a permit for self-employed workers.

The administrative procedure leading to the conversion of the residence permit consists of the following steps:

1. Application to the programme.
2. Evaluation and issue of the *nulla osta*.
3. Conversion of residence permit.

1) Application to the programme

Applications to the Italia Startup Hub programme must be sent to the email address indicated by MISE (Ministry of Economic Development) and must include the following documents:

- The **business project** containing the application form, a brief presentation of the company and a detailed **business plan**.

- A signed letter certifying the availability of **financial resources of no less than €50,000** to invest in the startup and documents proving such availability.
- A copy of your passport and valid residence permit.

2) Committee Evaluation

After the **formal check** by the Secretariat, Once they have passed the Secretariat's formal check, applications are assessed by the **Italia Startup Visa Committee**.

Differently from the Italia Startup Visa programme, the Committee is not required to ask for any opinion from the competent Police Headquarters, since the applicant already has a residence permit, which indicates the lawfulness of his/her immigration status.

In the event of a **positive outcome**, a **nulla osta** is issued for the conversion of the residence permit.

3) Conversion of the residency permit

Depending on the type of residency permit that the foreign national already holds, the **procedure to be followed** after obtaining the authorisation varies, in particular:

- If the non-EU citizen holds a residence **permit for study or a long-term residence permit** issued by another EU country, he must make an appointment with the competent *Sportello Unico* for Immigration, which will provide, by presenting all the required administrative documentation, a kit for the conversion of the residence permit. The kit must be presented at the next appointment with the police headquarters.
- If the non-EU citizen is in possession of a residence permit for **subordinate work, scientific research or family reasons**, he/she will have to fill in the kit for updating the residence permit, which is available at all post offices, and then transmit the documents to the police headquarters.

Duration of residence permit

The duration of the residence permit for self-employed start-up workers is **one year**.

Up to 60 days before it expires, the permit can be **renewed** for a maximum of **2 years** and is further renewable on expiry for a further **2 years**.

After 5 years, the non-EU citizen can apply for a long-term residence permit, which is valid **indefinitely**.



Elective Residence visa

Italy is globally recognized as one of the most fascinating places to live. The Mediterranean climate, the culinary art, the beautiful landscapes and, last but not least, the recent **favorable tax provisions** introduced by the Government, make our country a very desirable destination for foreigners from all over the world.

Are you a non-working non-EU foreigner with adequate financial resources? The **Elective residence visa** may allow you to reside in Italy without working, benefitting from interesting tax advantages.

EU and non-EU citizens

While citizens of EU countries may live freely in Italy, provided that they apply at the register office of the municipality where they intend to reside and have the economic resources necessary for their independent support, **non-EU citizens** need a visa for elective residence to stay in our country without simultaneously carrying out a work activity.

The issuance of the visa

The **visa for elective residence**, provided for by the Interministerial Decree 850 of 11 May 2011, allows **non-EU foreigners** who intend to settle in our country and are able to **support themselves independently, without working**, to enter Italy.

The procedure requires the foreigner to attend a meeting at the Italian Consulate of the country of residence providing, in addition to identification documents, documentation demonstrating ample autonomous, stable and regular **economic resources**, of which the continuity over time can be reasonably assumed, coming from sources other than employment, and the **availability of a home** to be elected as a residence in Italy.

The **cohabitating spouse, minor children and dependent children of age** may also be entitled to the same visa, on condition that the aforementioned financial resources are also deemed adequate for the latter.

Residence in Italy: requirements for a visa elective residence

The applicant for a visa for elective residence must demonstrate **annual earnings in excess of € 31,000 per year** from **sources other than employment**. This type of visa may also be issued in favor of the visa holder's cohabiting spouse, minor children, dependent children of full age who are cohabiting and dependent, and parents who are cohabiting and dependent, provided that the aforementioned financial capacity is adequate.

Therefore, in the event that the applicant intends to move to Italy with the family unit, the amount of monthly income must be increased by **20%** for the spouse and at least **5%** for each child, whether minor or adult dependent.

The economic resources referred to above must come from the ownership of **substantial revenues** (pensions, annuities), **real estate, stable economic and commercial activities**, or other sources besides employment. The applicant must also demonstrate the availability of a property to be used as his/her own home.

The Procedure

The procedure for issuing a visa for elective residence begins with an online booking for an appointment in person at the **Italian consulate/embassy** of the applicant's place of residence.

At the meeting at the embassy/consulate, the applicant must provide documentation proving the availability of financial resources (e.g. bank statements, documentation attesting to the ownership of companies or real estate, pensions, annuities from which they derive) and housing in Italy (proof of ownership, rental contracts, preliminary purchase agreements). Since the assessment of the sufficiency of economic resources is discretionary, we recommend the utmost organization in gathering and submitting all the required documentation.

Residence permit

Once in Italy, the foreigner must, **within eight days**, go to the competent police headquarters to apply for a **residence permit**.

This document generally has a duration of one year, renewable on expiry. After five years, the foreigner may finally apply for a long-term residence permit, which is **valid indefinitely**.

The residence permit for elective residence can also be issued as a **conversion of a residence permit** to a foreign citizen who already holds a residence permit for subordinate work, self-employment or family reasons when the applicant ceases his or her work and receives an old-age pension, civil invalidity pension, or social pension.

Tax benefits for foreigners moving to Italy

Foreigners who move to Italy can benefit from **preferential taxation**. In [this link to one of our articles you can find](#) an **in-depth analysis** of this and other tax benefits for foreigners.



A beautiful sunset in the city of Venice

The visa for managers or highly specialized personnel of foreign companies with headquarters or representative offices in Italy: entry outside the quotas

Generally, immigration of non-EU foreign citizens for work purposes in Italy is subject to the annual programmatic quotas provided for by the flow decree. However, for some particular categories of workers, entry into Italy is permitted throughout the year without any numerical limit, including managers or highly specialized personnel of foreign companies with headquarters, branches, or representative offices in Italy.

What is a representative office?

A Representative Office (RO) is an entity with no legal autonomy which carries out auxiliary and preparatory activities in Italy on behalf of a foreign company; typically, such activities are those of marketing, sales promotion, collection of information, and scientific or market research, with the exception of actual sales and production operations. An RO shall be qualified by the absence of:

- a permanent endowment of means dedicated to carrying out the foreign company's activity (or part of it);
- the power to act in the name and on behalf of the foreign company, binding the latter vis-à-vis third parties.

The presence of the elements listed above would imply the existence of a Branch Office, which falls within the legal and fiscal requirements of a permanent establishment.

The foreign company shall appoint a representative of the RO whose name will be entered in the Italian Companies' Registry (this can be - in general terms - the same director of the foreign company and does not need to be an Italian resident). The company shall have an address in Italy and the mother company and the representative of the RO shall obtain an Italian tax identification number (codice fiscale).

The secondment visa for managers or highly specialized personnel

Article 27(a) of the Consolidated Act on Immigration provides for the entry and stay, outside of the quotas established by the flow decree, of "Managers or highly specialized personnel of companies with headquarters or branches in Italy or a representative office of foreign companies [...]".

Basically, the following requirements must be met simultaneously:

- The foreign national must qualify in Italy as a "manager" or "highly specialized personnel".
- The foreign national must have been employed abroad for at least 6 months in the same sector before the temporary transfer to Italy;
- There must be a formal transfer of the temporary worker within the same group of companies

The secondment cannot exceed 5 years. At the end of the secondment contract, the worker can be hired by the seconded company.

During the entire period of secondment in Italy, the foreign worker must maintain his employment relationship with the mother company, while he/she must be granted the minimum wage foreseen by the national collective contract for the category applied by the Italian company. The foreign company must take charge of social security obligations by paying the relative contributions. Alternatively, if the foreigner's country of origin has entered into a bilateral agreement on social security with Italy, it will be sufficient to produce the social security coverage certificate issued by the foreign social security institution to comply with Italian contribution obligations.

The visa procedure

The employer (in our case the representative of the office or subsidiary) must send the request for nulla osta (no impediment) via the dedicated online platform to the territorially competent Single Desk for Immigration at the Prefecture. The request must be accompanied, among other things, by a letter of secondment, duly translated and legalized and showing the corporate relationship between the seconding company and the subsidiary/representative office.

In the case of a positive evaluation of the request, the Prefecture issues the authorization and forwards it to the Italian consular representation of the worker's country of residence. Within 6 months of receiving the nulla osta, the worker must apply in person to the consular representation for a visa.

Once in Italy, the foreigner must go to the competent police headquarters within eight days to apply for a residence permit.

What we can do for you

Our Studio, MGI Vannucci & Associati (vannuccieassociati.it), thanks to experience developed in this sector and our collaboration with legal studios specialized in such matters, is ready to support you in carrying out the procedure for setting up a representative office in Italy and obtaining the visa:

- Assisting you in the submission of the documentation necessary for setting up the representative office, indicating the proper documentation and dealing with the local Chamber of Commerce.
- Assisting you in the collection and submission of the necessary documents for obtaining the visa, as well as communicating on your behalf with the relevant offices.
- Supporting you in the process of visa issuance by the competent Italian Representation.
- Assisting you in the process of applying for a residence permit and in all the paperwork after obtaining the visa.
- Providing tax and financial advice by a team of experienced professionals who will assist you with all the issues and requirements related to moving to our country.

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