

INCREDIBOL! – BOLOGNA CREATIVE INNOVATION



SUPPORT JOBS CREATIVE INDUSTRIES
LOCAL DEVELOPMENT INSTITUTIONAL
EMPLOYMENT ECONOMIC URBAN PLANNING

1. Context

The Emilia-Romagna Region is one of the most developed regions in Italy, home to world-renowned enterprises in sectors such as mechanical, agri-food and fashion – A vast cultural heritage characterizes the cities of the region. Parma and Bologna are part of the UNESCO Creative Cities Network, the former for gastronomy, the latter for music, while Modena, Ferrara and Ravenna all have UNESCO World heritage sites.

Situated at the heart of Italy, Bologna is the capital of Emilia-Romagna. Thanks to its strategic location it has always been a crossroads of peoples and cultures. It is seat of the most ancient University in the Western World which still draws students from all over Italy and abroad - also due to pertinent degree programs attracting artists and creative talents. Its cultural offerings are extensive and varied and, in relation to the Italian context, it always ranks high for quality of life and the consumption of products and services related to culture and the arts.

2. Bologna and culture

The Municipality of Bologna provides the human resources for the project, as well as unused spaces - allowing for a strategic use of abandoned public heritage. Incredibol started as a pilot project on a smaller budget managed by the Department of Culture of the Municipality, while nowadays it is a permanent program. The city and the region have signed, in 2016, a political agreement to pursue support to the regional cultural and creative sector. At the same time the CCI sector was officially included in the regional Smart Specialization Strategy 2014-2020. Culture and creativity, together with more traditional specific areas (agri-food, constructions, mechatronics and wellness), represent the pillars of the regional future economic development.

Incredibol, among others, aims at tackling the brain-drain effect. Students graduate but face the lack of a business dimension of the CCIs as well as entrepreneurial skills. Incredibol aims at retaining qualified professionals within the region to create jobs and face economic recession. The project also allows for a creative use of public spaces: the municipality, thanks to creative professionals and the activities they carry out, revitalises certain areas through a bottom-up regeneration process. Last but not least, conceiving a model whose main asset is not represented by high budgets rather the *supporting system* built around it, intends to generate long-lasting effects and solutions.

THE GENERAL AIM OF THE INCREDIBOL PROJECT IS TO ENHANCE THE DEVELOPMENT OF ARTISTIC, CULTURAL AND CREATIVE INDUSTRIES IN THE EMILIA-ROMAGNA REGION, AND STRENGTHEN THE ENTREPRENEURIAL DIMENSION OF THIS SECTOR.

During the process, Incredibol weaved links with global agendas including the UN 2030 Agenda and Agenda 21 for Culture:

UN 2030 Agenda

- Goal 4: The project encourages lifelong learning education in conventional and non-conventional ways.
- Goal 8: The project has been encouraging creative talents to remain and operate locally. These professionals are highly specialized, tend to adopt green lifestyles and tend to employ almost the same percentage of men and women.
- Goal 13: Spaces – which had started falling into decay – belonging to the municipality, are provided for free to creative talents, thus *avoiding potential overbuilding*.
- Goal 16: The project contributes to the creation of inclusive societies and effective institutions by involving public and private entities whose vision is based on shared responsibilities towards the territory and society as a whole. It does so by embracing a multi-level governance both vertically and horizontally and supporting talents with limited means while encouraging them to connect with the city.

Agenda 21 for culture



- Undertaking 18. Incredibol promotes the expansion of cultural goods and services by supporting regional cultural and creative industries in their start-up phase. Also, it helps strengthen new forms of expression through policies and pilot projects in different fields.
- Undertaking 20. Through its main call, it provides funds to the winners in an unconventional way: contrary to average calls, funds are given mostly in advance.
- Undertaking 27. Public spaces are granted to professionals who refurbish them and regenerate buildings which leads to an improvement of the surrounding area.
- Undertaking 30. Thanks to the ties and collaborations with the region, the CCIs sector is now part of the regional strategy for economic development.
- Undertaking 31. Incredibol adopts an innovative approach for a public administration making an extensive use of digital platforms to promote activities.
- Undertaking 40. Incredibol encourages cooperation among players, the creation of networks of people, entities and knowledge, exchanges among diverse domains.

3. Goals and project implementation

1.1. Main aim and specific goals

The general aim of the Incredibol project is to enhance the development of artistic, cultural and creative industries in the Emilia-Romagna Region and strengthen the entrepreneurial dimension of this sector. Specific goals:

1. Retain creative talents. Creating opportunities and facilitating processes to make sure culture and creativity are not bound to be just *leisure activities*, rather an actual sector that can generate growth and new chances.

2. Encourage interactions with other sectors. Incredibol intends to challenge the mindset according to which the CCIs sector and the traditional ones have nothing in common, in fact they can both benefit from each other.
3. Urban regeneration. Incredibol found a unique solution to solve two problems: provide a space for professionals with a business idea and improve certain areas of the city that had experienced depopulation. It does so by renting for free abandoned spaces belonging to the municipality to the winners of the Incredibol call.
4. Enhance city attractiveness. A vast and innovative cultural offering stimulates quality tourism and makes cities more lively for the community itself.
5. Face the challenges of today's society with a resilient approach and innovative solutions. Certain problems can become opportunities for other groups of people (e.g. abandoned spaces).

INCREDIBOL AIMS AT TACKLING THE BRAIN-DRAIN EFFECT BY RETAINING QUALIFIED PROFESSIONALS WITHIN THE REGION TO CREATE JOBS AND FACE ECONOMIC RECESSION.

1.2. Development of the project

Main actions carried out

Phases

1. The main call for projects is announced yearly, the communication campaign (tours in cities, private appointment meetings, etc) ensures that all interested people know about the call and how to apply. After the deadline a commission is formed and all applications are examined. When the winners are announced, the staff meets up with each of them individually to start the tutoring process, outline a strategy and design a tailor-made support.
2. Throughout the year Incredibol! acts as an intermediary conveying information, announcing calls for proposals/projects organized by other entities through its platforms.
3. Workshops and meetings on entrepreneurship, innovation and creativeness are also held and organized – which are facilitated and supported by its partners.
4. The second call on the internationalization of the creative enterprises, which was created later, is also announced on a yearly basis and it is addressed to all enterprises in the field.
5. Partners are constantly engaged and informed. They are invited to the annual meeting where the impacts of the project are communicated, new plans for the future are made, ideas and opinions are shared.

Partners

There are different types of partners: educational institutions, consultancy firms, research centers etc (to find out more, please see: <http://www.incredibol.net/en/partners/>)

Stakeholders

1. The Emilia-Romagna region: it provides a large part of the funds to support the project. Through Incredibol actions and outputs, the region can easily understand the needs of the cultural and creative sector (and improve policies, for instance).
2. The Municipality of Bologna: It provides funds and human resources. Creative talents, using its real estates, free the Municipality from having to take care of deteriorating spaces.
3. Cultural and creative talents: they receive funds they can invest in their main activity; saving money on rent allows them to make smarter investments and grow; they receive tailor-made support from partners. By remaining in the region they help develop an ecosystem of creative talents that can improve the region as a whole.



4. Partners of the project: working closely with the winners allows them to increase their network and understand habits and behaviours of the professionals operating within the creative and cultural sector; cooperating with a public entity (the Municipality of Bologna) lets partners enjoy a good reputation, often leading to recognition in the industry; they often become the professionals to whom creative professionals refer to; they increase their knowledge on CCIs which allows them to specialize deeply in this field.
5. House owners: redeveloped and used spaces lead to a decrease in crime rate and an increase in the value of the building, which is a positive effect for home owners in that area

Budget

In 2017, 150.000,00 euros were allocated by the Emilia-Romagna region while the Municipality of Bologna provided +50,000.00 euros. However, the financial budget does not take into account the salaries for the human resources working for the project (municipal public servants), rent-free spaces provided by the city, and in-kind services provided by the partners.

Results

1. Increasing importance of the CCIs sector at regional level (and positive outcomes for the economy)
2. Improvement in the strategic use of public heritage for creativity-based projects
Transfer of this practice to other contexts (e.g- KRACH in Chemnitz, Germany)

4. Impacts

1.1. Direct impacts

Impacts on the local government

Bologna has included the Incredibol project in its annual programming. It started in 2010 as a pilot project within the Department of Culture that would manage one Call for Projects for start-ups. Today,

the Incredibol office, made up of 4 people, is within the Economic Development and City Promotion Department and runs several kinds of activities and calls to support the CCI sector.

Impact on culture and on local cultural actors

The Emilia-Romagna Region has included the CCI sector in its Smart Specialization Strategy 2014-2020, using, as a framework for its policies, among others, the experience and outcomes provided by Incredibol. In 2016, the Municipality and the Region signed a political agreement expressing the will to follow a common direction to improve the CCI sector of the region. In doing so, the Emilia-Romagna region truly acknowledges the pivotal role Incredibol has played in enhancing this industry. Forecast, trends and future developments in the CCI sector, made possible with direct contact with professionals, entities etc., lead to a continuous evolution of policies and actions.

THE EFFECTIVENESS OF THE PROJECT LIES IN THE FACT THAT, BECAUSE OF INCREDIBOL, THERE IS GREATER AWARENESS ON THE CULTURAL AND CREATIVE INDUSTRIES, AND THAT IS HAS BEEN RECOGNIZED AS A GOOD PRACTICE AND WAS USED AND ADAPTED IN OTHER CONTEXTS.

1.2. Evaluation

The project has been evaluated by several external players, such as the ETF (European Training Foundation) and has been recognized as a good practice numerous time:

- 2011, special prize for young cultural policies "Cultura di Gestione" Federculture
- 2013, best Italian project of the European Enterprise Promotion Awards within the category Improving the Business Environment
- 2014, Culture For Cities and Regions, network EURO CITIES, Good practice
- 2015, ETF European Training Foundation Good Practice
- 2017, URBACT Good Practice

The staff of the project is now working on the impact generated thanks to the assignment of spaces owned by the Municipality: how certain neighbourhoods have improved, how many new business activities have established in the surrounding areas, how much the quality of life of the inhabitants has improved.

The data available at the moment on all participants to the main call (those who have won and those who have not) regard gender, education, age, partnerships etc. At the moment, the impact studies available are only related to the winners of the project.

However, the staff would like to deepen the research by involving all participants in order to understand how Incredibol support system (grants, services, networking opportunities) has impacted on the development of businesses in the long-term.

1.3. Key factors

The effectiveness of the project lies in the fact that, because of Incredibol, there is greater awareness of the cultural and creative industries and that it has been recognized as a good practice and was used and adapted in other contexts (e.g. KRACH in Chemnitz; several study visits).

1.4. Continuity

The project started by launching a call in 2010, and has been operating ever since. In 2013, the Emilia-Romagna Region recognized the positive outcomes generated by the project on the territory, and started cofunding it. In 2016, the Municipality and the Region signed a *programme agreement* to communicate they would pursue strategies and policies to enhance this sector.

5. Further information

Bologna was a candidate for the third "UCLG Mexico City – Culture 21 International Award" (November 2017 – May 2018). The jury for the award drew up its final report in June of 2016, and requested that the Committee on Culture promote this project as one of the good practices to be implemented through Agenda 21 for culture.

This article was written by INCREDIBOL! Staff, coordinated by Giorgia Boldrini, Municipality of Bologna, Italy.

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