Negative: Startup Visa

By “Coach Vance” Trefethen

***Resolved: The European Union should substantially reform its immigration policy.***

The AFF case creates an EU-wide visa for entrepreneurs creating “Startup” businesses – new enterprises that are just getting off the ground. The EU should try to attract immigrants to bring these new ideas to create jobs in Europe. This is unnecessary and won’t work, for several reasons.

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Negative: Startup Visa

INHERENCY

1. Lots of startup visas already being offered

Many EU countries are actively developing startup visas to attract entrepreneurs

European Migration Commission 2018 (agency of the European Commission, part of the executive branch of the EU government) Attracting and retaining foreign startup founders, January 2018 <https://ec.europa.eu/home-affairs/sites/homeaffairs/files/inform_startups_2018_final_revised.pdf>

A number of new startup hubs and ecosystems are developing fast across the EU, but they need a critical mass of startups, entrepreneurs and investors to fuel their growth. As a result, many countries are actively trying to stand out by offering various incentives to attract foreign startup entrepreneurs that could drive such growth, ranging from funding schemes and tax reductions to fast-track startup visas.

2. Status Quo is getting plenty of startups without EU startup visa

Germany says: Status Quo is fine

European Migration Commission 2018 (agency of the European Commission, part of the executive branch of the EU government) Attracting and retaining foreign startup founders, January 2018 <https://ec.europa.eu/home-affairs/sites/homeaffairs/files/inform_startups_2018_final_revised.pdf> (brackets added)

Many MS [member states], however, have decided against launching startup schemes. According to a representative of the German Foreign Service/ Federal Ministry of the Interior, Germany has decided not to develop a scheme, because they believe that the current system is able to address the needs of entrepreneurs. Moreover, the German representative argued against involving the public sector too closely in assessing the entrepreneurial potential of individuals and, instead, leaving it to the private sector. Germany currently relies on existing business structures like the chambers of commerce and industry to evaluate the business potential of foreign companies.

Germany’s right: They’re the #1 country in Europe for new startups. [despite not having startup-visas]

THE LOCAL 2020. (German news journal) 20 Aug 2020 “Germany named best European country for startups for second year running” <https://www.thelocal.de/20200820/germany-named-best-european-country-for-startups-for-second-year-running>

Germany has held on to its top position as the best country in Europe for running a startup company in an annual ranking. The country beat 30 other European nations to the top position. The ranking was taken from a [study by NimbleFins](https://www.nimblefins.co.uk/business-insurance/best-countries-europe-startups-2020), who analysed data from the World Bank, World Economic Forum, UNESCO, OECD and tax consultancies. Environments good for startups are considered to have highly educated populations, strong economies, healthy business environments and relatively low costs for conducting business.

HARMS / SIGNIFICANCE

1. Low volume / Low impact

Startup visas by design are very low-volume immigration channels

Liam Putazzi 2019 (Policy Analyst at Migration Policy Institute Europe; master's degree in social sciences, with a focus on globalization and migration, from the University of Freiburg, Germany and the University of KwaZulu-Natal, South Africa) July 2019 “Start-Up Visas: A Passport for Innovation and Growth?” <https://www.migrationpolicy.org/research/start-visas-innovation-growth>



SOLVENCY

1. Immigration policy isn’t enough to solve – lots of other factors involved

General business environment has to be conducive to startups – not just migration policy

European Migration Commission 2018 (agency of the European Commission, part of the executive branch of the EU government) Attracting and retaining foreign startup founders, January 2018 <https://ec.europa.eu/home-affairs/sites/homeaffairs/files/inform_startups_2018_final_revised.pdf>

Third-country national (TCN) founders often choose to relocate to places where they think they have the highest likelihood of succeeding. This means that besides migration policies, the general business environment matters.

Lots of other factors needed besides startup visas, to attract new business

Liam Putazzi 2019 (Policy Analyst at Migration Policy Institute Europe; master's degree in social sciences, with a focus on globalization and migration, from the University of Freiburg, Germany and the University of KwaZulu-Natal, South Africa) July 2019 “Start-Up Visas: A Passport for Innovation and Growth?” <https://www.migrationpolicy.org/research/start-visas-innovation-growth>



Winning office on the back of an “America first” campaign, the U.S. president [repeatedly vowed to cut the number of H-1B visas](http://fortune.com/2017/04/18/h1b-visa-donald-trump/) that permit talented foreigners to join the world's biggest tech companies in Silicon Valley.

That sets the stage for Amsterdam, Berlin or Paris to become the next global magnet for engineers, coders and entrepreneurs. Yet Europe is struggling to surmount multiple barriers. It's considered one of the least-tolerant continents toward migrants as populist movements continue to sway public opinion, said Eugenio Ambrosi, [the regional director](http://eea.iom.int/index.php/about-iom/iom-regional-office) of the EU, Norway and Switzerland office of the International Organization for Migration. Meanwhile, the Continent's reputation for tech investmentremains weak, and its inability to grow the next European Google or Facebook makes it a less desirable place for ambitious workers, politicians, civil society and the industry agree.

Immigration rules alone won’t solve: Must have tax breaks and funding to boost R&D investment

Liam Putazzi 2019 (Policy Analyst at Migration Policy Institute Europe; master's degree in social sciences, with a focus on globalization and migration, from the University of Freiburg, Germany and the University of KwaZulu-Natal, South Africa) July 2019 “Start-Up Visas: A Passport for Innovation and Growth?” <https://www.migrationpolicy.org/research/start-visas-innovation-growth>



Estonia didn’t succeed just because of the visa: It was the entire business climate

**[includes non-immigration policies beyond AFF’s control]**

European Migration Commission 2018 (agency of the European Commission, part of the executive branch of the EU government) Attracting and retaining foreign startup founders, January 2018 <https://ec.europa.eu/home-affairs/sites/homeaffairs/files/inform_startups_2018_final_revised.pdf>

The session also sought to understand the specific reasons behind TCN founders’ decisions to found their company in the EU and, more specifically, by using the Estonian startup scheme. The founders present noted that these decisions are determined by a number of personal considerations, but highlighted the importance of additional measures in Estonia that helped them to minimise business risks, the inclusive nature of the scheme (besides founders, it also includes startup employees) and a reputation as a startup hub. A startup founder present at the workshop had been looking for a possibility to start a business in different countries since 2015, but found that most regulations were not startup friendly nor transparent. The choice of Estonia was linked to the eresidency programme that allowed him to familiarise with the business environment in Estonia and the EU, and to be better prepared before applying for startup scheme. Starting a business in an unfamiliar business environment creates additional risks, which this extra time to learn about the new context helped to minimise.

8 other factors are key to making the decision where to locate a new startup

European Migration Commission 2018 (agency of the European Commission, part of the executive branch of the EU government) Attracting and retaining foreign startup founders, January 2018 <https://ec.europa.eu/home-affairs/sites/homeaffairs/files/inform_startups_2018_final_revised.pdf>

What would make a startup founder choose one country over the other?
 ⎢ How supportive is the educational system?
 ⎢ How easy is it to get information about the local system?
 ⎢ How well do locals speak English?
 ⎢ What are the employment laws – how easy is it to employ (and dismiss) people?
 ⎢ How complicated is the taxation system?
 ⎢ What services are available and offered by the authorities?
 ⎢ Is it possible for a foreigner to open a bank account and is the banking system digitalized?
 ⎢ How fast can you deal with bureaucracy and what is the level of corruption?

“Emotion” and other “random” factors play a big part in the location decision

European Migration Commission 2018 (agency of the European Commission, part of the executive branch of the EU government) Attracting and retaining foreign startup founders, January 2018 <https://ec.europa.eu/home-affairs/sites/homeaffairs/files/inform_startups_2018_final_revised.pdf>

Most startups are founded by a single person or a small team, so the initial location is often tied to that individual’s networks, migratory routes or merely emotions. One of the panel speakers reflected from his own experience as a founder that the choice of choosing a country, where to start a business has much more to do with emotion than we would dare to admit publicly. We choose a location that meets our values and needs at a specific time and thus in many cases can be ´random´.

2. Won’t attract new business

Startup investors don’t choose location based on immigration policy

European Migration Commission 2018 (agency of the European Commission, part of the executive branch of the EU government) Attracting and retaining foreign startup founders, January 2018 <https://ec.europa.eu/home-affairs/sites/homeaffairs/files/inform_startups_2018_final_revised.pdf>

Two representatives from Startup Genome stressed that while startup schemes send a positive signal to founders, in reality the data suggests that startup founders do not move to a new country, because of its immigration policy, but instead choose places where they think they have the highest likelihood of succeeding doing business. In their interactions with different startup schemes, they have come to a conclusion that you cannot compete with everyone on everything. Instead, countries should focus on specific groups and startups in order to maximise the return on investment into these schemes meant to attract founders.

Investors don’t respond much to startup visas. Sometimes they don’t even use it once they get it

Startup Lithuania 2016. (Lithuanian government agency) 28 June 2016 “EU Exploring a European Startup Visa Scheme” <https://www.startuplithuania.com/news/eu-exploring-a-european-startup-visa-scheme/>

Generally, countries who already have startup visa schemes, receive lower-than-expected number of applications, participants of the seminar on Attraction of the Entrepreneurial Talent to the EU suggested. For instance, Kasper Gregersen, the Head of Section at the Danish Business Authority (Ministry of Business and Growth) overseeing the Danish startup visa scheme at [Startup Denmark](http://www.startupdenmark.info/), said it received a total of 238 applications (both from individual founders and from teams of two people) since January 2015, however, only 52 were approved. What’s more, only 30 visas were actually used by successful applicants.

Failed in Canada. Startup visas attracted very few immigrants

CBC News 2016 (journalist Lisa Xing) 12 Feb 20176 “Start-up Visa program a 'disappointment,' says Windsor, Ont. Lawyer” <https://www.cbc.ca/news/canada/windsor/start-up-program-disappointment-laywer-says-1.3443956>

It is supposed to be a way to expedite permanent residency for people who want to start their own business in Canada. But three years since its inception in April 2013, just 100 people have come to Canada through the Start-up Visa program, and that includes dependents, CBC News has learned. By 2014, just four people and their five dependents had gained permanent residency through the program, according to Citizenship and Immigration Canada.
'Fanfare has worn off'
"A lot of the fanfare has worn off," Eddie Kadri, an immigration lawyer in Windsor, Ont. told CBC News. "There are some [lawyers] who are more optimistic. But again, I was optimistic when the program was first announced. We all were. But that optimism quickly faded," he said.

3. More Study needed

Experience with startups is limited. We can’t draw conclusions about success yet from existing data

Liam Putazzi 2019 (Policy Analyst at Migration Policy Institute Europe; master's degree in social sciences, with a focus on globalization and migration, from the University of Freiburg, Germany and the University of KwaZulu-Natal, South Africa) July 2019 “Start-Up Visas: A Passport for Innovation and Growth?” <https://www.migrationpolicy.org/research/start-visas-innovation-growth>



4. High failure rate

Startups have >90% failure rate

Startup Lithuania 2016. (Lithuanian government agency) 28 June 2016 “EU Exploring a European Startup Visa Scheme” <https://www.startuplithuania.com/news/eu-exploring-a-european-startup-visa-scheme/>

Startups have a 90%+ failure rate even in thriving ecosystems, and so monitoring their business development after a startup visa is granted and deciding what to do with the ones that fail is another challenge, Jousephine Goube, Chief Operating Officer at Techfugees, an international non-profit coordinating the technology industry answer to the refugee situation, said at the seminar. “Any startup visa scheme must be accountable, transparent and should have a predictable process. Answers should be given fast and the process must be constantly updated to the applicants. Also, countries should expect a huge amount of startup failures, but what they will do about it? Should they help these founders or kick them out? What should be evaluated when deciding on this matter? Countries working on startup visas and the EU must answer to this question”, – J. Goube stated.

DISADVANTAGES

1. Investor fraud

Link: AFF incentivizes individuals who want visas to invent startups

That’s the point of their plan.

Link: Hi-tech startups are often run on hype, exaggeration, and lies. And Europe is especially vulnerable to fakery

Alex Mann 2020 (venture capitalist investor who sits on the board of 6 startups) Don’t believe the hype: Why skepticism is increasingly important for VCs 8 Apr 2020 <https://thenextweb.com/growth-quarters/2020/04/08/heres-why-investing-in-startups-is-riskier-than-ever/>

Startups have long lived by the mantra of ‘fake it till you make it’ and many are built on buzzwords and hype. For example, a blockchain startup claiming to use the technology [without having an actual blockchain](https://ftalphaville.ft.com/2019/12/12/1576151643000/When-is-a-blockchain-startup-not-a-blockchain-startup--/). Or a study last year which revealed that two in five ‘AI startups’ [actually have no AI](https://www.theregister.co.uk/2019/03/05/eu_startups_no_ai/) whatsoever. Founders have come to believe that exaggeration and the latest tech lingo are the best way to land the cash they need to develop their big idea, and in many cases the resulting hype is harmless. But as technology becomes more complex and hyperbole more extreme, this liberal attitude to the truth is starting to pose big problems for [venture capital investors](https://thenextweb.com/growth-quarters/2020/02/14/what-is-venture-capital-why-does-it-matter-for-startups/), bringing even greater risks when investing.
Increasing complexity
With many VCs having little formal scientific training, and with tech getting more sophisticated all the time, sorting scientific fact from fiction is becoming harder. In Europe in particular, the majority of investors still come from a banking or consulting background rather than technology or science. While these broad business-based skills are of course essential for scaling businesses, they aren’t so valuable when analysing highly complex and specialised technologies.

Impact: Fake startups set back legitimate businesses and innovation

Alex Mann 2020 (venture capitalist investor who sits on the board of 6 startups) Don’t believe the hype: Why skepticism is increasingly important for VCs 8 Apr 2020 <https://thenextweb.com/growth-quarters/2020/04/08/heres-why-investing-in-startups-is-riskier-than-ever/>

Investing in venture capital is always going to be risky and our raison d’etre is to back big, bold ideas. But, aside from the obvious losses to investors, fraudulent and overhyped companies have the effect of raising the cost of capital for honest ventures and real innovations in the same space. As such, it is becoming more important than ever for VCs to maintain a healthy dose of skepticism when evaluating startups, and that means investing plenty of time ensuring that there is substance behind the increasingly technical projects and charismatic founders.

2. Startup hype hurts society

Link: AFF hypes the value of “startups”

It’s all through their 1AC

Impact: Hyping startups creates false hope, reduces work ethic, falsely promises something for nothing

Ian Brookes 2018 (former founder, advisor and investor in tech startups) 17 Sept 2018 “Avoid the distractions of startup culture and hype, believe in yourself” <https://thestartupfactory.tech/journal/avoid-the-distractions-of-startup-culture-and-hype-believe-in-yourself>

Enough, I could let you have more, but what is the impact of this startup hullabaloo culture? It is deception in various forms such as outlandish exaggeration, warping of reality or just talking in a way that gives an inaccurate picture of how your startup is actually doing. It’s the lies you tell yourself, and this self-deception is akin to self-harm, that concerns me most. So let’s be clear: startups are starting level companies based on new ideas. It’s a label, nothing more than a time adjective for businesses. Yet it has turned into a tech-cool-hipster way of doing business and it’s a label people yearn for – but how can a ‘business’ that is four years old, with no revenue or customers, still call itself a startup? How can an idea in heads and on paper only be worth £1m? All of this eager desire to carry that image is helping to establish the Endup Culture, because they are ignoring the fundamentals of any business, and equally, downplaying that the striving in hardship and graft that is the reality of startups, is not for everyone. It’s grit not glamour. That’s not to say that the real startup culture isn’t valuable, the culture and ambition that stands for exploring the blank canvas of unsolved problems is worthwhile. There are brilliant ideas out there. But this hype and bravado comes at a price. It’s chipping away at the key things you really need – self-belief and hard work. It’s the Emperor’s New Clothes syndrome. Believing or just even exposing yourself to this noise is an insidious trap. At its heart, it makes you blinded, you second guess yourself and take your eye off the only thing that actually matters: focusing relentlessly on knowing your customers and delivering value to them.

3. Anti-immigrant backlash / EU fragmentation

Link: Political barriers to tech talent immigration into Europe

Joanna Plucinska & Saim Saeed 2017 (journliasts) POLITICO 14 July 2017 “Europe struggles to attract tech talent even as US closes doors” <https://www.politico.eu/article/why-europe-still-lacks-silicon-valleys-sex-appeal/>

It's considered one of the least-tolerant continents toward migrants as populist movements continue to sway public opinion, said Eugenio Ambrosi, [the regional director](http://eea.iom.int/index.php/about-iom/iom-regional-office) of the EU, Norway and Switzerland office of the International Organization for Migration. Meanwhile, the Continent's reputation for tech investmentremains weak, and its inability to grow the next European Google or Facebook makes it a less desirable place for ambitious workers, politicians, civil society and the industry agree.

Link: EU-wide program replacing national programs would be controversial – stoking fear of opening up labor immigration

Joanna Plucinska & Saim Saeed 2017 (journliasts) POLITICO 14 July 2017 “Europe struggles to attract tech talent even as US closes doors” <https://www.politico.eu/article/why-europe-still-lacks-silicon-valleys-sex-appeal/> (first and third sets of brackets added; second brackets in original)

The Commission is trying to boost uptake by revamping the legislation, with a 2016 proposal that [demands](https://www.politico.eu/pro/meps-support-call-for-blue-card-visa-to-supersede-national-schemes/) governments abolish “all national schemes for the admission of third-country nationals for the purpose of highly skilled employment” — an idea [strongly supported by MEPs](https://www.politico.eu/pro/meps-support-call-for-blue-card-visa-to-supersede-national-schemes/) [members of the European Parliament] who also want to cut salary requirements.However, EU countries including Sweden, France, Austria and the Czech Republic are deeply reluctant to give up their own labor migration schemes in favor of an EU-wide approach. They would rather run their own programs in tandem, three EU officials said. The Council of the EU is expected to take a position on the Blue Card reforms later this year. “There is a clear majority in favor of national systems,” an EU diplomat said.
**Other hurdles**Jean-Yves Ntamwezi, a 27-year-old Rwandan-Canadian software engineer at Microsoft in Boston, said the landscape in the U.S. means he's considering his options. Even ahead of this week's announcement on entrepreneur visas, Ntamwezi said the presidential election and the hateful rhetoric that accompanied it made him feel it might be time to head elsewhere. Yet as Trump responds to public opinion by taking strong action to limit foreign workers, the EU quietly faces the same pressures back home. “There is a fear that too much of [a] move to open up labor immigration would resonate very negatively with public opinion,” the IOM's [International Organization for Migration regional director Eugenio] Ambrosi said. “Many leaders would feel backlash in opening up too much."

Link & Brink: Discussion of EU immigration reform will disintegrate the EU

Bodo Weber 2020 (senior associate of the [Democratization Policy Council](http://www.democratizationpolicy.org/), based in Berlin) 9 March 2020 “Threat to EU on Greece-Turkey border is EU-made” <https://euobserver.com/opinion/147672>

The current narrative's complete avoidance of core questions is astounding. Reasoned, rational discussion seems to now be a collective pan-European taboo. EU leaders evidently fear that just by opening up such discussion, the Union would disintegrate. In September 2015, when some of the Visegrád countries declared they would not implement the EU's legally-binding relocation scheme, the Union collapsed as a legal entity in the area of asylum and migration.

Link: EU unity is necessary for beneficial trade deals

Julian Bonte-Friedheim 2020 (head writer at The Perspective) “IS THE EU BETTER OFF DIVIDED OR TOGETHER?” (month not given in the published article) <https://www.theperspective.com/debates/businessandtechnology/is-the-eu-better-off-divided-or-together/>

Better trade deals can be negotiated from within the EU. For any European nation, negotiating trade deals with other countries is much more advantageous as part of the EU rather than as an independent economy. As one of the world’s [biggest economic unions](https://www.thebalance.com/world-s-largest-economy-3306044), the EU has a lot more leverage when brokering a deal with China or India. Being able to offer (or withhold) access to its many consumers is a strong bargaining tool. Additionally, there is [free trading](https://www.ft.com/content/1688d0e4-15ef-11e6-b197-a4af20d5575e) between members of the EU, as it is a customs union. Individual countries, while able to create their own terms, are unlikely to reach deals as beneficial as the EU does on its own.

Brink: Cracks already being seen in EU unity, and even partial non-cooperation will eventually bleed it to death

Hans Vollaard 2020 ( Lecturer in Dutch and European Politics at Utrecht University, the Netherlands.) “One down, many to go? European disintegration after Brexit” 23 March 2020 <https://blogs.lse.ac.uk/brexit/2020/03/23/one-down-many-to-go-european-disintegration-after-brexit/>

Even though there may not be other instances of European disintegration like Brexit, dissatisfaction may lead to other forms of disintegration. Not by countries leaving the EU entirely, but only partially. These partial exits involve member states not complying with the EU rules, for instance with respect to public finances in the Eurozone (Italy), or the Schengen rules, many member states have introduced “temporary” national border surveillance since the migration crisis of 2015. Another partial exit is the desire to pay less money to ‘Brussels’, such as expressed by the so-called Hanseatic group of EU member states led by the Netherlands. Disintegration can also occur involuntarily, when one member state wants to exclude another member state, such as the calls to push Greece out of the euro or the Schengen area. These partial forms of disintegration undermine the functioning of the EU. Its rules are less respected, and it gets fewer resources to function properly. In such a scenario, the EU would gradually ‘bleed to death’.

Impact: Devastating economic impact. Financial recession

Mauro Guillen 2016 (holder of the Zandman Endowed Professorship in International Management at the Wharton School. He served as Director of the Lauder Institute of Management & International Studies between 2007 and 2019. PhD in sociology from Yale University and a Doctorate in political economy from the University of Oviedo in Spain.) 13 June 2016 “On the Brink: How a Brexit Could Fracture a Fragile Europe” <https://knowledge.wharton.upenn.edu/article/on-the-brink-how-brexit-could-fracture-a-fragile-europe/>

The European Union is the largest economy in the world. It’s not as rich as the U.S., but it is bigger in terms of gross domestic product if you combine those 28 countries. If there is a crisis of confidence that undermines consumer spending and business confidence, then you are going to get into maybe even a third recession. That would be devastating for Europe itself, but it would be really bad for everybody else in the world that has business with Europe, including the United States. Exporters to Europe and American companies that have investments in Europe are going to suffer. Companies such as GE or GM or Boeing, 20% to 30% of their business is in Europe, so it could have a large impact.

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