

IncrediBOL! - Bologna's Creative Innovation

Context

Creativity is one of the main elements that make Bologna renowned. Home to the oldest University in the Western world (founded in 1088), thousands of students come here every year from all over the world. First in the Italian Smart City Index, Bologna's cultural offer is rich and diverse, thanks to the high quality of opportunities and events, especially in the music field.

At the international level, Bologna has always been involved in projects and networks in the field of culture; it was awarded the title of European Capital of Culture in 2000 and is UNESCO Creative City of Music since 2006. In 2010, the City of Bologna launched IncrediBOL! project to support CCIs: also thanks to this initiative, Emilia-Romagna Region has considered cultural and creative industries as a priority for Emilia-Romagna's Smart Specialisation Strategy (S3) for 2014-2020, as a potential innovative economic driver.

Challenges

Cultural and creative professionals are flourishing in Bologna, but the sector remains fragmented and its actors often lack managerial and organisational skills. This situation causes low turnover and profit margin in the sector. Moreover, the city suffers from brain drain: after their studies, the best creative talents move to other regions, offering more opportunities. The main challenge for Bologna is therefore to retain talents, offering young people opportunities to build a creative business at the local level, while keeping an eye on the global market.

The Project

IncrediBOL! - acronym for Bologna's Creative Innovation - is a project aimed at supporting professionals and businesses in the cultural and creative field, during their start-up phase.

IncrediBOL! is a network of 30 public and private partners, offering different services to help young creative professionals to develop their ideas into business. The basic concept is: selection of best projects through an annual call for proposals, small grants and rent-free spaces for the winners, tailor-made training, consultancies and promotion; pilot projects in different sectors of CCIs.

IncrediBOL! started in 2010 and since then it has continued to grow; it is coordinated by the City of Bologna but open to the whole Emilia-Romagna Region, that supports the project through a multi-annual strategic and financial agreement.

After seven years of INCREDiBOL!'s activity, a growing creative community and real creative hubs are developing in the city and in the region. Since 2010, 82 creative projects have won IncrediBOL! call.

Over the years INCREDiBOL! has received different awards:

- 2011, Best Italian youth policy, Federculture, Italy
- 2013 EEPA National Winner and European Runner-Up
- 2015, ETF European Training Foundation Good Practice

In 7 years, around 1100 hours in training sessions were provided

In 7 years, 82 projects selected and supported through small grants, rent-free spaces, and services: free training, coaching, consultancies, promotion.

77 out of 82 projects are still ongoing (1 project ended, 4 projects inactive)

94% of the projects selected are successfully carrying out their activities

50% of them also works at the international level

Incredibol! can work on a limited budget (150.000 per year) because it is mainly based on non-financial resources. Training and consultancies are provided by Incredibol!'s network partners and the coordination staff from the City of Bologna. The non-financial part of the project has been estimated at more than €500,000 per year in rents, training, consulting and promotional services, etc.

INCREDIBOL operates through different policies and actions:

- Cross-sectorial collaboration: The integrated and participative approach of INCREDIBOL allows the winners to be able to deal with different economic sectors
- Sustainable economic development: promoting 'spillovers' between the creative sector and traditional sectors, INCREDIBOL! helps the innovation of the traditional economical sectors .
- Education & Skills: INCREDIBOL! cooperates with partner training institutions creating tailor-made initiatives and offering free advice.
- Social inclusion: INCREDIBOL! helps the implementation of inclusive policies and actions in the city promoting social and non-technological innovation
- Employment: More than 4% of regional employment is related to the CCIs sector, and Incredibol is the leading project in the area.
- Innovation: New businesses financed by INCREDIBOL! are innovative and with good opportunities to develop.
- Respect for the environment: CCIs are a 'green' sector and the re-use of Municipality's spaces encourages green urban regeneration.