



An Roinn Dlí agus Cirt  
agus Comhionannais  
Department of Justice  
and Equality

# Start-up Entrepreneur Programme

## Migrant Entrepreneur's Gateway to Ireland

Aonghus O'Connor



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STEP:

The importance of migrant entrepreneurs

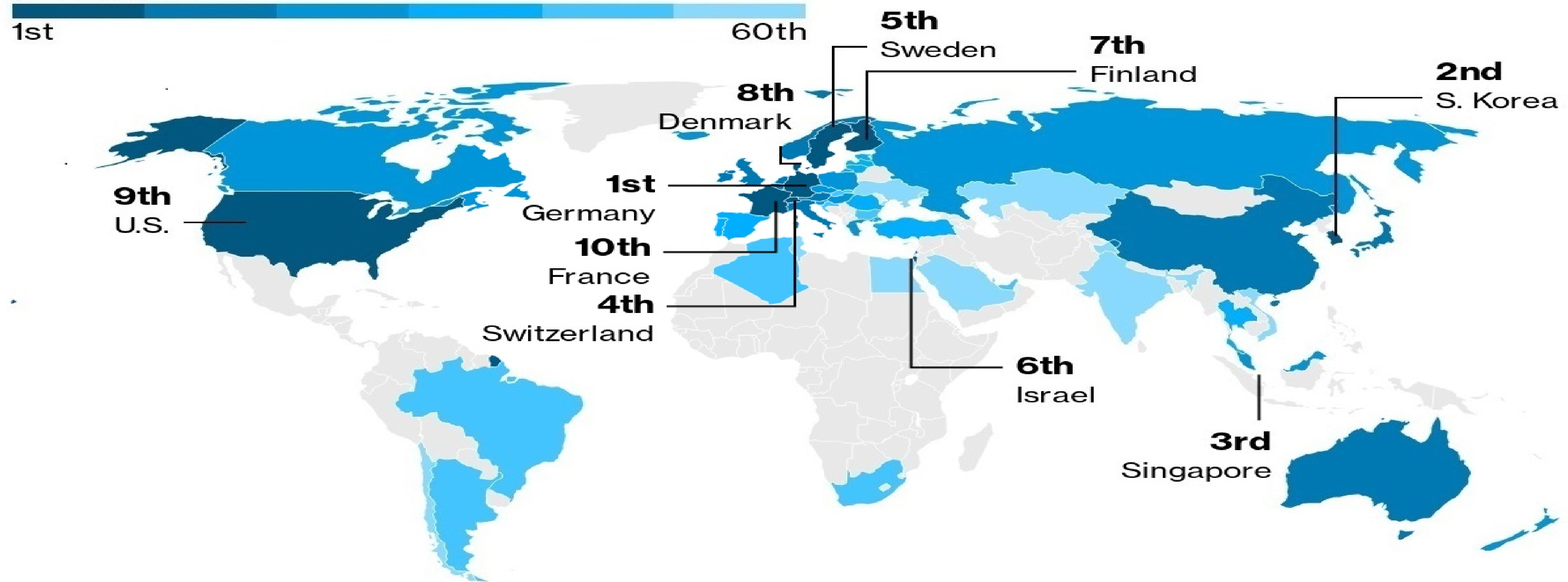
# The importance of Innovation – Ireland ranked 16<sup>th</sup>



## World's 60 Most Innovative Economies

China inches into top 15 in 2020 as Japan drops out of top 10

Innovation rank



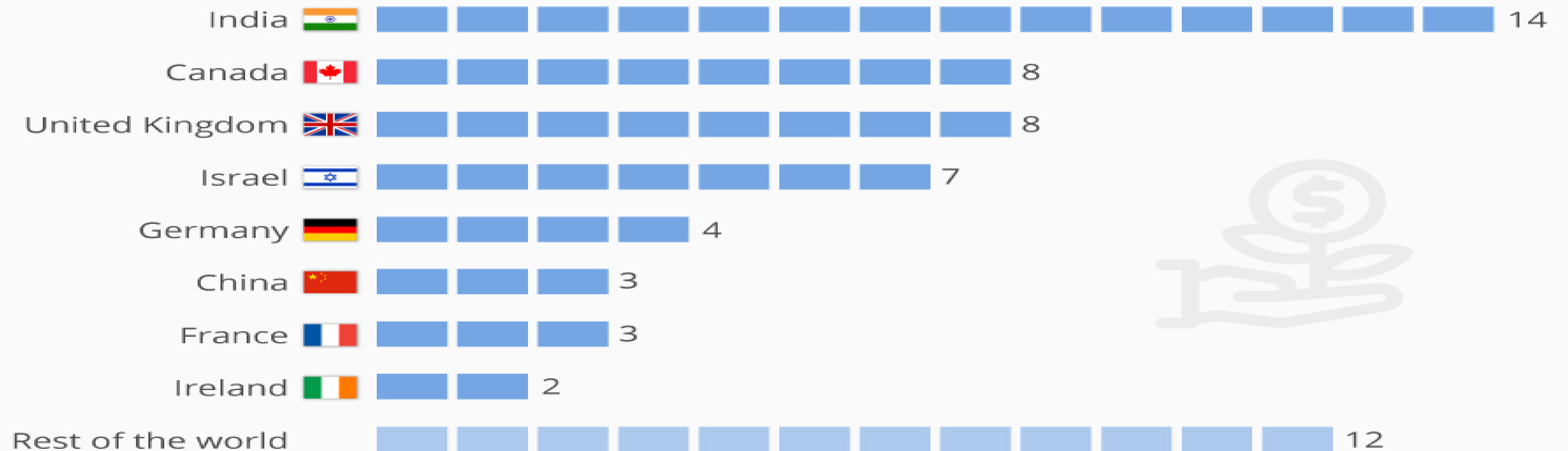
Sources: Bloomberg, International Labour Organization, International Monetary Fund, World Bank, Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development, World Intellectual Property Organization, United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization

# The importance of migration and entrepreneurship



## Immigrant Entrepreneurs Shape America's Startup Economy

Countries of origin of immigrant founders of billion-dollar startups in the United States\*



As of Jan. 1, 2016, 44 of 87 U.S. startups valued at \$1 billion or more were (co-)founded by immigrants.



\* as of January 1, 2016

Source: National Foundation for American Policy





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# STEP:

## An overview of Ireland



# Ireland as a start-up destination



- European Digital City Index ranks Dublin in the top 10 cities in Europe for start-ups
- 1<sup>st</sup> in Mentoring
- 2<sup>nd</sup> for Entrepreneurial Culture
- 2,200 Start-ups in Dublin alone
- Ireland hosts c. 80% of the world's global tech companies
- Ireland leaders in Fintech, Medtech and Agtech



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STEP:

Statistics and review 2012-2019

# STEP: A Review 2012-2019



- 495 applications received
- 162 applications approved
- 33% approval rate



# STEP: A Review 2012-2019



- 9 companies selected at random from successful applicants
- 121 staff employed across the 9 companies – average of 13 staff per company
- €10m venture funding received

# Case Study 1 – Romero Games



- Founded in 2015 by gaming industry legend John Romero and BAFTA award winner Brenda Romero
- Located in Galway
- Currently employs 28 staff with over 200 game credits across the team
- 2 games already released
- 1 upcoming game due for release in 2020 “Empire of Sin”
- Empire of Sin won 7 awards at E3 2019 and has been included in 10 most anticipated titles lists





# Case Study 2 – Vela Games



- Founded in 2017 by industry veterans with experience in gaming giants such as EA, Activision and Riot Games
- Located in Dublin
- Currently employs 16 staff + 1 office dog
- Targeting 65+ staff within the next 2 years
- Has secured €3.4m in seed funding
- Currently working on their first title
- Listed as an Irish start-up to watch by EU [start-ups](#).



# STEP: Stakeholder Engagement included



- Past and Current participants
- 3<sup>rd</sup> level education sector (Institutes of Technology and Universities)
- Incubators and Accelerators
- EU Counterparts



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STEP:

EU Comparisons



# STEP: Benchmarking Ireland's offering vs EU



- Various European Counters offerings were reviewed to better understand the “best practice”
  - *Estonia*
  - *Denmark*
  - *Netherlands*
  - *Sweden*
- Attendance Conference pan European conference to speak to national counterparts

# Shared problem areas across EU programmes



- Difficult to measure the impact of start-ups
- Challenging to measure job creation or investment
- Lack of collaboration
- Barriers to entry - restrictions

# Start-up - Estonia



- Up to 5 years residence permission available to entrepreneurs
- Innovative business plan reviewed by expert panel
- At least €1800 per year to support the entrepreneur
- Dedicated website and office <https://startupestonia.ee/about>

# Start-up - Denmark



- 2 year residence permission available to successful entrepreneurs which can be renewed
- Innovative business plan reviewed by expert panel
- Teams of three entrepreneurs may come together
- At least €18,500 funding required to support the entrepreneur in the first year
- A dedicated website and office <https://startupdenmark.info/how-apply>

# Start-up - Netherlands



- 12 month permission available for entrepreneurs
- Must be supported by an approved industry mentor
- Innovative product or service
- Step by step plan to establish business in NL
- Sufficient funds available to support the entrepreneur
- Dedicated webpages <https://business.gov.nl/coming-to-the-netherlands/permits-and-visa/startup-visa/>



# Start-up - Sweden



- No special scheme for start-ups in Sweden
- Alternate avenues for entrepreneurs to establish a business e.g. student permission
- World class start-up ecosystem
- 2 unicorn (€1bn valuation) start-ups founded in Sweden despite no specific start-up programme

# Learnings



- Residence offering varies 2-5 years
- Submissions reviewed by Start-up experts
- Expert advisory is a key aspect
- Capital vs Subsistence model
- Web presence



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STEP:

Key review learnings

# STEP: Specific Learnings from stakeholders



- Lack of dedicated information and support
- Lack of clarity / legalistic language
- Lack of collaboration
- Barriers to entry to the scheme too high

# STEP: New approach



- Application windows removed in 2019 for STEP
- A dedicated webpage with enhanced content to be launched
- Resources dedicated to start-up unit
- On-going stakeholder engagement
- Take a greater collaborative approach
- Alignment with EU best practice
- Greater leveraging of technology for processing applications