



New practices of
GRASSROOTS INNOVATION
for **DEMAND DRIVEN BUSINESS**

DESIGN OPTIONS PAPER

Grassroots support schemes
for young SMEs

Agenzia Regionale per la Tecnologia e l'Innovazione (ARTI Puglia)
Fundacion FUNDECYT Parque Científico y Tecnológico de Extremadura
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PART I – Introduction and Background

GIDDB project and partners

“New practices of Grassroots Innovation for Demand Driven Businesses” (short GIDDB) was a 9-months peer-learning project financed by the European Union’s Horizon 2020 Research and Innovation Programme. It was coordinated by ARTI Puglia (IT) and implemented in collaboration with FUNDECYT-PCTEX (ES) and IFKA (HU).

The project aimed at discussing and identifying possible policy support mechanisms for improving innovativeness in SMEs primarily founded and managed by young entrepreneurs (18-35 years of age) by applying a grassroots approach.

The present document represents the final deliverable of the project.

ARTI Puglia

ARTI Puglia is the Regional Agency for Technology and Innovation of the Italian Region of Apulia. It was established with Regional Law no. 1 of 7 January 2004. As an operational body of the regional government, it came into full operation in autumn 2005.

ARTI was established with the objective to promote and consolidate the System of Regional Innovation, i.e. the networking of public and private players implementing common strategies. In particular, it operates to promote regional innovativeness and competitiveness strategies, to favour the relations between science and industry and between science and society, to support the innovativeness of enterprises, and to favour the networking of all the players of the regional R&I system at international level.

The activities performed by ARTI are based on the fundamental role of research and innovation for the achievement of economic growth and social cohesion. Its actions are part of a more comprehensive strategy of economic development pursued by the Apulian Regional Government and they are addressed to promote, stimulate and meet the needs for innovation and continuous training of human resources, local enterprises and production systems.

With regard to the design and implementation of innovation policies, ARTI tackles many aspects and phases of the lifecycle of regional measures and programmes, from conception to management, monitoring and evaluation. Among these policies are the support of innovative start-ups, R&D in SMEs, and industry clusters.

ARTI has run a series of research and pilot initiatives designed as experimental innovation policies targeted to young entrepreneurs and new business. These were mainly based on social needs and characterised by the will to better exploit the strengths of bottom-up innovations and grassroots initiatives. Among these are “Laboratori dal Basso” and “Giovani Innovatori in Azienda”, both further illustrated in Part II of this document.

Moreover, ARTI develops specific actions in order to support innovation and competitiveness in SMEs founded by young entrepreneurs. Among these are “Start Cup Puglia”, a business-plan competition created in 2008 and presently at its 9th edition, and “La scuola di Bollenti Spiriti”, a temporary school for local development, youth policies, social entrepreneurship, urban regeneration and animation of the community.

FUNDECYT-PCTEX

The Foundation FUNDECYT Science and Technology Park of Extremadura (FUNDECYT-PCTEX) is a non-profit organisation based in Extremadura (Spain) with the aim of contributing to the social and economic exploitation of science and technology in the region, of fostering innovative entrepreneurship, and of supporting and promoting scientific and technological development and a better use of research and innovation outcomes.

The mission of FUNDECYT-PCTEX is to create the space and services needed to facilitate the exchange of know-how, science and technology for the socio-economic development of Extremadura. Its vision focuses on the consolidation of its service to support innovation, entrepreneurship and cooperation for the promotion of smart, sustainable and inclusive growth of the region.

FUNDECYT-PCTEX hosts more than 80 innovative companies in its facilities in Cáceres and Badajoz and supports regional entrepreneurs and SMEs with advanced services related to business idea development, consolidation and validation, business development and innovation. Moreover, FUNDECYT-PCTEX fosters regional R&D&i activities by connecting and coordinating the exchange of knowledge among entrepreneurs, scientists, and social and institutional agents, as well as by providing consultancy services to regional bodies. FUNDECYT-PCTEX also provides technical assistance to the Regional Government for the design and implementation of policies, such as the Smart Specialisation Strategy (RIS3) or the Digital Agenda of Extremadura, and works in close relation with enterprises, the University of Extremadura, R&D centres and other regional stakeholders to foster innovation.

FUNDECYT-PCTEX is continuously promoting and fostering the employability of young people in the region. For more than 13 years, it has facilitated the development of their professional competences, abilities and skills through the implementation of work placements abroad in the framework of transnational mobility projects, especially under the former European Commission's Lifelong Learning Programme (now Erasmus+ Programme). FUNDECYT-PCTEX further organises training programmes on entrepreneurs and entrepreneurship as a part of its regular activities and through specific actions or projects. In this framework, it particularly focuses on the development of the innovation potential of the region's SMEs and the skills of workers in order to increase their competitiveness.

IFKA Public Benefit Non-Profit Ltd. for the Development of the Industry

IFKA Public Benefit Non-Profit Ltd. for the Development of the Industry is the auxiliary organization (government agency) for the Ministry for National Economy (Hungary). For over 25 years, IFKA's extensive network of connections has promoted liaisons between the supply and demand sides of the economy in the fields of education, improving job opportunities, research and innovation. IFKA is strategic partner to the Hungarian Enterprise Europe Network, dealing with technology transfer between stakeholders, and to the Hungarian Association of Innovation.

As an Intermediary Organization, IFKA is supporting Hungarian (start-up) entrepreneurs under COSME's Erasmus For Young Entrepreneurs Programme in EU-wide knowledge exchange, as well as under Climate KIC's Pioneers into Practice programme, addressed to skill development in the field of the circular economy. In Hungary, IFKA contributes to shaping mindsets of entrepreneurs through the priority project 'Industry 4.0' that aims to re-industrialize the ways industry works. As part of its economic development activities, IFKA is running the 'Market Mate' project under the Economic Development and Innovation Operational Programme (EDIOP), addressed to increase the employment capacity of social enterprises in convergence regions.

IFKA is further leading the project SOCIAL SEEDS 'Exploiting Potentials of Social Enterprises through Standardized European Evaluation and Development System' under the INTERREG EUROPE Programme, with the aim of shaping and improving current regional policy instruments on social enterprises across Europe.

The Grassroots approach

Grassroots policy support actions for young SMEs are community-led solutions for increasing innovativeness and sustainability in small and medium enterprises created and managed by the young. They seek to experiment with alternative forms of knowledge creation and processes for innovation and thus have a great potential to offer promising new ideas and practices.

As bottom-up solutions they respond to local situations and the interests and values of the communities involved, thus directly supporting a process of joint and sustainable development.

This document intends to show possibilities to approach the important issues of youth unemployment, NEETs and inactive youth by ideating new approaches to youth policy design that start from the grassroots and apply a bottom-up strategy as much as possible in all stages of planning and implementation.

Youth unemployment and NEETs in Europe

Youth unemployment across the European Union remains unacceptably high and the consequences for society will be, and already are, significant. The economic crisis severely hit the young; according to the latest Eurostat data (July 2016), the youth unemployment rate in the EU-28 has still been close to 20% at the end of 2015 (compared to 15.1 % in the first quarter of 2008).¹ In the middle of 2012, the Euro Area youth unemployment rate even overtook the EU-28 rate, with the gap further widening in the following years.

These data concern young people between 18 and 24 years of age. However, for a considerable part of this population, this period of their life continues to be a time of school and studying and, therefore, finding a job is of secondary or no importance. The time for approaching the labour market arrives in their mid-twenties and many graduates believe to be exposed to only a small risk of unemployment after higher education. Unfortunately, it becomes ever more evident that also a tertiary-level education is not a guarantee for direct employment upon graduation around the EU any more.

While employment rates for recent tertiary education graduates in Germany, Malta, Sweden or the Netherlands exceeded 90% in 2015, only half of Greece's graduates, only 57.5% of Italy's graduates and only 68.7% of Spain's graduates found employment.² As underlined by Eurostat analyses, "the impact of the [financial and economic] crisis on access to the labour market of graduates was particularly pronounced in Greece and Italy, where the employment rate of recent graduates fell by almost 15.0 percentage points during the most recent 10-year period for which data are available. There were also considerable reductions in Spain, Portugal and Ireland — all of which were amongst those Member States most seriously affected by the crisis — as employment rates of recent graduates fell by 10.0 points or more".

Inaccessibility of qualified job opportunities for tertiary graduates furthers yet another unwelcome development, as shown by the same Eurostat data: in order to work, tertiary graduates may choose to accept jobs for which they are over-qualified – thus shifting part of the labour market that is accessible to young people with a lower degree of education away from these. At the same time, tertiary graduates accepting under-qualified jobs only boost the employment rate of this group numerically. They face limitations to express their full potential, may become discouraged and are likely to create a lesser worth, in terms of ideas, productivity, development, innovation, and so forth, for their territories and society.

A further indicator for the continuously challenging labour market situation for European youth is the percentage of NEETs, whose share rose all over Europe in the wake of the economic and financial crisis. The share of young people from 15 to 34 years of age neither in employment nor in education or training was 16.1% in the EU-28 in 2015. However, the share of NEETs among 15 to 19 year olds is considerably lower than in the group from 20 to 34, where it approaches almost 20% (one in five

¹ Eurostat, [Unemployment statistics](#), page revision 11/08/2016 – the data concerns young people aged 15 to 24.

² Eurostat, [Employment rates of recent graduates](#), page revision 30/09/2016 – the data concerns young people aged 20–34 years who have recently graduated from either upper secondary or tertiary levels of education

young Europeans). While there is not much of a difference regarding male and female NEETs up to 24 years of age, Eurostat shows a growing rift between the sexes among 25 to 29 year olds and, even more, among the 30 to 34 year olds. The share of male NEETs actually decreases significantly for this last group, while the share of female NEETs is the highest of all sub-groups (after having continuously increased every 5 years).³

Youth entrepreneurship in Europe

In today's economy, experience, adequate skills/competences, established business networks and stable sources of financing continue to be regarded elements of success for the creation of new businesses. In this context, the young do not seem to be a likely target. They are often inexperienced, face greater barriers for accessing finances, and have not yet had the time to create themselves a professional network. The bureaucratic and administrative management of starting a business may also be scarier to them than to older self-entrepreneurs.

However, youth entrepreneurship is a topic of increasing interest in the EU and new forms of creating and doing business are emerging with it.

Self-employment activities of young people vary in different Member States. Countries like Italy and Greece register a share in youth self-employment of 15% or more, while northern regions like Germany or Denmark show a share of only about 3%.⁴ An immediate explanation of this gap could be given by the difference in framework conditions and access to business creation support in the different countries – even though expectations for finding favourable start-up conditions would generally be higher for the northern European territories, given their stronger economies and steady consumer markets. The data seems inverted though and the percentage figures rather seem to reflect the economic and labour market situations in the different European countries. Where youth employment reaches 90% and options are plentiful, young minds tend to consider self-employment less or not at all. In territories like Italy and Greece on the other hand, where even tertiary graduates' employment rates are below 70%, a higher share of self-employment activities goes hand in hand with limited access to the labour market and the lack of employment possibilities for young people.

The young may be inexperienced when it comes to business creation but by taking their futures in their own hands, they regain a sense of self-worth and of purpose. Instead of waiting for a job to come up, they attempt to create work for themselves and thus actively try to solve their situation before considering leaving their home region or mother nation. Eurofound's 2015 report Youth entrepreneurship in Europe: Values, attitudes, policies summarises the entrepreneurial personality of Europe's youth and its impacts on their social behaviour: "[...] among young people[,] self-employment is positively associated with self-direction and stimulation, and negatively related to tradition, conformity and security. These results suggest that it is important for young self-employed people to be free and creative, to try different things in life and take risks; this group is less inclined to follow tradition and to prioritise having a secure and stable environment. Openness to change is a specific behavioural characteristic of young self-employed people, while conformity is clearly associated with employees."⁵

In a nutshell: young entrepreneurs may be inexperienced, but they are driven and creative and often gain success thanks to new ways of thinking and unconventional solutions.

In Europe, youth-operated businesses tend to be concentrated in markets and industries with low barriers to entry, e.g. construction (18.7% of youth businesses compared with 13.8% for adults), information and communication (4.9% for youth compared with 2.7% for adults) and other service

³ Eurostat, Statistics on young people neither in employment nor in education or training, page revision 01/09/2016

⁴ Eurofound, Youth entrepreneurship in Europe: Values, attitudes, policies, Publications Office of the European Union, Luxembourg, p. 1, 2015.

⁵ Eurofound, Youth entrepreneurship in Europe: Values, attitudes, policies, Publications Office of the European Union, Luxembourg, p. 2, 2015.

firms (7.5% compared with 4.9%). They focus on narrow product lines and primarily focus their activities in local markets.⁶

However, youth entrepreneurship is still low. Eurofound has collected data that illustrates that almost half of young Europeans would like to become entrepreneurs, a much higher share than those actually self-employed.⁷ While the lack of experience and missing networks can be overcome by pro-activeness and enthusiasm, a major challenge for young start-ups is the availability of finances and financing opportunities. Especially in the cultural and social sector, young people with entrepreneurial ideas often lack the knowledge or skill to identify and access sources of funding and they struggle much more in the acquisition of private funds and investments than their counterparts in the technological fields.

Visible and cross-sectorial public policies and support instruments to enhance youth entrepreneurship therefore play an important role in creating heterogeneous start-up opportunities of a territory's youth, from classic incubation and acceleration frameworks to new support forms that enhance young ideas based on particular social values, soft skills and transversal topics.

The territorial context of the GIDDB project

Italy and Apulia

As introduced in the previous section, Italy was hit hard by the financial and economic crises and youth unemployment remains a big issue. The unemployment rate from 15 to 34 years of age recorded by the Italian National Institute of Statistics (Istituto Nazionale di Statistica, ISTAT) for 2015 was 23,2%.⁸ More in detail, the data shows a 40,3% unemployment rate among the 15 to 24 year olds, while the age group from 25 to 34 years still registers unemployment for 17,8%. This data, however, does not include all those young people that are employable and willing to work but do not actively look for a job. Adding inactive youth to unemployed youth, the rate increases for all age groups, bringing the overall average for the 15 to 35 year olds to a staggering 36,1% in 2015. Unfortunately, this data is not to be seen as a single bad year or an exceptional value. The overall employment rate of young people in Italy is continuously falling since 2004.

Italy registers the highest number of young NEETs of the three GIDDB countries. The share of NEETs among 15 to 34 year olds was 26.9% in 2015 and although this value shows only a slight decrease compared to the overall high of the previous year (27.4%), it actually represents the first decrease of the NEET share in this age group since 2008.⁹ As reflected also in the general European data, female NEETs register a higher share than male NEETs (30,6% and 23,4% respectively in 2015) and the country registers a significant geographical disparity in the share of NEETs among young people. While the northern regions remain under slightly 20% (in line with the European average) and Central Italy registered 22% in 2015, the southern territories recorded a staggering 38.4% (females 41.9%, males 35%).¹⁰

Data for the southern region of Apulia confirm this context and underline the gap between the South and central and northern Italy. Compared with the described national data, the Apulian regional performance is considerably worse.

As regards the general socio-economic framework in Apulia, the ISTAT's regional indicators register a relative poverty incidence of 22,2% (South Italy's average is 22,6%), almost double the national rate

⁶ Halabisky, D., *Entrepreneurial Activities in Europe - Youth Entrepreneurship*, OECD Employment Policy Papers, No. 1, OECD Publishing, p.7, 2012.

⁷ Eurofound, *Youth entrepreneurship in Europe: Values, attitudes, policies*, Publications Office of the European Union, Luxembourg, p.2, p. 85, 2015.

⁸ ISTAT, *Indicators on youth employment*, 2016

⁹ Eurostat, *NEET rates*, page revision 13/10/2016

¹⁰ Istat, *NEET*, 2016

(12,9%). Similarly, the Apulian GDP per capita is 17.400 €, almost 10.000 € lower than the national one, while the regional unemployment rate of 19,7% is 8 points higher than the national rate.

The picture is even worse when narrowed down to look at young people's situations, including an additional gender effect. Youth unemployment in the age group from 15 to 24 years affects one out of two, with the rate for young women (54,8%) being slightly higher than the overall total (51,3%). One in three young people in the age group from 15 to 29 years is classified as NEET (33,1% overall total, 34% for females) - more than double the European rate.

Finally, youth entrepreneurship (percentage of young people under 30 years old registered at the Chamber of Commerce) has decreased in the last 15 years, mainly because of the economic and financial crisis. However, it is almost identical to the national value (6,5% versus 6,4%).¹¹

Spain and Extremadura

Spain has a high level of youth unemployment (35,15% in December 2015)¹², which has been aggravated in the last few years by the economic recession. The current situation of the Spanish youth is further marked by structural weaknesses, which influence their access possibilities to the labour market. These are, for example, a high rate of early leavers from education and training, a higher rate of youth with only primary or lower secondary qualifications than other European countries, a higher rate of young people with tertiary education with an unemployment rate superior to the European average, or underemployed youth. Difficulties to overcome temporal contracts, enhanced barriers to the labour market for people risking social exclusion and a reduced entrepreneurial spirit, with decreasing numbers of self-employed youth and scarce entrepreneurial initiative complete the picture.¹³

In 2015, youth unemployment rates were almost equal for men and women, with 48,53% and 51,47% respectively. By age, the unemployment rate of young Spaniards is lower in the group from 25 to 29 year olds compared to the younger ages (16 to 19 and 20-25). With reference to education, the number of unemployed young people is decreasing at all educational levels, apart from those with tertiary studies, due to new graduates from the Bologna process.¹⁴

Also Spain is among the countries with a high share of NEETs from 15 to 34 years of age, with a 20,9% share in 2015.¹⁵ Particularly for low-skilled NEETs, an increasing tendency to inactivity has been registered in the last year, many are not actively searching for employment.

Compared to Spain, Extremadura is one of the Autonomous Communities with a higher rate of youth unemployment than the Spanish average. The rate was at 38,9% in 2015, slightly higher for men than for women, and particularly noticeable in the young aged between 25-34. Entrepreneurship data in Extremadura confirm the tendency of low entrepreneurial initiative also registered at national level. Less than 20% of young people are working on a self-employment basis, with men showing considerably more initiative than women do.

Extremadura also registered a higher share of NEETs from 15 to 34 years compared to the national rate. However, the number has decreased in the last few years, almost reaching levels of national average by 2015.

Hungary

Comparative information published in December 2013 by the European Observatory of Working Life (EurWORK) illustrated that "in Hungary the employment rate, especially among youth, is very low.

¹¹ Istat, Indicatori regionali, 2016

¹² Spanish Statistical Institute (INE), Labour Force Survey, 2015

¹³ Spanish Strategy for Entrepreneurship and Youth Employment 2013-2016

¹⁴ Spanish Statistical Institute (INE), Labour Force Survey, 2015

¹⁵ Eurostat, NEETS, 2016

In fact, it is one of the lowest in Europe.” The publication demonstrated that this rate had decreased since 1998 parallel to the development of economic activity rates and that the youngest adults were especially vulnerable (51.9% of 15-19 year olds and 26.4 % of 20-24 year olds were unemployed in 2012).¹⁶ In February 2013, youth unemployment reached an all-time high, with a rate of 29.5 percent. However, the situation has improved continuously since then, also thanks to a series of steps taken by the Hungarian Government (cf. “Youth policy strategies in the project territories”).

In August 2015, the rate was down to 16.3% and it further decreased to 12.6% in July 2016.¹⁷ The overall unemployment rate in Hungary in July 2016 was 5.1%¹⁸.

The share of NEETs among young Hungarians was 16.9% in 2015, respectively 10 and 4 points below the Italian and Spanish values and the lowest registered value in Hungary since 2006. In line with increased employment numbers, the registered share of NEETs (between 20% and 21%) was stable throughout the period from 2009 to 2013 and only started to decrease in 2014 (18.1%).¹⁹

Youth policy developments and strategies in the project territories

Apulia

Until 2006, Italy was one of the few EU countries not to have defined a youth policy at central level; there was no central institution for the coordination of youth policies, nor a national youth representative. Decision-making and responsibilities were distributed between different ministries (Labour and Social Welfare, Education, Universities and Scientific and Technological Research, Foreign Affairs, Interior). As a result, the lack of a legislative framework determined a fragmentation of the interventions, usually conceived as social services addressing a target perceived as a disadvantaged minority.

Despite the improvements registered in the last ten years with the establishment of a Ministry (later transformed into a Department) for Youth Policies, the national Youth Guarantee Strategy does not substantially differ from this general framework, being organised as a set of traditional services supporting young people’s access to education and employment.

The Apulian context up to 2005 was not different from the national framework, with a rather low investment in youth policies. In 2006, the Regional Government decided for the first time to launch a youth policy programme, characterised by a strong shift of vision: ‘Do not ask what the Region can do for young people, ask what young people can do for the Region’. Action planning consequently shifted from wanting to support a vulnerable social group to providing tools, financial and knowledge resources to a dynamic sector of society, deserving of trust and operational autonomy. Betting on young people as a resource meant going beyond the old concept of “protection” that sees the younger generation only as “citizens of tomorrow”. It enhanced the role of young people as key players in the here and now, with skills, values, energies, and talents essential for the regional development.

The Regional Youth Policy Programme was explicitly conceived as an integrative initiative, pursuing the aim of networking different experiences in the territory, opening up spaces for social, cultural and educational initiatives, and for endorsing the entrepreneurial and creative potential of young generations. It created and creates a participative network of young actors and projects, supported by the smart use of social media, with the aim of building a dynamic community covering the whole region and fostering synergies among the projects.

¹⁶ Krén, I., Rindt, Z., EurWORK, Hungary: Working conditions of young entrants to the labour market, published on 18/12/2013

¹⁷ Tradingeconomics.com, Hungary Youth Unemployment Rate

¹⁸ Eurostat, Unemployment rates, seasonally adjusted, August 2016, page revised 30/09/2016

¹⁹ Eurostat, NEET rates, page revision 13/10/2016

Since 2006, the Programme has directly managed a public investment of over 140 millions €, with a mix of regional, national and EU funds to finance a number of initiatives in the field of education, spaces for young people and entrepreneurship:

- **Ritorno al futuro:** The intervention offered postgraduate scholarships with the aim of promoting young people's integration into the labour market. A shift from the past: the regional authority awarded the funds to the youths not to the training agencies.
- **Laboratori dal basso:** The intervention gave young organisations the opportunity to organise workshops with the participation of national or international experts that can improve their competencies in specific fields. According to a new model, young people were directly responsible to find the place, organise the communication, and choose the best lecturers to invite, while the supporting public body covered lecturers' fees, travel and accommodation costs. The initiative is described in detail in Part II of this document.
- **Laboratori Urbani:** The Regional Administration launched a call open to regional municipalities and invited them to identify unused buildings in their urban areas to be transformed into cultural centres. The programme paid for renovation (the physical regeneration of the building and equipment) as well as the start-up (1 year) of a local management organisation selected through a public call (max 700.000 €). A grant for management activities (more or less 140.000 €) was aimed at creating medium-term sustainability of the projects. 150 buildings were identified so far, 169 municipalities involved, and the regeneration process has finished to create more than 100.000 sq. m. of new public facilities. 109 managing organisations have been selected, and 105 spaces are fully operational.
- **Libera il bene:** A twin programme of the Urban Labs, which converts properties confiscated from the Mafia. It was designed and implemented in collaboration with the association Libera, active at national level for re-developing properties confiscated from the Mafia.
- **Principi Attivi:** An initiative directed to young people (aged 18-32) who were required to form an informal group (minimum two people) and propose an idea for territorial, social or entrepreneurial activities. Ideas were granted up to 25.000 €. If selected, informal groups were committed to establishing a new legal entity of their choice (association, cooperative or company). In the framework of three editions, Principi Attivi funded about 800 projects all over Apulia. Today, 80% of the new legal entities created with the initiative are active and operating with the same legal form.

Taking into consideration the results of an academic research analysing the impact of the Regional Programme, the Regional Youth Policies Department and ARTI Puglia recently launched a new initiative named "PIN – Pugliesi Innovativi", which combines financial resources with education and technical services and which builds on the experiences and grassroots test schemes implemented throughout the previous years. The initiative is funded with 10.000.000 € via the European Social Fund and intends to support the realisation of innovative business projects by the young, while it aims at the same time at improving the entrepreneurial culture among Apulian youth.

Extremadura

Regional youth policies in Extremadura have increased their budget along the years. Besides designing particular actions in the field of youth, policies are implemented transversally by giving specific attention to issues regarding the young in all measures affecting this population adopted by the different Departments of the Regional Government of Extremadura (health, housing,

employment and other areas). In this sense, actions addressed to the young are not isolated but integrated in all general fields of actuation.

Extremadura has developed integral youth policies since 1995, with the approval of the Integral Youth Plan “Youth Extremadura” by the Regional Government of Extremadura. The plan was modified and updated in 2000 for the period between 2001 and 2004, and in 2004 for the period between 2005 and 2008.

The Law 1/2007 created the Institute for Youth in Extremadura with the aim of promoting equal opportunities for young people, and of encouraging the free and effective participation of young people in the political, social, economic and cultural development of Extremadura. The Institute is responsible for the design, elaboration, management and monitoring of the regional Youth Plans. The law further established basic elements of action: support to entrepreneurs, creation and innovation and social programmes for youth in rural areas, as well as actions addressed to education, health, emancipation, housing, employment, and cooperation to improve the quality of life of youth in Extremadura. In addition, actions to increase youth networks, management modernisation, and improvement of infrastructure and youth autonomy needed to be implemented.

In order to develop integral youth policies, the objective of the Regional Government of Extremadura for the IV Youth Plan for the period 2009-2012 was to place young people as constructors of the regional future and not as mere observers. With this aim of co-designing the Plan, participation of several social sectors through a debate process in cities and municipalities of Extremadura named “Mi IV Plan. Queremos Oírte” (My IV Plan. We want to hear you) was realised. This process included 42 working sessions, with 4.500 people participating from youth sectors, as well as institutional representatives, technical staff from the youth field, teachers and social agents at regional level. The IV Youth Plan was based on entrepreneurship, imagination and innovation as inspiring principles of the actions. More precisely: over 262 actions divided into four axes that organised measures offering integral attention to young people in all their needs and commitments. The four axes were:

- Axis for Emancipation and Autonomy
- Axis for Citizenship and Dialogue
- Axis for Civic Responsibility
- Axis for Sports, Leisure and Creation

The IV Plan of Youth in Extremadura was approved with a budget of 510 million Euros and the total amount of actions developed were:

	Axis Emancipation and Autonomy	Axis Citizenship and Dialogue	Axis Civic responsibility	Axis Sports, Leisure and Creation	Total measures
Measures as approval of IV Youth Plan (2008)	68	92	37	65	262
Measures incorporated in 2009	2	2			4
Measures incorporated in 2010	23	6	6	6	41
Measures incorporated in 2011		3	6	3	12
Measures incorporated in 2012	6	2	5	20	33

Following the participatory approach of the design of the IV Youth Plan, the V Youth Plan of Extremadura (2013–2016) was elaborated as a cross-cutting document that coordinates and outlines the steps of the regional government of Extremadura and others in the region. It aims to encourage the active participation of youth in society and to facilitate the process of emancipation from an integrated perspective. This plan is mainly focused on young people of Extremadura from 15 to 30 years old, but also some specific measures can be addressed to young people from 12 to 35 years old.

The plan is structured around five priority action lines:

- Emancipation: training, employability, entrepreneurship and housing
- Life conditions: health, leisure and mobility
- Creativity: culture and artistic expressions
- Social compromise: participation, volunteering and cooperation
- Values: inclusion, equal opportunities and diversity

The V Youth Plan in Extremadura was budgeted with 702 million Euros for a total of 275 measures to be implemented. The actions have been distributed as follows:

	Emancipation	Life conditions	Creativity	Social compromise	Values	Total measures
Measures as per approval of V Youth Plan (2012)	98	94	28	24	31	275
Measures foreseen for 2014	97	98	31	25	34	285
Measures implemented in 2014	84	72	25	17	21	219

The Institute for Youth in Extremadura is elaborating the final report on the V Youth Plan and is currently coordinating the design of the VI Youth Plan of Extremadura (2017 – 2020), focused on coordinating all measures addressed to facilitate autonomy to youth and to generate spaces where to develop their potential.

A Youth Guarantee Strategy has been implemented in Extremadura since 2014, following the European Youth Guarantee Scheme. This strategy has helped to reduce the rate of youth unemployment at regional level.

The objectives of Youth Guarantee Strategy in Extremadura are:

- improve youth employability and facilitate access to labour market, with measures on training and education addressed to employment, especially for NEETs,
- promote entrepreneurship reinforcing educational programmes both on secondary and tertiary levels,
- promote equal opportunities with professional training with curricula adaptations to youth with special educational needs,
- increase youth's professional experience by measures promoting hiring through apprenticeships and traineeships.

Measures implemented in Extremadura have been:

	Measures on Training and Education	Measures promoting employability
Action	Training programme for accessing compulsory secondary education qualifications (ESO) and Training programme for attaining Intermediate-level Vocational Training Certificates	Apprenticeships for young graduates in Extremadura
	Training programme for young people with special educational needs	Programme for acquiring professional experience for employment
	Mobility apprenticeship grants for graduates and VETs to go abroad	Promotion of hiring long-term unemployed young people by regional enterprises
	Training for Entrepreneurship: Emprededorext	Traineeships for young graduates in enterprises
	Dual Vocational Training	

Hungary

Hungary is on the move: significant demographic changes in the Hungarian population are happening as reported by the European Observatory of Working Life (EurWORK), such as “new life patterns are being followed, the structure of the labour market is continuously changing, the school system is just being restructured, [a] new and liberalised labour code has just been introduced”²⁰. Motivated by these phenomena, Hungarian policymakers are launching new initiatives and strategies to boost youth employability and the overall increase of youth employment figures confirm the favourable context.

Youth policy frameworks in Hungary have been designed to provide policy answers to the changes illustrated above. The Parliamentary Resolution on the National Youth Strategy no. 88/2009. (X. 29.) OGY defines strategic objectives for the period of 2009–2024.²¹ The Strategy targets the “development of the environment required for the successful social integration of youth age groups through enhancing youth employment and assisting in the achievement of self-sufficiency, the empowerment of the work of the youth profession and non-governmental youth organizations”. In order to implement the objectives of the Strategy, Action Plans are drawn up to define short-term measures and the responsible parties.²²

The Government’s Programme for the ‘Future of the New Generation’ adopted in 2012 corresponds directly to the Strategy. Priorities of the Programme are coherent with the specific objectives of the Strategy to jointly “define the areas of intervention of youth policy”. Employment goals are defined under the Programme’s priority ‘Career and self-sufficiency’ and the first pillar of the Strategy - “Developing the environment required for the successful social integration of youth age groups”.

The Youth Guarantee in Hungary ensures that “young people between the ages of 16–24 are provided a good quality offer to improve their labour market situation, including a job opportunity (with or without wage subsidy), entrepreneurship support, first job experience, apprenticeship, traineeship, redirection to public education, further education (including second chance education), vocational education or training” within 4 months after being registered by the Public Employment Service (PES), which serves as the only entry point.²³ Additionally, every participant is entitled to labour-market services provided by the PES, the National Office for Rehabilitation and Social Affairs or private service providers (civil organizations, NGOs).

²⁰ Krén, I., Rindt, Z., EurWORK, Hungary: Working conditions of young entrants to the labour market, published on 18/12/2013

²¹ Parliamentary Resolution on the National Youth Strategy no. 88/2009. (X. 29.) OGY

²² Hungarian National Youth Strategy 2009–2024

²³ Hungary’s National Youth Guarantee Implementation Plan

The Government has also launched first measures on supporting the start-up ecosystem in 2013. This was preceded by an open dialogue through BudapestHUB, a public-private task force, which produced the white paper “Startup Credo” (full title: Runway Budapest 2.0.2.0 – Startup Credo) in 2014.

Since then, a number of initiatives have been implemented, with the two most important ones being

- (1) the development of Design Terminal, a worn down bus terminal at the heart of Budapest refurbished into a start-up point where young entrepreneurs and start-ups meet, learn, and cooperate, and
- (2) the “Gazelle program” of the National Research, Development and Innovation Office, which focused on providing financing for early stage companies via select accelerators launched.

A special programme was run by the National Organization of Young Entrepreneurs (FIVOSZ). It provided individual mentoring by successful leaders of big companies in order to support young entrepreneurs during their start-up and development periods. Under the Economic Development and Innovation Operational Programme (EDIOP), dedicated support programmes targeting both the start-ups, youth entrepreneurs and social entrepreneurs have been established.

Part II – Experiences and Good Practices

Laboratori dal Basso

Description of the initiative

Laboratori dal Basso was an initiative created in Apulia, Italy, by ARTI Puglia and the regional youth programme Bollenti Spiriti. It was part of the Action “Innovazione per l’Occupabilità” of the Extraordinary Plan for Employment (Piano Straordinario per il Lavoro) of the Apulian Regional Government, co-financed by the European Social Fund (PO Puglia FSE 2007-2013, Asse VII “Capacità istituzionale”).

As illustrated in the previous chapter, Southern Italy was hit hard by the economic and financial crisis and youth unemployment has remained a challenge throughout the last years. It was furthermore described that the Regional Apulian Government has shown particular attention and action regarding youth activation and youth employment support. In order to strengthen and further cultivate the growing ecosystem of youth entrepreneurs, the Youth Policy Department of the Regional Government, specifically its Bollenti Spiriti programme, and ARTI Puglia decided to create additional support instruments to target the development of entrepreneurial competences.


Laboratori dal Basso

Where?
 Apulia, Italy

Who?
ARTI & Bollenti Spiriti

For whom?
 Young entrepreneurs and prospective entrepreneurs (18-35 years of age)

What?
 Creation of training activities based on actual demand to further entrepreneurial growth.

www.laboratoridalbasso.it

The ideation and development of the initiative was based on three fundamental objectives:

- to potentiate young entrepreneurs’ competences in order to free and/or support their potential to innovate;
- to increase sustainability and longevity of organisations founded by the young;
- to achieve all this through an active community guided by grassroots principles, collaboration, clusterisation and continuous peer learning to incentive bottom-up and community approaches to common problems and support joined growth.

Laboratori dal Basso’s philosophy is based on the belief that young Apulian entrepreneurs are extremely aware of their training needs. In other words, that they know what they need to learn (content), how they need to learn (didactic methodology) and who they need to learn from (professional experts, role models, success stories). By using a bottom-up approach based on actual demand, it is possible to go beyond the usual top-down development of education and training courses, for the benefit of creating tailor-made formative programmes for young entrepreneurs with a direct impact on their and other people’s growth. The implementing public body ARTI Puglia merely supported the realisation of such training programmes through the contractualisation and logistics of lecturers and by accompanying proponents throughout the application and implementation process. No money was transferred from the public body to the beneficiaries, thus freeing beneficiaries from the burden of financial reporting.

An additional objective of Laboratori dal Basso was to create a context in which not only the proponents receive the possibility to strengthen their entrepreneurial competences, but also the highest possible number of young Apulians. In order to do so, all education and training courses organised under the Initiative were open to all, and a high number of lectures were streamed and made available online afterwards.

Thus, it was possible to create a shared patrimony of knowledge, to orient proponents towards a proactive attitude, and to contribute to the diffusion of a culture of collaboration, sharing and social responsibility among young entrepreneurs.

Laboratori dal Basso was implemented as a pilot action to test this new approach to regional policies where the public institution was interpreted as involved partner and direct facilitator rather than being a mere funding organisation. Thus, possibilities to policy making through a direct dialogue and open and interactive collaboration between a public body and the young citizens of its territory could be explored.

In Laboratori dal Basso, projects were implemented under one of three calls: Laboratori, Testimonianze, and Mentoring. The main features of each call are summarised below.



Laboratori

- training courses, up to 100 hours
- proposed by established companies and associations
- proposed in groups of companies/associations, thus combining needs and facilitating joined exploitation
- proponents define a programme and secure a location



Testimonianze

- single speakers share an experience/ excellence in innovation and entrepreneurship
- proposed by established companies/associations as well as informal groups of like-minded young people looking for ideas and inspiration



Mentoring

- individual tutoring on a specific project
- established companies and associations choose a mentor according to specific needs
- reciprocal interest: the mentor also chooses the interested company/association

The Initiative ran from June 2012 until January 2015 and after an initial low participation phase quickly gained momentum in the Apulian territory. The calls for Laboratori and for Testimonianze were followed up with a second edition after their successful pilot phase, while Mentoring required longer setup processes and therefore implemented only a test call during the initiatives' funded period.

Implementation of the initiative

Call for proposals

As stated above, Laboratori dal Basso was implemented through calls for proposals. This text will present the framework of the instrument Laboratori, which required the greatest support and effort and involved the highest number of young entrepreneurs.

The two calls implemented for Laboratori specifically targeted micro enterprises and associations established for no more than 5 years and governed by a majority of members aged from 18 and 35 years. Applicants' eligibility was furthermore defined by their operational headquarters being registered in Apulia. Even though the calls did not introduce a mandatory minimum number of applicants, they encouraged interested proposers to create need clusters and to jointly present an application.

Applicants were offered the possibility to create educational and training activities on any aspect regarding business creation and business development. The calls invited interested micro enterprises and associations from the following sectors:

- safeguarding and enhancement of the territory (e.g. tourism, cultural heritage, environment, ...),
- knowledge economy (e.g. technologies, media, web, ...),
- social innovation (e.g. inclusion, education, local development, ...).

In order to participate to the calls for the creation of a Laboratorio, applicants were asked to identify an overall topic, to secure and indicate one or more places where the training activities would take place, and to present a training programme with information on

- the specific issues to be addressed,
- the duration of each lecture,
- the didactic methodology applied,
- the envisaged lecturers to be involved (preferably pre-contacted to verify general availability),
- the overall duration of the “Laboratorio” (up 100 hours).

Finally, applicants were given the possibility to involve partners and present relevant letters of support from such partners with their application. In the framework of the Laboratori calls, partners usually contributed to the project by making resources (human, financial, material) or spaces available to the proposing cluster.

Project evaluation and co-planning

Project evaluation was carried out by ARTI Puglia (staff Laboratori dal Basso) and primarily focused on

- the coherence between the proposing groups’ backgrounds, sectors and start-up stage and the proposed formative agenda,
- the coherence between young entrepreneurs’ expressed needs and the educational and training activities proposed to meet and overcome these needs,
- the coherence between proposed topics and issues to be addressed, the proposed didactic approach and the proposed lecturers,
- the balance between technical issues and issues related to business development, management and organisation.

Being Laboratori dal Basso a pilot action, an inclusive and open approach was adopted for the evaluation of applications to the first call. This approach was then confirmed as a methodology for the second call. Many young entrepreneurs were challenged by having to translate their awareness of training that could help them grow into a detailed, structured, and feasible programme, which considered economic sustainability and realistic timelines. Without an inclusive evaluation approach, only a small number of applications are able to pass such a call and these applicants probably represent the most ready among the involved community. A convincing core idea can become a successful Laboratorio, even if the applicants lack the necessary event management skills. This is why ARTI Puglia opted to connect the evaluation process with a follow-up step of co-planning an executive programme and to support applicants in developing the necessary organisation skills.

Positively pre-evaluated applications were assigned to specific members of the Laboratori dal Basso



Figure 1 ARTI staff member and applicants after signature of collaboration agreement

staff, who acted as reference person for the beneficiaries and as intermediary between the beneficiaries and other ARTI departments (administrative, communication/web) involved in the realisation of the Laboratorio. Reference staff members supported a group from the moment of selection until the group’s final activity report.

After positive pre-evaluation, beneficiaries were required to meet with “their” staff member, either in

person (preferred) or via Skype or telephone, who informed them on criticalities and necessary updates to the proposed formative agenda and invited them to finalise the programme, and to create a complete contact list and information on logistical necessities for each involved lecturer. Beneficiaries were also asked to

- make contact with their proposed lecturers in order to verify whether these were available on the dates assigned to them in the final programme,
- to reason on which lectures were feasible for transmission via streaming, and
- to verify the need for translation services in case non-Italian lecturers were involved.

The reference staff member accompanied the beneficiaries throughout this finalisation process, creating additional meetings and joined programme analyses as necessary. After having agreed upon all finalised documentation with the beneficiaries, the staff member forwarded the executive project to ARTI's administration who proceeded to formally approve and deliberate the action. Applicants were invited to sign an implementation agreement with ARTI Puglia based on to the final executive project's programme and timelines.

Project implementation

To kick a project off, beneficiaries received additional support from ARTI Puglia's Laboratori dal Basso structure, always accompanied by their reference staff member:

- a) Beneficiaries were assigned an administrative contact person for the contractualisation of lecturers and for the realisation of the logistical plan drawn up for each lecturer.
- b) Beneficiaries verified and finalised their streaming programme together with ARTI Puglia's responsible for coordination of this service.
- c) If needed, beneficiaries and their reference staff member finalised the details of the needed translation service, which ARTI Puglia then took over and organised.
- d) Beneficiaries were presented with a communication kit and discussed their communication strategy for involvement of their reference communities with a representative of Laboratori dal Basso's communication team.

At the first lecture, projects were officially launched with the presence of the project's reference staff member to underline the spirit of collaboration between public body and beneficiaries. Beneficiaries then implemented the formative programme autonomously, being able to refer to their reference staff member for support in case of unforeseen changes or difficulties.



Figure 2 Lecture of the Laboratorio "Do it together"

After implementation of the formative programme, beneficiaries received a request for the elaboration of a final report, which was usually presented within four to six weeks from the last lecture. The reimbursement of lecturers' travel expenses was linked to the presentation of the final report by the applicants, thus enhancing their sense of responsibility and involvement in the conclusion phase of the project.

Communication of the initiative

ARTI Puglia implemented the online platform www.laboratoridalbasso.it as an integral part of the initiative's overall strategy. In the spirit of accessibility and community, the website was planned as a strong formative instrument. After conclusion of the pilot edition of the initiative, having obtained an important number of multimedia contents, the website was updated and brought to its full potential.

The website offers an illustrative summary for each Laboratorio and each Testimonianza, presenting the applicants, information on the overall formative programme and location, the tackled topics, lecturers' profiles, and streaming opportunities. Mentors, on the other hand, are listed in a dedicated register online and are presented with a short bio, indications on their sectors and experiences of reference and a summary of the type of support they intend to offer to young enterprises.

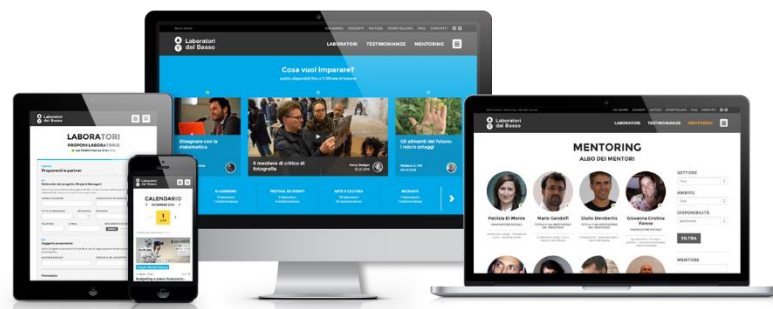


Figure 3 Laboratori dal Basso's website

The initiative's website further offers a storytelling section where projects are communicated in a joint effort by ARTI Puglia's communication staff and beneficiaries themselves. This is done via a multimedia approach, leaving the choice of storytelling method mainly to the beneficiaries.

An average 141 users followed each lecture broadcasted in streaming. After conclusion of a project, didactic materials and videos of streamed lectures were uploaded to the website and thus available to an even wider user base. The knowledge patrimony of Laboratori dal Basso's website exceeds 1.600 videos and offers more than 500 presentations and other didactic materials. In 2015, the website had a user base of 38.000, roughly half of which were located in Apulia, while 41% were located in other parts of Italy and a little more than 6% were foreign users.

Day-to-day interaction with the Laboratori dal Basso community was realised via social media, and primarily Facebook. By 2015, 6.200 people followed the initiative's Facebook page.

Key grassroots characteristics

Bottom-up approach

Laboratori dal Basso inverts the classic approach to learning by starting from young entrepreneurs' actual training demand (what do you need to learn, how, from whom and with whom). The initiative's methodology intended to make real needs emerge from the grassroots and to then create tailor-made solutions in a participatory and transparent way.

Empowerment of the young, support to youth entrepreneurship & employability

By directly involving young entrepreneurs and aspiring entrepreneurs in the choice and organisation of professional training and education activities, they are encouraged to take charge of their professional futures. By assessing their current situations and by addressing individual needs, young

entrepreneurs are given the opportunity to transform these needs into tangible training experiences with a high level of applicability. Through administrative support and joint planning, the public institution enables them to create the most qualitative and useful experience for furthering their own development and the development of their companies/associations.

Laboratori dal Basso was dedicated to increasing the managerial, organisational and specific technical skills of young entrepreneurs. Through its system of open participation, access to educational material and lecture videos on its online platform, it continues to educate and train all other interested persons not directly involved in proposing a project for the initiative. Laboratori dal Basso's actions have created numerous meeting and networking moments, giving all participants the chance to learn, share knowledge, create contacts and identify opportunities. Follow-up monitoring activities have shown that not only the proposing groups have increased their managerial capacities, but also that various individual participants have gained professional contacts, possibilities of employment or incentives for opening a business themselves.

Grassroots innovation support

Laboratori dal Basso supported the innovative potential of young entrepreneurs by helping them to follow their interests and overcome specific educational and training gaps. It particularly aimed at young start-ups having concluded their setup phase, when product development and tailored professional training become key issues for continued innovation and entrepreneurial success. A business running smoothly and a team with an elevated standard of knowledge is more likely to produce innovation and innovative products.

Through the application of free-choice learning in the professional context, Laboratori dal Basso catered to a need that goes beyond alternative training and non-formal education models. Free-choice learning does not limit the mind, young people can reach for the sky and see how close they can get. Education guided by a person's (and an enterprise's) individual needs and interests, contextualises knowledge and the processing of information and thus creates important stimulus for targeted, specific and applied innovation.

Community activation and communication

Laboratori dal Basso was based on bottom-up activism, which can be particularly effective in stimulating participation. Through the bottom-up approach, the initiative was capable to contribute practically to the animation of communities.

Young organisations willing to activate an entrepreneurial learning path based on their needs were asked to find other organisations and entrepreneurs with similar needs to involve in the initiative. By sharing the learning objectives and their action's management, they could enrich their educational experience and better exploit the training. New opportunities for peer learning, sharing experiences and networking were generated.



Figure 4 Lecture of the Laboratorio "Permacultura Mediterranea"

Return on involved community

Laboratori dal Basso was an inclusive initiative. It offered tailor-made professional education and knowledge sharing, thus creating an immediate impact on their entrepreneurial growth. At the same

time, all actions realised by the initiative had this impact also on the entirety of participants. The proposing groups did not exclusively create courses and testimonials for themselves. Laboratori dal Basso invited all proponents to adopt an inclusive and pro-active approach to making knowledge accessible. The resulting culture of collaboration and sharing has supported the involvement of hundreds of interested participants through free and open participation and has therefore greatly increased the scope of community return.

Besides the direct educational return for the involved communities through in-person and distance (streaming) participation, Laboratori dal Basso has also produced a patrimony of shared, open access knowledge on its website. The initiative therefore continuously allows for the greatest possible number of interested people to inform themselves and increase their entrepreneurial competences.

Validation/verification procedures

Implementation numbers

ARTI Puglia realised pilot initiatives for all three measures and followed up both Laboratori and Testimonianze with a second edition. Participation started out slowly when the calls were first launched but once the instrument was better known, a steady increase of applications was registered. An overview of applications and implemented actions is shown in Figure 5.

ARTI Puglia organised the contractualisation and logistics for more than 1.000 lecturers from

Apulia, Italy and many international destinations. Actions realised under Laboratori and Testimonianze created more than 7.000 hours of lectures, talks, training sessions, workshops, panel discussions, and similar to which thousands of people participated on-site and via streaming.



Figure 5 Laboratori dal Basso: overview implemented actions

Monitoring methodology

In order to monitor and be able to evaluate the experimental actions implemented, a series of actions were realised for the measures Laboratori e Testimonianze.

The monitoring actions sought to verify the initiative's impact on young entrepreneurs' growth and the development of their organisational and managerial capabilities. As Laboratori represents the most complex measure developed by the initiative, most data was collected in this framework.

Within Laboratori, data was collected for lead applicants at three distinct time points:

- (1) Immediate data (at project closure)
 - a. Pilot call: telephone interviews with questionnaire
 - b. Second call: online questionnaires
 - c. Primary indicators:
 - i. Level of satisfaction regarding the initial objectives for participation
 - ii. Level of satisfaction regarding the chosen lecturers
 - iii. Level of satisfaction regarding the collaboration with the public body

(2) Follow-up

- a. at 8-12 months: telephone interviews with questionnaire
- b. at 12-15 months: telephone interviews with questionnaire
- c. Primary indicators:
 - i. entrepreneurial growth of beneficiaries
 - ii. new collaborations launched by beneficiaries
 - iii. beneficiaries' capabilities to collect financings/funds

Monitoring activities for Laboratori also concentrated on the non-beneficiary participants to the individual actions, i.e. those that participated to a Laboratorio without being part of any of the applicant organisations. The impact on participants was measured immediately at the end of the formative programme (paper questionnaires), and through collecting case studies reported by the applicant organisations.



Figure 6 Lecture of the Laboratorio "Reactivity Reloaded"

During the ex-post evaluation, more than two thirds of beneficiaries declared to have increased their organisational and managerial capabilities thanks to a better focus of their core business and a clearer organisational strategy. Two-thirds have created new products/services ideated or developed during a Laboratorio. Many applicants have further registered an increase in their

business contacts thanks to networking opportunities. 89% of interviewed proponents launched new collaborations in the months following their Laboratorio, especially with invited lecturers.

Especially interesting data regards youth employment by the young. In the months following their Laboratorio, almost 80% of beneficiaries have employed participants to their action.

Besides the impact measurements, monitoring activities have also collected a great number of general data with which detailed applicant and participant profiles were developed.

Costs

The cost for implementing Laboratori dal Basso amounted to a little less than 2.1 Mio €. Expenditures regarded mainly the costs for lecturers and their travels, as well as the availability of streaming and translation services. The following list summarises the primary cost items (rounded sums):

Structured personnel	35.500 €
Dedicated staff for the initiative and payments of lecturers	1.030.500 €
Streaming and translation services	480.000 €
Promotion/communication	17.900 €
Logistics for lecturers, staff mobility around the territory	507.000 €

SWOT

<p>STRENGTH</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • creates cohesive and innovative, like-minded communities with strong focus on co-operations and team work • policymakers are facilitators rather than observers or pure financing authorities (active engagement and new role model) • complex demand-driven service portfolio (including training, mentoring and exchange of experiences) • formative methods stimulate entrepreneurial discovery • public funds used in close cooperation with market actors • free and open participation, also via streaming, and continuous accessibility of training materials online • flexible learning methodology 	<p>WEAKNESSES</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • needs dedicated resources not necessarily present in a public body, especially HR • co-planning and continuous support to individual groups requires much personnel time • monitoring partially based on applicants' self-assessment (subjective information) • lack of formal recognition of methods of alternative training and non-formal education • participants not always know how to seize the full extent of possibilities when offered to propose solutions for their own needs • risk for repetitive/already financed proposals after a certain amount of editions
<p>OPPORTUNITIES</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • co-creation/co-planning elevates the quality level and sustainability features of young people's self-development programmes • concept can be developed toward other bottom-up training initiatives, e.g. longer-term residential courses or a stable network of bottom-up trainers • concept can be developed towards online training exchanges, using the existing platform • connecting young entrepreneurs with national and international experts creates the grounds for follow-up co-operations • multiplier effect on other public authorities thanks to empirical data developed by the experimental actions 	<p>THREATS</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • dependency on budget assignments, applicable framework programmes and decision makers • needed quick time-to-action/time-to-service not always guaranteed by public bodies' long procedures (bureaucracy blocks efficiency)

Giovani Innovatori in Azienda

Description of the initiative

Giovani Innovatori in Azienda was ideated by ARTI Puglia and the Regional Government of Apulia. It was implemented by ARTI Puglia as an experimental initiative in the period from autumn 2014 to autumn 2015. It was part of the Action “Innovazione per l’Occupabilità” of the Extraordinary Plan for Employment (Piano Straordinario per il Lavoro) of the Apulian Regional Government, co-financed by the European Social Fund (PO Puglia FSE 2007-2013, Asse VII “Capacità istituzionale”).

Giovani Innovatori in Azienda was a pilot action for testing the impact of creating collaborations and innovation in SMEs through collecting innovative ideas directly from young people and facilitating autonomous matches with the territorial SME system. It was primarily based on the idea to stimulate and promote an active role of both companies and young people in order for them to meet.

Apulian companies were able to illustrate specific innovation needs, while young people were offered the possibility to present innovative ideas. Thus, the initiative supported young people’s potential to innovate and created opportunities for them to apply and test their innovative ideas in a company/business framework. At the same time, it potentiated Apulian SMEs by supporting their access to innovative ideas and thus increased sustainability and longevity of the Apulian SME system.

The platform for presenting ideas and needs was the initiative’s website, which was developed specifically for creating an easily accessible and transparent meeting framework for young innovators and companies.

Giovani Innovatori in Azienda was implemented in a 3-step process:

In the months September and October 2014, young Apulians from 18 to 35 years of age could present innovation projects through participation to a call for proposals. Young innovators were thus given a possibility to propose themselves for the implementation of their project ideas within a company in need of trying out the solution they offered.

From October to November 2014, companies were able to express their innovation needs through participation to a call for manifestations of interest. Companies and young innovators were then able to view the ideas and needs on the initiative’s website and to meet with each other in case of interest. In case both parties were interested in a match, they were able to jointly define and propose to ARTI Puglia an operative work plan. This document summarised the framework for implementing the young innovator’s idea within the context of the host company by integrating the youth into daily business and organisational processes for the period of three months. Such Operational Plans had to be presented using a dedicated template, which collected information on:

- Project Title
- Main objectives
- Expected results
- Illustration on how the idea meets the company’s needs
- Implementation phases, work plan divided in work packages
- Timelines, milestones and deliverables for each work package

Giovani innovatori in azienda

Where?
Apulia, Italy

Who?
ARTI Puglia & Regione Puglia

For whom?
Young people from 18 to 35 years of age with innovative ideas and companies with innovation needs.

What?
A tool for creating collaborations between innovative young people and companies with innovation needs.

www.giovaniiinnovatori.it

- Final measurable outputs

In addition to evaluation of the presented Operational Plans by ARTI Puglia, the proposing teams, composed of a young innovator and a reference person from the prospective host company, were also interviewed by the public institution in order to analyse the proposed work plan, experiment the synergy between company and innovator, and to jointly identify possibilities for improvement.

A successful Operational Plan led to the integration of the young person into the host company's workforce for the period of 3 months, with the explicit goal to implement the agreed work programme. ARTI Puglia paid the young innovator an overall stipend of 5.000 € in two transfers – the first after verification of reached milestones and available deliverables at mid-term and the second after final result verification according to the approved Operational Plan. To this end, young innovators had to elaborate an interim progress report and a final report, including all deliverables.

Operational plans were implemented from February 2015 to November 2015.

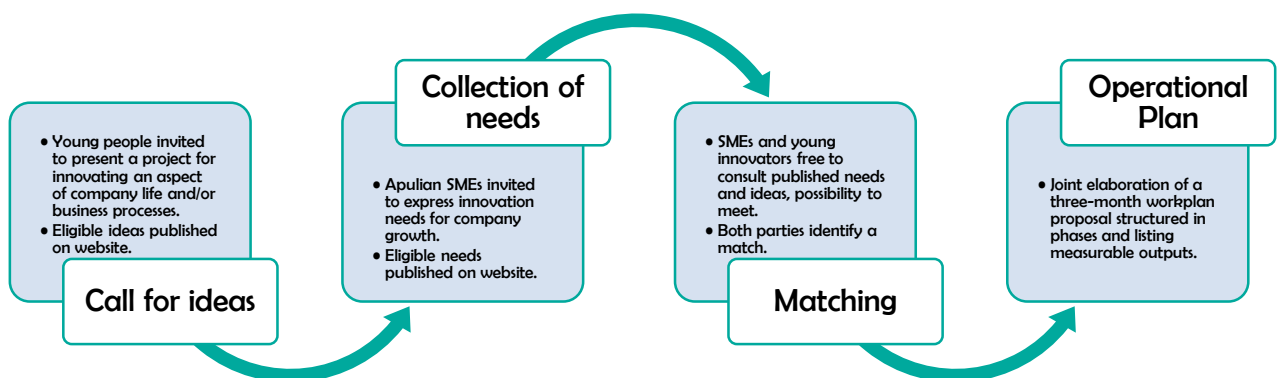


Figure 7 *Giovani Innovatori in Azienda's project development methodology*

With this approach, ARTI Puglia sought to explore possibilities of policy making through a direct relationship with the citizens of its territory in order to base actions on their needs and potentials. The initiative build on young people's potential to innovate and created business opportunities for involved companies.

Communication of the initiative

Giovani Innovatori in Azienda regarded a specific target community (young people with innovative ideas and companies with innovation needs) and projects were company-focused. This context influenced the communication strategy, which did not opt for the widest possible visibility but rather sought to enhance the initiative's reference community by connecting its experiences.

As a first step, a closed Facebook group was created to which all activated young innovators and their host company's reference persons were invited. The group was moderated by ARTI Puglia and created a space for meeting and exchanging experiences throughout and beyond participation to Giovani Innovatori in Azienda among its member. It also aimed to stimulate collaborations between participants and to create synergies among projects.

For presenting the initiative's actions to a larger public, the website included a dedicated blog. Here, almost concluded operational plans were told as experiences, mostly by the young innovators themselves. In order to stimulate participation in feeding the blog, ARTI Puglia's staff further drafted small stories collected for the most part during monitoring interviews.

After conclusion of the pilot edition, a short film was realised on a selected number of success experiences in order to share the spirit and opportunities of the initiative with other policy makers and the general public. The film (Italian) can be watched [here](#).

Key grassroots characteristics

Bottom-up approach

Giovani Innovatori in Azienda applied a bottom-up methodology in order to activate the reference territory and empower young innovators in Apulia. This was achieved by collecting ideas for innovation in companies directly from young people and through permitting the autonomous meeting between SMEs and young innovators for the creation of jointly elaborated and submitted executive project proposals.

Empowerment of the young, support to youth entrepreneurship & employability

Giovani Innovatori in Azienda offered a voice and visibility to young Apulian innovators. They were enabled to express ideas and innovative projects, which they consider useful for the territorial SME system. These range from the introduction of overall innovative approaches to ideas for innovating specific applications, production steps or products.

Being able to freely express their innovative potential and present themselves through their ideas to the territorial labour market, young people are encouraged to take charge of their professional futures. They are given the opportunity to transform their thoughts and ideas into tangible opportunities for companies to innovate. At the same time, they enter the company with a strong position: that of proposing a solution to an existing need or problem.

Thanks to being able to test their innovative ideas in a business context, young people were given the possibility to create a qualitative and useful experience for themselves, as well as to further their own development and prospects in the host company and in the labour market in general.

During the three-month collaboration, the company and the young person profited from moments of reciprocal learning. While the young innovator fine tuned and implemented his/her project within the company, he/she also acquired skills through the interaction with co-workers, through getting to know internal processes and productions phases, through tutorage by a company reference person, and so forth.

Grassroots innovation support

The initiative enhanced the competitiveness of territorial SMEs by channelling the innovative potential of young people to find new solutions for existing needs and problems. By facilitating these young innovators in applying their thoughts and ideas, by giving them a practical space within an existing company framework to test and adapt their identified solution(s), Giovani Innovatori in Azienda directly supported the innovative growth not only of the young, but also of the Apulian SME system.

Community activation and communication

Through the participation in a dedicated social media group, young innovators and company tutors from all selected projects were offered a platform for sharing experiences, learning from each other, and creating follow-up partnerships. Experiences were additionally shared via a blog on the initiative's website. Joint meetings of all initiative participants, e.g. for the presentation of final results, and an open assessment of the initiative among innovators, companies and the public institution further enforced a community feeling.

All preparatory actions, storytelling and follow-up information evolved around the initiatives online platform and the social media group. Both the group and the platform offered possibilities for active contribution to communicating the initiative and individual experiences within the target community. They also offered information on the community to the community, to facilitate the creation of contacts and partnerships and activate interested stakeholders.

A dedicated reference staff from the public body accompanied all matches, from initial interviews, to interim monitoring and final follow-up visits. The dedicated staff was contactable by any company or young innovator in need of support or clarification throughout the duration of their project.

Return on involved community

Giovani Innovatori in Azienda involved a community of territorial companies and young people with innovative ideas. The actions supported by the initiative created a direct return on this community. Host companies received an innovative company update, be it a new process, product or organisational solution. Young innovators, on the other hand, were enabled to implement their project ideas within a host company and could profit from a certain degree of visibility within the community.

All participants benefited from the contact opportunities the initiative and its online platform offered. Thanks to the active involvement of the community throughout the initiative's various stages, cooperation and individual follow-up projects among participants were possible for interested parties.



Figure 8 Result analysis Giovani Innovatori in Azienda with participants and stakeholders

Finally, the involvement of the community during a joint moment of reflection at the end of the pilot initiative represented a great opportunity to share additional ideas and/or critical experiences. The community was consequently able to contribute to shaping the initiative's evolution and a possible follow-up edition, thus increasing its own return potential.

Validation/verification procedures

Implementation numbers

Giovani Innovatori in Azienda collected 427 idea presentations from young people, of which 326 were published on the initiative's website. 484 need descriptions were collected from 281 Apulian SMEs (companies could present more than one innovation need).

After research of the website by companies and the young, which led to independent contacts and meetings and the joined development of Operational Plans, a total of 254 operational plans were presented to ARTI Puglia by young innovators and SMEs. Following a round of interviews and final evaluation, 162 operational plans were activated.

Participating companies primarily registered the following needs:

- introduction of innovative marketing and communication forms,
- introduction of a product or service innovation.

Monitoring

In order to verify the correct and targeted implementation of approved operative plans according to their timelines and objectives and to be able to evaluate the pilot initiative's performance and impact, specific monitoring activities were realised.

An assessment of operative plans was primarily carried out using two approaches:

- (1) On-site visits and verifications of progress on roughly a 20% sample, including interviews with the young innovator and the reference person assigned to him/her by the company.
- (2) Deliverable verification at project end for all finalised Operational Plans.

Monitoring was additionally carried out following the conclusion of operational plan. This assessment gathered information on

- (1) the correct implementation of the approved Plan and the coherence between outlined activities and actually realised actions, and
- (2) the initiative's impact, through questionnaires collected from company reference persons and young innovators at project conclusion and through follow-up telephone interviews to young innovators at 3-4 months after project conclusion.

Follow-up monitoring activities focused on both the sustainability within the company of the innovative aspects introduced by the young person, and developments in the young innovator's employment status.

From a sample of 152 monitored young innovators, 30 have continued the collaboration with their host company and 23 have started to work with another company. 71% of young innovators that did not work at the time of applying for participation to the initiative were employed after participation.

96% of participating young innovators have declared that the experience supported their professional growth, while 100% of participating companies declared to have satisfied their innovation need.

Costs

The cost for implementing the pilot edition of *Giovani Innovatori in Azienda* amounted to roughly 1.1 Mio €. Expenditures regarded mainly the costs for covering young innovators' three-month stipends for implementing their idea in the host company. The following list summarises the primary cost items (rounded sums):

Structured personnel	71.800 €
Dedicated integrated staff for the initiative	108.700 €
Implementation of Operational Plans	903.000 €
Development of web platform and communication	51.800 €

SWOT

<p>STRENGTH</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • testbed for innovative ideas generated by the young • policymakers are closer to stakeholders through facilitator role (active engagement and new role model) • renewal of SMEs and innovation ecosystem through capitalising local ideas and knowledge potential • financial support facilitates trial insertion of young innovators into companies • monitoring of progress through tangible milestones and objectives • medium-term performance assessment for follow-up data • interactive collaborative methodology through the platform 	<p>WEAKNESSES</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • no additional support for the young innovators (they often lack communications/negotiation skills) to prepare for discussions with interested companies – companies may “overrule” the unprepared young • no protection of the young innovators’ intellectual property (e.g. patent service) • timeframe of the application procedure (young innovators, companies) may affect interest or availability • more established (older) companies less willing to follow-up on collaborations
<p>OPPORTUNITIES</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • young innovators create contacts and networks with companies • additional opportunity for SME growth and innovation • brings together young innovators with similar interests • job opportunities for young innovators, including self-employment • discovery of young people’s potential by companies creates further joint undertakings or new services/products • continued collection of ideas, towards an “idea library” and search facility • new business generation within participating companies 	<p>THREATS</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • dependency on budget assignments, applicable framework programmes and decision makers • companies regard the initiative as a supplier of temporary personnel and do not seize (nor give) full opportunities (lack of commitment) • additional resources required by SMEs to devote time to co-operations with the youth • lack of interest from the most promising youngsters due to lack of IPR arrangements

Gabinete de Iniciativa Joven

General description of the initiative

The Gabinete de Iniciativa Joven – GIJ (Youth Initiative Office) was a management tool of the Regional Government of Extremadura, Spain to “Promote Youth Initiative” as an alternative development project to foster an “Imagination Society”. It ran from 2004 to 2011 and had a twofold perspective:

- (1) to stimulate an imagination offer, and
- (2) to promote demand of such imagination offer by society.

The GIJ had the aim to identify new ways of progress by fostering and developing imagination in Extremadura by stimulating young people from 18 to 34 years of age, in order to generate new innovative possibilities for regional development through imaginativeness.

GIJ staff rendered support services to young people, from their first innovative ideas up to actual project implementation. The staff mainly listened, detected needs for idea development and monitored actions, and supported the young by performing tasks for management and coordination, technical and technology analysis, promotion of imagination, training and advising, market studies and contacts, and communication and monitoring activities. The GIJ also helped young people through the identification of measures for support opportunities and programmes that could be offered by other entities or institutions. In these cases, the GIJ directed the young to the organisations where these kinds of resources were available.



nevoj iniciativa
JUNTA DE EXTREMADURA

Where?
 Extremadura, Spain

Who?
 Regional Government of
 Extremadura

For whom?
 Young people with ideas
 (18-34 years of age)

What?
 Fostering and developing
 imagination to generate
 innovative entrepreneurial
 ideas in the young.

<http://www.iniciativajoven.org>

The services of the GIJ were many and are summarised below:

<p>ORIENTATION INTERVIEWS</p> <p>60 minute interview, in-person or by phone, with the aim to guide young people on the development of their idea or project.</p>	<p>INDIVIDUAL TUTORIAL</p> <p>Advice and orientation during two months for project development, with the aim to guide young entrepreneurs with an idea who need a document where to reflect it.</p>	<p>BUSINESS PLAN ELABORATION</p> <p>Advice for development of a business plan. This service is for young entrepreneurs that have previously had an orientation interview and have prepared a document for their idea or project.</p>
<p>APPLIED IMAGINATION</p> <p>Meeting and co-living for a weekend among young innovative people who want to develop projects in Extremadura.</p>	<p>WORKSHOP FROM I TO P</p> <p>Group workspace and individual monitoring for the elaboration of a descriptive report of the idea or project to develop in Extremadura.</p>	<p>COMMUNICATION WORKSHOPS</p> <p>Focused on developing communication skills for an effective introduction of an idea or project by young people to financial entities or interviews, etc.</p>
<p>SECTORIAL MEETINGS</p> <p>Training meetings on trends and experiences in different sectors. This service is for young people with interest in meeting and contacting persons related to a specific sector.</p>	<p>DIAGNOSIS OF INITIATIVES FOR CONSOLIDATION AND GROWTH</p> <p>Focused on gathering detailed information of an idea, in order to reflect on the current situation of the project, to contribute to make decisions for its future.</p>	<p>MASTER PLAN FOR CONSOLIDATION AND GROWTH</p> <p>Focused on elaborating a document (based on the document of diagnosis), for strategic orientation, analysis of future scenarios, and deep interviews with young people.</p>
<p>ADVICE SESSIONS FOR CONSOLIDATION AND GROWTH</p> <p>Focused on effective improvement of identified areas for consolidation and growth of initiatives, based on the master plan for consolidation and growth of initiatives.</p>	<p>“LA PASTA” INVESTORS’ EVENT</p> <p>Focused on getting financing for ideas or projects, including training on finance and communication skills, advice on business plans and searching of investors for the ideas or projects.</p>	<p>ADVICE FOR SUBMITTING IDEAS OR PROJECT TO AIDS DECREE</p> <p>Focused on facilitating access to aids, solving doubts by phone, email or face-to-face, organising informative sessions and follow-up monitoring.</p>

The GIJ implemented its activities at regional level, with a main headquarter office in Merida, called Imagination Cube. It also covered the whole region of Extremadura thanks to more than 30 territorial units and through active collaboration with other organisations. These organisations were territorial development groups of REDEX (Regional Network of Local Action Groups of Extremadura), adult education centres, regional banks and other institutions related to research and youth, which worked with the GIJ under the conditions established by dedicated framework collaboration agreements. The GIJ also established a virtual office to create even greater accessibility.



Figure 9 GIJ promotional material

Once young people established contact with the GIJ, the enabling actions followed two paths: implementation support to the idea or project and joined analysis of needs and realisation of complementary training for the young innovators.

Action Units

The GIJ worked in Action Units, defined as little knowledge niches. They were an important part of the initiative and represented an innovative, participated method of support for inspiring and supporting young people with entrepreneurial ideas.

Each young idea selected for support was assigned an Action Unit, which was composed of the young person with the idea and a mediator from the GIJ staff who would answer and direct all questions from the young person. The mediator then assigned an expert from the GIJ's existing network (connections, collaboration agreements, etc.) to the young idea. If no feasible expert was available, a new, dedicated one was being looked for within the region. Thus, an Action Unit was composed of 3 people. Experts were individually approached and worked on a voluntary basis.

Experts participated in the Action Units to determine the innovative character of the idea or project and in order to identify to what extent the proposal's content was original, useful and feasible. Experts prepared a report to guide the idea or project promoter. In this report, the expert made a description of the local and global initiative environment and a SWOT analysis, proposed actions to reinforce or strengthen positive elements or eliminate/correct negative ones, gave orientations to develop the idea into a project, and suggested contacts, relations or new ideas for training and learning.

The expert's profiles were very diverse:

- practical or existential experiences: artists, business managers, creators, social organisations, managers or professional agents
- resource experiences: professionals with knowledge on financial or any other resources that markets offer for new ideas
- technical experiences: researchers, economists, philosophers, consultants, and experts in different fields of knowledge

A total of 1.500 Action Units were constituted, as many as young entrepreneurs were supported by GIJ. Through the Action Units, several services were implemented, perfecting offered tools and services to advice and train young entrepreneurs:

- a) Personalised advice services. GIJ Action Units worked by advising young people and more than 1.500 personalised interviews were realised in person in the different offices and support spaces of the GIJ at regional level, mainly at Badajoz, Mérida and Cáceres. Considering the geographical characteristics of the region of Extremadura, a distant advice service was implemented as well through telephone, email and social media, with more than 6.500 followers. This service was offered to young entrepreneurs 47 hours per week.
- b) Training services to young entrepreneurs. Several specific training activities for young entrepreneurs were implemented to support young people with initiative who wanted to work on new entrepreneurial projects. This specialised training programme applied useful learning tools to promote successful entrepreneurship, using versatile formats and focusing on different issues with practical aspects. Training activities were named according to their methodology, as for example “Caja de Herramientas” (ToolBox), “Taller Comunica” (Communication Workshop) or “Taller Las Cuentas Claras” (Clear Accounts Workshop). Also experts and professionals were engaged in GIJ training services, as in the format “Take a coffee with...”, a space where young entrepreneurs were offered the opportunity to know sectorial trends, debate with professionals on practical applications of theoretical and technical knowledge, hear of successful and failed cases to learn from them or search new horizons for their projects. More than 550 persons were trained and improved their abilities and knowledge to start projects.
- c) Direct training with entrepreneurs. The activity had the main objective to move from business ideas to feasible and real projects, to be developed by the young entrepreneurs. This kind of training allowed entrepreneurs to start a business based on business plans created by them during this activities. More than 350 business plans were created. Direct training activities were focused on sectors and locations. For example, the action “Territorio 10”, implemented together with the Extremenian Network for Rural Development, has trained 150 entrepreneurs in rural areas with interest in developing projects in their localities.

Decree for Aids to Young People with Ideas

One of the main needs of young people for launching entrepreneurial projects in Extremadura is the access to financing sources. With the aim of supporting young entrepreneurs, the GIJ implemented two specific programmes to help them access financing for business and projects.

The GIJ, together with the Regional Government of Extremadura, designed and managed the Decree for Aids to Young People with Ideas 16/2008 that offered 10 specific aid schemes for the design and implementation of new business, social or cultural projects. Through these, young entrepreneurs were supported in all development steps, offering them resources to help them make progress in their activities.

The ten specific aid schemes for supporting young people with ideas were:



Figure 10 GIJ consultations

- Subcontracting Consulting and External Enterprises, to cover technical needs of entrepreneurial projects and initiatives.
- Imagination and Innovation Units, to create an internal department where to design, develop or consolidate innovative projects, services or processes.
- Training aids, to access needed training for the development of business, social or cultural projects.
- Pilot Experiences, to test how the projects or initiatives work in real conditions.
- Grants to Young Talent, to establish a professional collaboration participating in the creation of new innovative projects, products or processes.
- Grants to Young Creation, to work in the development of an artistic piece of work or project.
- Grants to Project Implementation, to support theoretical development of entrepreneurial projects.
- Grants for Territorial Dynamisation, to work in the socio-economic study of future scenarios, new business opportunities and/or strategic sectors that could generate added value to the territories.
- Grants to Sport Innovation in the Natural Environment, to develop sport innovation projects in natural environment, in the framework of the International Centre of Sport Innovation in the Natural Environment “El Anillo”.
- Micro-projects, for the organisation of events, activities or fairs in their first edition.

Evaluation and selection of actions

The GIJ established a procedure to select the actions and projects to be financed under the Decree, starting with the administrative revision of the submitted documents until the final justification of the costs incurred and the payment to the promoter. The steps of this procedure were:

- 1) Check whether proposals were presented according to the rules of the respective call and before the deadline established by the Decree.
- 2) The GIJ staff checked the submitted documents from an administrative point of view, establishing their adaptation and if needed, the possible modifications, that were communicated to the applicants in order to modify accordingly the proposal within a given deadline.
- 3) If modifications were submitted, the technical evaluation process checked the adaptation to technical criteria established by the Decree. The total evaluation score was determined considering the following aspects:
 - originality and innovation,
 - contribution to development of the region, and
 - degree of consistency and coherence.
- 4) A report on the technical and adaptation condition of the proposal was elaborated, indicating whether a proposal was feasible for financing.
- 5) The Commission for Evaluation, composed by GIJ staff and the Regional Government of Extremadura, determined which proposals to finance considering the before mentioned report.
- 6) A project list for each specific aid scheme, indicating the total amount granted for each proposal, was created and published in the Official Gazette of Extremadura, while applicants were also notified by email.
- 7) If requested, applicants had to submit additional information in order to be able to accept the awarded grant.

Reporting and payments

After project implementation, the GIJ verified the realised actions and drew up another report determining the final amount to be awarded. In case of incomplete implementation of the project, decreased payments or requests for back-payment were possible. If additional information was needed for justifying the grant, a communication was sent to the beneficiary requesting such information by a deadline. Final payments were made to the beneficiaries according to the amounts established by the GIJ report.

Youth Committee

The GIJ created a Youth Committee, composed of young people that were previously supported by the GIJ. After having successfully implemented their target activity or set up their project, the GIJ offered them the possibility to support and collaborate with new users of GIJ services.

Youth Committee members supported and guided new users, presenting their own experiences to young people to lead by example, and guided the GIJ on the needs of aspiring young entrepreneurs. Their activity regarded both the direct actions they performed with the GIJ and their participation in their existing reference communities (virtual and physical).

Key grassroots characteristics

Bottom-up approach

GIJ followed a bottom-up approach as it started many of its actions intercepting the young and by starting planning and support measures based on their needs and ideas. It aimed to identify youth potential to create initiatives and develop ideas, both innovative and entrepreneurial, for possible materialisation in social, artistic or cultural entrepreneurial projects.

Empowerment of the young, support to youth entrepreneurship & employability

Through the work of dedicated Action Units, a support group comprised of a mediator and an expert accompanied each young person with a selected idea in order to support feasible implementation. Additionally, the GIJ implemented a series of targeted support schemes to both train young people and support the setup of the entrepreneurial projects.



Figure 11 GIJ training action

All supported initiatives were born from a starting contact between the young and the Imagination Cube in Merida, or another node at regional level, or the virtual office. From that moment, the GIJ supported a young person's project until its development and setup, thus enabling young entrepreneurs to follow their ideas, show initiative and take responsibility. Experts brought complementary professional experience in business, social and cultural areas and offered additional enabling knowledge tools to the young.

General objectives of the GIJ were related to making ideas visible, to training, coordinating and advising young entrepreneurs, to promoting contacts, analysis and financial resources, and to diminishing the cultural gap between youth and market.

Grassroots innovation support

The GIJ promoted a “Society of Imagination” in Extremadura, i.e. the capacity of young people for dreaming, imaging, creating and innovating to activate cultural and economic development. It targeted innovative ideas in any form, giving youth a possibility to apply their imagination and test solutions born from their observations and experiences.

The GIJ aligned its organisational model to its philosophy. It created a flexible, open, free, differentiated, dynamic, and active environment in order to become a new model for unusual ideas that boost bottom-up innovation.

Community activation and communication

The GIJ aimed to call together imaginative and innovative young people around Extremadura, to generate new innovative possibilities and foster regional development. It offered a flexible and dynamic organisational structure and involved a Youth Committee formed by young people with own innovative experiences. This Committee offered knowledge from peers to young entrepreneurs and at the same time represented the voice of the youth’s experience for the GIJ. Youth Committee members represented community leaders and were able to act as multiplier stimulators in their own reference communities.

Through its Action Units, all project development stages followed a participatory approach, the young entrepreneurs being the guiding voice while the GIJ staff and experts acted as facilitators and supporters. Contacts among young people and their projects were fostered in “Ideas Lab” or the “Initiatives Portfolio”, where all participants in GIJ meet together.

The GIJ was able to disseminate its work and intercept interested participants all over the region of Extremadura thanks collaboration with important community actors and its own physical network with 34 nodes. It additionally set up a virtual office for easy contact. Throughout its duration, a lot of new communities of interest and networks developed in Extremadura.

Return on involved community

The GIJ’s supported projects were born from the regional context and thus prepared to meet reality. The young suggested solutions to specific problems from which they themselves and their communities would profit. Solutions proposed by young people followed their ideas on how to improve Extremadura and situate it at international level. Young proposers also collaborated with different groups in the region and supported integral development of actions.

Validation/verification and primary results

The interest on GIJ training activities for young entrepreneurs increased every year, with an average evaluation of the activities of 4.53 of maximum 5 points. The satisfaction rate of the GIJ service was registered being 7.2 of maximum 10 points. 99% of the beneficiaries of the GIJ’s aid schemes considered these useful for implementing their projects in the region.

Networking activities between entrepreneurs organised by the GIJ facilitated business relations between participants. 75% of beneficiaries confirmed that they were able to established useful contacts for their projects, while 38% launched new professional alliances.

The GIJ social media channels registered more than 6.500 followers and became an open space for debate and a source for knowing the challenges of the young, as young people expressed their recognition and critiques. The GIJ aspired to a continuous dialogue with its users.

The Decree for Aids to Young People with ideas stimulated 3360 applications and supported 776 actions. Young entrepreneurs received aids, in the framework of the different schemes, for a total amount of 5.506.265,01 € in seven call for proposals.

33% of beneficiaries of the aid schemes were able to professionalise their entrepreneurial activity and formalise their businesses.

Costs

The implementing costs cited in this section regard an example period (2008-2010). Main expenditures of the initiative were linked to support services and grants to young people.

The following list summarises the cost framework:

	budgeted costs		actual costs	
	GIJ operations	Promotion of youth, incl. grants & services	GIJ invoiced costs	Total operating expenses
2008	1.581.306 €	4.728.964 €	1.641.557 €	n.a.
2009	1.581.306 €	4.870.555 €	1.293.300 €	1.301.762 €
2010	1.501.894 €	5.016.672 €	2.030.000 €	2.013.000 €

The GIJ was primarily implemented through HR work. In its offices throughout the region it employed a total of 36 staff members in 2008, while the number increased to 50 in 2009. 30 (44) were full-time staff members.

In 2009, 21 of the 50 staff members were under 30 years of age.

SWOT

<p>STRENGTH</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • dedicated staff support programme management and project development as mediators • actions of the programme primarily developed from a demand-side analysis • establishment of a Youth Committee as organisational and support unit eliminates internal blindness (quality management) • complex and adaptable service portfolio offered to young innovators • goal oriented actions and action groups, flexible and dynamic organisational model • includes a wide expert community, available to lend support to the young • open-door policy and easy access through regional network of contact points and online office 	<p>WEAKNESSES</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • financial support for setting up an idea linked only to participation in calls, the follow-up for “walk-in” situations is limited to services • less flexibility in allocating funds when promising ideas arise, as funds are linked to specific call timelines • project development through Action Units primarily guided by the expert’s report (less participation in this stage, more top-down consultations) • no capitalisation strategy for outcomes of formative processes • Action Units are dissolved by a project’s end, knowledge gained risks to be lost
<p>OPPORTUNITIES</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Stimulation of long-term connection among the members of the Action Units and generally the network of young entrepreneurs within the GIJ • possibility to create similar, independent supporting units or agencies from the former participants and Youth Committee members (autonomous follow-up) • no geographical limitation set by the programme management authority, it is open to the world as long as implementation is regional 	<p>THREATS</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • dependent on funding opportunities and policy makers • no clear legal protection scheme for the original ideas presented by the young innovators

Participation

Introduction

There are many definitions of the participatory approach, but all of them agree on the active involvement of the public in specific decision-making processes, with a flexible methodology in which everyone who is affected by a specific topic has a voice and is invited to participate in the debate. The participation of citizens in decision-making processes is a key element of local democracy. It increases the transparency, makes local government officials more accountable for their decisions, and transfers part of the responsibility for development processes to the affected community.²⁴

According to Mitlin and Thompson, participatory approaches include activities designed to:

- increase awareness and understanding about the key actors and groups at local level,
- improve the quality and quantity of information about local conditions,
- identify viable local development options,
- mobilise local and external resources for such options,
- enable local people to identify constraints, set priorities and take action,
- strengthen the self-confidence and capacities of local organisations, and
- develop and support mechanisms to resolve local conflicts.²⁵

Participatory approaches intend to achieve change objectives. To do so, policy makers are asked to be open to all points of view regarding problems and objectives in order to establish a starting situation from whence to identify a collective way from listening to putting strategies in place. Ideas and contradictions collected are made available to all stakeholders to analyse key points, lines or steps to be taken, in order to prioritise the causes and define how to focus the strategy process.

The Work Group for Community Health and Development at the University of Kansas lists the following advantages for the use of participative approaches:

- **Ownership:** when people participate in planning an intervention, the action builds a strong common base and generates feelings of ownership, making them work for success.
- **Credibility:** when an intervention is based on people's points of view and experiences, it has more credibility for the local community.
- **Wider horizon:** when more people from different target populations participate, the access to knowledge, and the diversity of perspectives, ideas and customs create a more heterogeneous picture.
- **Effectiveness:** considering all views and perspectives ensures identification of all needs and minimises unintended consequences.
- **Relationship:** establishing contacts with community members who are usually far away from decision-making processes can create bridges that help to develop long-term relationships, and to build trust as a base for future local community actions.
- **Learning:** skills learnt in a participative process become community resources to be used over the long term.²⁶

²⁴ Cosma, I., Jovanova, K., *Implementing Citizens participation in Decision Making at Local Level (Toolkit)*, OSCE Mission to Skopje, 2013

²⁵ Mitlin, D. and Thompson, J., *Participatory approaches in urban areas: strengthening civil society or reinforcing the status quo?*, *Environment and Urbanization*, Vol. 7, N° 1, April 1995.

²⁶ Community Tool Box, *Learn a skill. Chapter 18. Deciding where to start. Section 2. Participatory Approaches to Planning Community Interventions*, Work Group for Community Health and Development, University of Kansas, 2016

- **Empowerment:** respect for all involved populations becomes an example for inclusiveness and empowerment that could lead other stakeholders to participate.

Participation can be direct or indirect and all types of local actors on a specific issue should be included in the participatory approach, including different classes, ethnicities, genders and groups of age. Direct participation can involve members of local communities in the different phases of development of local programmes or action plans, i.e. by offering attendance to thematic workshops, participation in project implementation, or by collecting ideas to be implemented. Indirect participation, also considered representation, involves structures that represent beneficiaries or recipients (like local civil society organisations), which participate to and organise discussions, gather information and summarise ideas for interventions.²⁷

Indirect participation can be a powerful tool. Community leaders are identified to deliver observations and proposals in representation, as well as stimulate participation among their reference communities. Community leaders can help to strengthen confidence and skills, encourage active engagement and explain the opportunities of empowerment offered during participatory approaches. By actively targeting reference people of a community, public institutions can get help to change attitudes and encourage people to take part in local decisions and action plans.

Local contexts establish the conditions for identifying interest groups and community leaders. Communities that participate in decision-making processes often are not homogeneous or they are split into sub-groups. Identifying who is who is an essential step in the analysis that will underlie the design and implementation of the strategy for participation, establishing relationships between different individuals or groups and facilitating various types or partnerships. It allows trust and mutual understanding to be established and encourages those involved to take into account each other's ideas and needs.

Participatory approaches can be used in the different steps of policy development (design, implementation and evaluation), as dynamic processes ranging from information to active involvement. They should be re-considered along the way, always identifying the most appropriate tools and resources. The following levels for participation can be proposed:

Levels	Objectives	Tools
Information	Build trust in beneficiaries and users, to raise awareness on specific issues	Public meetings Media, events
Consultation	Commitment and understanding of the specific issue	Participatory analysis with interest groups Mediators working with local community
Joint development	Plan and design actions and evaluation procedures	Working groups with active local community
Collective decision-making	Final definition of actions and strategies by consensus	Participatory selection of local action plans
Initiation	Implementation of local action plans	Support and assistance for development
Leadership	Engagement, activation and self-management	Responsibility and power for management

²⁷ Groupe URD - Groupe Urgence Rehabilitation Developpement, Participation handbook for humanitarian field workers - Involving crisis-affected people in a humanitarian response, 2009

Participation of the young

Participatory approaches can be very useful to engage young people, validate their interests and involve them in designing policies and support services addressed to them. This can be considered both for macro-level strategy planning and for the design and implementation of specific support measures.

Grassroots youth policy designs for entrepreneurship and employability are related to activation, participation and empowerment of young people in a sustainable and innovative way, while aiming at returning benefits into the youth's local communities. Participation objectives in this context regard:

- securing the active participation of young people and their associations in the development process, facilitating circulation of information and access to training, and ensuring transparent decision-making procedures;
- the involvement of stakeholders working on youth and employment;
- helping young ideas to emerge and to generate initiatives;
- building consensus with the young, ensuring fair representation of their interests and creating new links between their interest groups and the public institution.

A more effective engagement and involvement of the young during the definition of youth policy instruments can increase their employability and boost their success in self-employment. Young people tend to be very aware of their needs and are often able to propose reasonable solutions or approaches to improving their situations. Involving them in macro-level planning and in the design of support instruments is a promising possibility for creating useful, tailor-made and sustainable framework conditions for their professional growth.

A participatory approach requires more than providing young people with options, they need to be involved in the whole process, having choices, making contributions, and collaborating with local planners, on an individual basis or through youth representatives. Stakeholders for participatory processes on youth policy issues may include youth work organisations, NGOs and civil society groups, employment support services providers, educational bodies (formal and informal centres), the private sector, and young people as individuals.

Examples for youth participation

This section presents three different examples on different levels of youth participation, collected from experiences in Spain, Hungary and Italy.

Macro-level planning: Extremadura Youth Plan

The V Youth Plan for Extremadura, defining policy actions for 15 to 30 year olds for the period from 2013 to 2016, has been elaborated with the participation of different organisations at regional level working with and for youth in Extremadura, from institutional and public administrations to different youth associations.

The design of the V Youth Plan for Extremadura has counted on the participation of youth through questionnaires and debate sessions regarding the following aspects:

- Main interests for youth: among others employment, training, health, leisure, education on values, housing, creativity and innovation.

- Vision on youth programmes and policies: among others knowledge of places and organisations related to youth, utility and offer of existing activities for youth, perception of activity organisers, information on activities.
- Youth proposals: ideals for activities and proposals for actions according to focal points of interest.

In order to design, develop and implement the Plan, the concerns, needs, proposals and ideas of the young have been taken into consideration. To this aim, a process for embracing diversity and plurality of youth was planned with a participative methodology, in order to consider all the above aspects, involving regional young people and technical and institutional experts working with youth. Participation was implemented through 21 face-to-face debate sessions at different locations in the region (600 persons attending), 798 in-person and online questionnaires to youth, and 14 in-depth interviews to experts working with and for youth. Furthermore, a total of 190 organisations have participated in the design of the Plan:

- Regional Government of Extremadura:
 - 13 Regional Directorates, such as Rural Development, Enterprise and Entrepreneurship, Social Policy and Family, Sports, etc.
 - 3 autonomous divisions: Regional Employment Service, Health Service and Dependence Service
 - 3 public entities related to youth: the Institute for Youth in Extremadura, the Extremadura Youth Council, and Youth and Sports Foundation
 - 3 other public entities: Consumer Institute, Women Institute and Regional Agency for International Cooperation for Development
- 2 County Councils (Badajoz and Caceres)
- 12 Municipal Councils
- Extremadura Federation of Municipalities and Provinces (FEMPEX)
- University of Extremadura (UEX)
- Extremadura Human Rights Association
- 62 Youth Associations
- 3 Local Youth Councils
- 5 Spaces for Youth Creation
- 2 Youth Factories
- 2 Spaces for Coexistence and Youth Citizens
- 7 Associations of Students' Parents
- 12 Cultural Associations
- 4 High Schools
- 12 Sports Associations
- 5 Students Associations
- 5 Women Associations
- 13 Disabled and Minorities Associations
- 5 Environmental Associations
- 4 Health Associations
- 7 Rural Development Associations
- 3 Training Associations

As the young were the main target group for the Plan's measures and activities, considerations on adequate communication instruments were carried out as well. The following channels were used:

- collaboration with organisations working and involved with young people, e.g. educational and youth associations,

- organisation of sessions with youth, as well as with associations or entities concerned with young people (youth and sports associations, university and educational centres, etc.),
- use of internet, social media and email for disseminating activities,
- use of youth information points and other spaces visited by youth, and also volunteers acting as intermediates for dissemination activities,
- creation of dissemination material in an interactive way, more visual and innovative to be communicated through social media by youth.

Active intermediation: Youth Rapporteurs in Hungary

At local level, the Hungarian youth institutional system is operated and maintained by local governments with youth information and counselling offices as well as youth rapporteurs, responsible for coordinating the youth-related actions of local authorities in county seats and towns, mediating youth information that are usually associated with other services or institutions.

Youth rapporteurs are young people trained by a dedicated programme. They follow the goal to create bridges to young people and act as reference persons and information flow supporters between the young, institutions that support the young and the Hungarian policy framework. During the development of the Hungarian National Youth Plan in 2009, youth rapporteurs were involved as intermediaries and communication channels to the young for the definition and development of the strategy.

Youth rapporteurs act as catalysts in the lives of settlements, districts and micro-regions. Youth services play a key role in the development of young people (youth information and counselling offices, youth information points, youth public spaces, street work) and by now, operation of network- or system-based youth services has been fully developed in Hungary.

The number of youth rapporteurs differs by region (Southern Great Plain: 15, Northern Great Plain: 20, Northern Hungary: 19, Southern Transdanubia: 15, Central Transdanubia: 9, Western Transdanubia: 17, Central Hungary: 4), with a total number of 99 rapporteurs working in 75 settlements. The employment of rapporteurs and the financing of their operations belong to tasks undertaken on a voluntary basis; for a few years their job used be supported in the framework of a central grant application scheme, which is still available.

In order to train as a youth rapporteur, graduation from the secondary education is the main educational requirement. Training takes 2 years. At present, this qualification can be obtained in 14 institutions, financed either by the state or available for a tuition fee, in the form of a full-time or correspondence course. The network of youth rapporteurs is co-financed by the European Union and the Hungarian Government.

The socio-economic situation in Hungary is urgently calling for youth rapporteurs being capable to support disadvantaged and marginalised social groups, especially those of young people. Skills and competences required to fulfil the occupation include emotional stability, empathy, good communications skills, stress tolerance, decision-making abilities, efficient problem identification and problem solving abilities, tolerance, and conflict management skills.

Youth rapporteurs are primarily in charge of the protection of youth's interests, of giving support to local society and communities, of networking between sub-cultural groups, and of providing advocacy to youth being at risk of becoming victims (including crime and cybercrime prevention). Youth rapporteurs are in charge of:

- identifying, collecting and analysing information on main questions dealing with the problems and life situation of young people that enables comprehensive and deep understanding of information resources, tools, databases,
- being aware of formal and non-formal education, training opportunities and career choice services and allowances,
- providing advice on labour market and job opportunities, preconditions for employment, unemployment benefits, healthcare services, prevention and treatment services addressing addictions, helping and crisis services,
- providing information on available domestic and EU funding opportunities, mobility and exchange programmes – including support to applicants in selecting the proper programme and contribution to proposal-writing and project implementation,
- bearing in mind the service users' needs, values and problems,
- treating information gathered confidentially.

Participation to shaping direct support measures: Laboratori dal Basso in Apulia

Laboratori dal Basso (cf. above) is a support scheme aimed to activate, facilitate and further the development of managerial, organisational and networking competences of young entrepreneurs through a set of meeting and training tools in order for them to be able to use learning opportunities for entrepreneurial growth.

Young entrepreneurs participate in shaping individual actions, indicating topics, tutors, didactic methods and creating training activities tailored to their needs and based on their actual demand to further their professional development. They contribute to the tailor-made creation of formative agendas by sharing

- what they need to learn,
- how they need to learn, and
- from whom they need to learn, in order to grow.

The support scheme only defined general framework conditions for eligible training projects, while all issues regarding the formative agenda were defined by the beneficiaries and co-planned for finalisation together with the public body. Therefore, each individual project was created with an applied participatory approach, based on needs and solutions collected directly from the young.

As participation was realised at a very immediate level and young entrepreneurs' proposed solutions directly influenced the implemented actions, the public body opted for co-creation of activity plans together with the young. Thus, young entrepreneurs' proposals could be supported and guided in terms of feasibility, according to applicable frameworks, and reporting rules while compromises were found together where necessary.

Grassroots schemes and youth participation in Europe – additional examples

Co-creation of social spaces - for youth with youth (SI)

When the Municipality of Maribor realised that it owns many empty and unused spaces and that these spaces are of great interest to young people and youth organisations, it developed a support scheme to bring public spaces into adequate conditions in order to offer them to young people and organisations for creating their own activities and environments. It did so by involving young people in all steps along the way. For the city, the methodology itself was already an innovation. It started out by approaching young people with a proposal of co-creating social spaces – following its motto “for youth with youth”. During a pilot action, young men and women renovated a public space in four weeks’ time at the end of 2013. They were fully and responsibly involved in the works, giving their own ideas on how to improve the space, gaining valuable work experience and getting closer with the City Youth Council Maribor and the environment they are offering. Thanks to co-creation, the budget of the initiative could be kept at a low level, while the city registered important results for its youth.

Young people could try their skills at professions for which there is a shortage in the Maribor area (e.g. handcraft businesses: painters, electricians, masons) and youngsters also learned how to actively participate in decision-making processes. They understood how to encourage other young people for active participation in volunteer activities. As active citizens, young people can cooperate in order to contribute to their local communities as well as empower themselves by gathering experiences and knowledge for the improvement of their employment situation.

The pilot action resulted in the renovated premises of the City Youth Council Maribor. Due to the successful work, different places owned by the Municipality of Maribor are to be renovated within similar workshops in 2015 - 2020. The Municipality of Maribor’s experience was also selected one of the five best practices supporting women and youth in South East Europe and was a winner of the GENiYOUTH Municipal Initiatives Award.

Source: Municipality of Maribor, 2016

Action programme for more youth participation (DE)

From 2007 to 2009, the German Federal Ministry of Family Affairs, Senior Citizens, Women and Youth, the Federal Agency for Civic Education and the Deutscher Bundesjugendring implemented an “Action Programme to enhance Youth Participation”. The Programme followed the motto “Only who acts can change things!” and supported projects and initiatives presented by children and young people from 6 to 27 years of age. It aimed at integrating young people into socio-political decision-making processes, to strengthen young people’s socio-political engagement, and to make political decision makers more sensible to young people’s actual needs.

The Programme offered a series of instruments for supporting young people’s projects and ideas. This included for example a yearly call for ideas, to support innovative ideas and projects, and “Praxislabor” (practical laboratory), a training scheme for young people and beneficiaries on project management, public relations management, and all other aspects needed for the professional and successful implementation of a project. Praxislabor also included the possibility for individual advice sessions.

The Programme was monitored and evaluated by the German Youth Institute and the relevant materials and reports are available online (German).

Source: Deutsches Jugendinstitut, 2016

Demola's Innovation Ecosystem (HU)

Demola was born in Tampere, Finland, following an initiative from Nokia. The company was interested to find new models of co-creation, involving students and companies. Today, Demola is an international network of innovation centres with headquarters in Finland, dedicated to facilitating fruitful collaboration between university students, companies, and local organisations. Besides centres in Sweden, Latvia, Lithuania, Hungary, Slovenia and the Basque Country, it is also present in Mexico and Namibia.

The Demola concept is based on structured co-creation with a win-win character and well-established agreements between universities, students and companies. Companies are given the opportunity to integrate students into their innovation development processes, they act with low risk and are offered the possibility to experiment on innovative systems with multi-disciplinary student teams. Universities have the chance to create sustainable contacts to the business world, as well as give students the opportunity to work on real case studies.

In other words: Demola is an open innovation platform for bringing together ideas, skills and perspective from young people, teachers and experienced entrepreneurs of various backgrounds.

Projects carried out with Demola are controlled by contracts between a student group and a company. Such contracts regulate the framework for collaboration and for financial correspondence to satisfactory developments. Companies and students co-plan and co-create solutions for the company's challenges and after completion of a project, the company is presented the results by the project team. This approach is still rare in business practice, as it includes openness and sharing of development concepts, which are usually kept as confidential. Only if the company deems the presented results useful, it has the possibility to license it or purchase the rights from the student team. Demola does not ask for payment from companies, it shares in the purchased or licensed IPR.

Solutions developed by Demola teams are as diverse as companies' challenges. They can be new concepts for service delivery, pilot procedures or prototypes. Universities usually contribute with teachers who support and examine projects, and they offer credits for the activities carried out in the framework of the project. Students tend to be in the final stage of their studies, to be able to apply the necessary amount of disciplinary knowledge. Throughout the project duration, they are asked to hold presentations and to pitch the state of their work. This procedure presents an additional formative aspect of the Demola approach, as it readies student groups for their final presentation to the company.

In 2012, Demola received the Baltic Sea Region Innovation Award. The choice was motivated with Demola being a common open platform, where students and universities develop new products and services and together with companies create real solutions to existing problems and challenges.

Sources:

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Barcelona: towards Fab City (ES)

For the last 10 years, Barcelona has been a forerunner in the development of the Fab Lab network and maker movements. Fab Labs are open digital fabrication studios where anybody interested can learn how to use technology's latest tools and is free to make (develop) pretty much anything they want. Thus, Fab Labs create projects and products that are conceived during a collaborative process, and while they often use advanced manufacturing technologies, they maintain an open source philosophy.

Fab Lab Barcelona is one of the leading laboratories in the worldwide network of Fab Labs. It is a small scale production and innovation centre offering digital fabrication tools for the production of objects, prototypes and electronics. It is part of the Institute for Advanced Architecture of Catalonia, with which it collaborates on various educational and research programmes.

The team around Fab Lab Barcelona strives to provide access to tools, knowledge and the financial means to educate, innovate and invent – to allow anyone to become technologically empowered citizens who create opportunities to improve their communities and their own livelihoods. The city of Barcelona adopted the concept within its strategic Smart Cities framework, and translated it into the “Ateneus de Fabricació” programme. The latter seeks to make public spaces for encouraging and supporting digital manufacturing and social innovation projects available all over the city; and to bring technology to citizens, regardless of their background, origin, age or profession.

This municipal network of maker spaces allows multi-disciplinary citizens from different parts of Barcelona to get in contact and develop joined projects. It brings people and interests together, supports community building and social integration and nurtures innovation through open collaboration. The Ateneus spaces are furthermore accessible to local associations and groups, universities, and businesses who can share or search talent, contribute to or profit from grassroots innovation processes within the network.

The Ateneus Programme includes different targeted sub-programmes, i.e. a Teaching Programme, a Social Innovation Programme and a Family Programme. The first aims at schools (students and teachers alike), the second promotes collaboration in the creation and in the search for answers to social challenges, and the third aims at neighbourhood residents and follows the goal to stimulate their interest and curiosity.

Sources:

Open Digital Science, Lostal, E., Fablab Barcelona, 02.07.2015

BCN3D, Digital Manufacturing for Everyone, 17.12.2015

Part III – Recommendations

Based on the frameworks for youth in their territories, and following the joint discussion and analysis of the presented experiences and practices, the GIDDB project partners have developed recommendations for policy-makers interested in developing support schemes for young entrepreneurs using a grassroots approach. The Design Aspects in this Part present a synthesis of lessons learned both through direct implementation of experimental actions and through studying other practices in the framework of the GIDDB project. They can be considered separately during policy development processes, as well as be applied in the presented order.

Target Group

The Design Aspects presented in the following pages regard the development of policy support schemes for young entrepreneurs. The target group is proposed to include young people from 18 to 35 years of age that either wish to implement an entrepreneurial idea or already created a start-up.

Many schemes and support models targeting young entrepreneurs define themselves as helpful only to those who are ready to receive them, that only young people with the right skills, attitudes and entrepreneurial values have enough of an entrepreneurial spirit to choose self-employment as a practicable career option. In the framework of a grassroots policy scheme, this type of reasoning cannot apply. Innovation and initiative can be found anywhere and in all sectors and creativity is not limited to those already possessing an entrepreneurial mindset. The key to establishing grassroots policy measures is to be open and willing to stimulate all interested young people to voice their needs, to propose solutions and to try out their ideas.

If policy schemes continue to target only those already ready, much innovative potential continues to be lost and many young people for whom a chance to try, learn and grow could make a significant change, risk to continue to be excluded during project evaluation processes because they are “not ready” and not because their idea would not work.

Challenges

In order to stimulate youth entrepreneurship, support innovation and develop talent, public bodies must ask themselves: which barriers can be taken away and how can we actively help? This is not an easy commitment and a public body aspiring to adopt a participated and inclusive approach to young entrepreneurs will likely have to overcome challenges before being able to do so. Grassroots policy schemes can be difficult to integrate into existing strategic development programmes and it is not easy to merge them with standard performance requirements and indicators given a public body for managing funds.

Bottom up approaches require a high degree of continued closeness to the target group and without being able to plan for dedicated personnel, mobility and communication channels, the work to be done in the framework of a grassroots policy scheme would simply overwhelm the public body, take over its day-to-day operations, or risk to be implemented insufficiently and become counterproductive.

When the development of individual actions is linked to young entrepreneurs expressing their needs, reactivity is a key factor. Adequate reaction times for implementing services after short-term planning may represent another challenge to a public body's internal procedures. Being able to act within reasonable timeframes should be verified before launching policy schemes that require ad-hoc reactions.

DESIGN ASPECT Nr. 1: COMMUNITY

Any grassroots initiative needs a community. For communities represent the “grassroots” level from which needs and ideas can stimulate practical innovative solutions, new ways of tackling old problems, synergies for common growth. And: communities facilitate participation.

What makes a community?

In the framework of this document, communities of young entrepreneurs and aspiring entrepreneurs are intended. They are defined by two main characteristics: territoriality and shared interests and values (like-mindedness). Such communities can stretch beyond small, urban areas, such as neighbourhoods and municipalities, to cover larger geographical territories. As long as members are bound by a common set of needs, interests and values, close territorial vicinity is of secondary importance.

Which territorial radius applies to a young community with which and for which grassroots policies are planned to be implemented depends much on the profile of the policy-maker. Policy makers on different levels interact with communities in different territorial frameworks. While mayors and city counsellors want to focus their municipality’s territorial boundaries, regional or national governmental structures need to follow a larger territorial approach.

Peer-to-peer

A major point of strength of grassroots communities is their peer-to-peer aspect and this is especially true when they are composed of young people. Community members come together on the same level; they work with each other and learn from each other. They share their interests and solutions, enhance each other’s development, and can even become each other’s mentors.

Community leaders and activation

However, the fact that community members are on a par with each other and that they interact on equal terms does not secure the active participation of all. It does not secure the taking advantage of possibilities and opportunities (be they offered by policy measures or other’s experiences) of all those young people that share the same interests. Not everybody is pro-active, not everybody knows how to identify and access opportunities, not everybody has the courage to do so. In addition, sometimes inactivity has simply lasted too long and lethargy must be overcome before the spark of initiative can be lit again.

This is why the identification of community leaders is crucial to the administration of grassroots policies for young people. Following the peer-to-peer aspect, such leadership is not hierarchical. Leaders must be an integral part of their communities, they must speak the same language and be of the same age group as community members. Community leaders act as activators, facilitators and intermediaries.

Community leadership does not have a pre-defined profile and leaders can and will change with time. Today’s inactive youth can be tomorrow’s community leaders. The sharing of experiences, of opportunities and of knowledge among peers creates multiplier effects and developments in the best of cases, so the community a policy-maker works with in 2016 may not have the same reference people, needs and/or interests in 2018.

Communication with communities

It is therefore of vital importance to create open and lasting communication channels. Policy-makers need to start following communities as much as communities follow policy-makers. Standard institutional communication is not advisable for grassroots interaction with young people, policy-makers must learn and adopt their language and ways of expression and interaction, and

information should be presented in adequate text, form and (graphic) style. Using the right language and channels of communication will help overcome long-lasting prejudices of the dusty old public administration and will help make young people and communities listen and consider what a public body has to offer. It will also support community building and networking aspects and offer spaces and platforms for the exchange of knowledge, ideas and partnership needs.

Effective community interaction through social media management, easy-to-identify and easy-to-contact reference staff and (joined) storytelling can as much contribute to successful activation and development of a territory's youth as targeted financial support schemes.

Communities and grassroots policy schemes

As indicated before, communities represent the grassroots level. In order to create policy instruments from and with the grassroots, the involvement of the community to which the policy instrument is targeted is inevitable. Bottom-up logic requires to develop policy proposals by assessing problems, needs and opportunities from the recipient level and to adapt the intervention/solution to this assessment's outcome. Instead of offering standard solutions for macro-level need definitions, a grassroots policy scheme sets out to involve a specific community of which it asks to assess itself in order to identify their own specific needs and to propose solutions to those needs. In response, it offers the community instruments to support the realisation of proposed solutions.

Consequently, the selected community must be made to feel responsible for shaping its own future opportunities. Grassroots policy schemes are no one-way street; the more a community expresses its needs and proposes solutions, the more a policy-maker can act on the assessment and suggestions. The openness and willingness of a public body to create tailor-made support schemes must be met by a responsible management of this opportunity by the target community. It must understand that a bottom-up approach makes it accountable for the identification of its gaps and needs and for the resulting development of support schemes.

To achieve this, the public body and the young become partners; the policy-maker moves away from being a mere financing authority, it becomes an intermediary and a facilitator, which helps the community to connect ideas, people, resources and efforts. A grassroots youth policy scheme uses the community as much as it enables it. It widens the scope of opportunity to community members and stimulates multiplier effects and cross-pollination of ideas.

Work with pre-existing communities

In order to develop a grassroots youth policy scheme, policy-makers should already know and be in contact with the reference community. This may be the case e.g. for a local or regional government, which has implemented a series of support schemes for young people, for the employability of young people or for supporting youth entrepreneurship. Policies for specific target populations (e.g. the young) or specific sectors (culture, social, technology, tourism, ...) tend to create a pool of users, which take advantage of all available complementary and follow-up support measures or which simply always apply for support.

As another example, young communities often develop around remodelled open spaces within previously unused or discarded areas or buildings; a development ever more visible in European cities' urban development processes, where Fab Labs, maker spaces and urban laboratories have become fixed points of reference for grassroots innovation.

The more such nascent communities were intercepted, involved and brought together throughout previous policy schemes, the more networking will have happened and the more unity, sense of belonging and common interest will have developed.

Starting the process of grassroots policy-making by researching, identifying or even building communities “from scratch” is not advisable. These actions take time and effort and cannot lead to an effective, open and responsible collaboration with the wished-for target community within the (financial programming) timeframe to which the policy-to-be-developed will likely be subject. If an administration without ties to one or more existing communities aspires to develop grassroots youth policy measures, it is recommended to make this the final objective of a greater mid-term strategy and to build a community and community interaction through the inclusive and participatory implementation of a set of preceding initiatives.

DESIGN ASPECT Nr. 2: PARTICIPATION

Communities can be brought to their full potential through participation, i.e. a flexible, process-oriented approach for active involvement in decision-making processes.

Greater effectiveness through involvement

For a public body, in order to work with a community, it needs to know and understand it, wherefore working with existing communities is preferable. Only if the public body has a clear picture of the target population, it can integrate its needs into policy schemes and develop instruments for its support.

By applying a participatory approach to strategic planning and policy implementation, a public body can collect and understand views, needs and proposals from target communities and improve the quality of information on which it acts. By inviting communities to research themselves and to share their needs and ideas, public bodies have the possibility to create a bridge to citizens and thus contribute to developing a new level of trust. At the same time, participation stimulates a sense of responsibility in communities, it strengthens their self-confidence and it increases involvement in public support schemes.

Identify who is who

Public bodies need community references in order to implement a sensible and fruitful participatory approach. It is rarely possible to reach every community member, but the strategic collaboration with community leaders enhances the effect of participation. Through them, the scope of dissemination within a community widens and information on opportunities and possibilities is more probable to also reach those community members, which are less pro-active and do not autonomously inform themselves. Thus, community leaders play an important role in participatory actions – both as catalyst for the public institution and as representative for less prepared or inactive community members.

In the framework of youth entrepreneurship policies, important partners for creating participation can be youth workers and youth organisations, operators of spaces frequented by youth, successful young entrepreneurs who lead by example, and similar.

Establish a relationship

Young people’s trust in public institutions tends to be low and many are not very informed about support possibilities. When developing support measures for the young, the concept of participation should go beyond macro-strategy consultations, it should be implemented constantly along the way. In order to do so, the role of the public institution must change. Instead of being perceived as a financing authority, a distant government body, which does not necessarily enter into young entrepreneurs’ practical daily challenges, the time has come to work with the young. The public body must become a partner to its beneficiaries, a facilitator, even a mentor, where this is adequate. The

development and implementation of support schemes in direct collaboration with a community offers great opportunities for all parties and allows for better monitoring, follow-up and sustainability of supported actions.

Relationships are based on mutual understanding and respect. Participation by the young in the shaping of support instruments does not mean that they dictate the process. When a public body and a community become partners, an open dialogue is established and the needs and ideas from the young are as much discussed as the actual possibilities for implementation and regulatory frameworks for financial reporting that the public body must respect. Consensus and compromise are key issues in any successful relationship.

Create accountability

Participation does not only mean to voice concerns and to point out needs. Participation is an opportunity, which at the same time creates responsibility. When given the chance to propose ideas and solutions, young communities must understand that they are contributing to shaping their own support options and, ultimately, their own futures. Through active participation in policy design, a community becomes partially accountable for the design process and it is important that young people (entrepreneurs and non) are aware of the opportunities as well as the impact they can create by using the participatory tools offered by a public body.

Adapt participation methods

Not every participative approach is adequate for every situation. While the for creation of macro-level strategy plans a wide and diversified range of participative actions is used with the goal to reach the highest possible number of target group members, the participated development of specific support schemes must be implemented based on the involved community and the targeted actions.

Youth policy support schemes for enhancing entrepreneurship and employability have to consider the territorial framework of their scope. Depending on the action, specific sectorial groups of young people as well as all aspiring or established young entrepreneurs can be involved. Participation can be implemented through wider-scale forums and consultation, dedicated group work or individual interviews. Especially experimental actions may profit from targeted collaboration with intermediaries and community leaders to spread the word and stimulate participation.

Continued participation, review and assessments

Many participatory approaches stop after the initial policy design phase. This is especially true for the macro-policy level, where youth plans are being defined in collaboration with national youth and youth organisations. However, an overall strategy level does merely indicate overall needs and creates macro-objectives. Already the next step, the translation of needs and objectives into programmes, often follows without participation by the young. The same is even more true for the definition of individual instruments within programmes.

As a result, promising youth plans created with much participation and momentum bring forth paradox youth policy instruments that seek to reach the jointly defined general objectives with standard, top-down schemes and approaches. Where policy-makers start out open-minded and with a willingness to act on youth's indications throughout strategy development, they cut their own wings by not following through with participatory methods in the definition and implementation stages of actual support instruments. This context leaves public bodies in the situation where they try to reach grassroots goals with top-down methods.

Participatory approaches are often mentioned as a start for macro-level planning. However, they can be introduced at any step along the way. They do not necessarily have to start at national level

to be gradually brought down to the local level, they can be directly applied to the development of specific programmes or instruments by an interested public body.

Finally, an aspect often ignored when applying participatory approaches regards the necessity to continue participation also during periods of review and assessment. The efficacy of a policy is often determined by the results of its monitoring efforts. But while these stop at the fact whether or not an initiative worked (and if it worked, how much), participated review and assessment processes can contribute to identifying reasons for good or bad performance. Especially for low performance policy instruments and pilot actions, a joined analysis with the target community can bring critical issues to light and propose ways of improvement.

DESIGN ASPECT Nr. 3: CO-PLANNING

Participation can go both ways and public bodies can gain a lot by engaging in co-planning activities to accompany the young during the development of feasible project proposals. By outlining the regulatory framework to be respected and by supporting young people to reason on a sustainable and realistically implementable project idea, increased quality of supported actions and a better follow-up outlook can be created.

The meaning of co-planning

Co-planning is a feasibility test for project ideas. In the context of this document, co-planning is intended as co-creation of project proposals by the public body and young applicants. It regards the general approach to project writing according to the rules indicated by a reference call and according to a feasible project management framework. Therefore, co-planning does not intend a joined development of contents or technical advice on a specific project idea. It rather regards a process of guiding young people in the organisation of their thought processes and the identification of criticalities and inconsistencies in the overall proposed activity plan. Co-planning finally regards the accompaniment of young people in decision-finding processes through the joint identification of options, without taking the responsibility for final decisions from them.

The advantage for the public body is the creation of more coherent and focused proposals, with an increased quality level and better sustainability prospects.

A formative experience

Young entrepreneurs and young people aspiring to enhance their employability can profit from a multitude of targeted support instruments. However, one aspect often used to argue against youth entrepreneurship can not be easily supplied by a policy tool: experience. For young people, grant schemes and other financing opportunities are one of the most important resources for realising their ideas - and experience in managing project applications helps a lot in achieving this goal. Co-planning of project proposals together with young applicants is a training itinerary in itself, independent from whether or not the proposal is eventually selected for support. With guidance, young minds learn to identify and focus the essential, to outline a logical implementation process, and to integrate sustainability issues into project planning from the start.

Key aspects and methodology

Co-planning is a support measure primarily focused on bringing young people to their full potential when presenting their project ideas. This means first of all to identify and mobilise applicants' existing technical and organisational capacities and to build on these. The joint work on a proposal must not be carried out as a lecture. The key is to guide and accompany the young, to help them reason and use their abilities, while ensuring coherence of envisaged project steps.

Project development frameworks that may seem basic to experienced project writers are often unknown to young people. Explaining the sense of planning according to milestones and deliverables, supporting the correct identification of milestones and deliverables, and helping the young to order these according to the planned implementation process of their project can greatly improve their ability to logically outline an idea.

Another criticality in young people's project proposals is the incoherence between planned actions and needed times and resources. In most cases, this is simply due to a lack of experience and a difficulty to evaluate costs, efforts or timelines.

Finally, it is important to jointly analyse the feasibility of proposed objectives and targeted results. Young people tend to follow two equally inaccurate approaches: to overestimate possible outputs or to present generalised macro-level results. Identifying appropriate results that are realistically reachable according to the proposed activity plan and with the available resources is a challenge many young proposers can be helped to tackle.

Public body as partner

In order to work with young proposers in a co-planning context, a new relationship model needs to be implemented by public bodies. Joint analysis and project development needs as close a peer framework as possible, and in order to be able to share experiences with the young and guide them in their thought processes, mutual respect, trust and understanding are necessary.

Dedicated staff, space and time

Such an approach creates added resource needs for the public body and it should be verified whether these needs can be met before offering co-planning possibilities to young communities.

The most important resource for effective co-planning is dedicated personnel, possibly employed especially for this task. There is no standard profile for such support staff but the experiences gathered for the development of this document show that public bodies should keep an open mind and seek candidates with transversal experiences. A key issue is attitude: it is of vital importance that young proposers are met with patience, an open mind, and an ability to join their enthusiasm about their ideas. Staff members must at the same time be able to take on seniority when needed, in order to guide young proposers in logical reorganisation processes.

Co-planning staff needs to be flexible and may have to be able to work outside of the standard office hours of a public body. The public body should also provide for its staff to be able to move around the reference territory. Finally, the use of distance meeting tools, like video chats, besides telephone consultations or email advice complete the availability toolkit. However, in-person meetings continue to be the most effective method to work with the young.

When organising co-planning meetings or sessions, an adequate space should be available. The size depends on the number of participants (for one-to-one meetings, two chairs and a desk can be sufficient), but the most important aspect is the environment in which the meeting takes place. It is recommended to allow for a dedicated space, without much movement and hubbub in the background, in order to be able to concentrate on the task at hand, as well as to give the young participants the sensation that the joint work session is being taken seriously by all.

Make co-planning available around the reference territory

Co-planning ideally takes place at the public body's premises, in the offices of dedicated staff. However, this framework makes the opportunity exponentially less accessible, the further away young people live from the public body's office.

In order to be perceived as a partner and facilitator, the public body must strive to bring all support actions accompanying the implementation of a policy instrument to the highest number of interested young people in its reference territory. Opportunities for dialogue and joined analyses must be created independently from the public body's headquarters, in order to give as many young proposers as possible the chance to use the co-planning support mechanism.

While individual meetings are not easily implemented around a territory, joined sessions and meetings created with key stakeholders and community leaders can group interested young people in more distant areas. Such practical sessions can focus on teams of young people and implement co-planning in the form of presentation and analysis, where all present participants profit from the identification of criticalities and the advice given to each team.

DESIGN ASPECT Nr. 4: EMPOWERMENT

Empowerment is at the heart of most youth policy support instruments. It regards the will and effort to enable youth to overcome challenges and realise their potential by making dedicated instruments and support available to them. At the same time, it is important to identify means to bundle efforts, create synergies and avoid the continuous financing of similar actions.

Enabling young entrepreneurs

To empower is to enable. Young entrepreneurs and aspiring entrepreneurs often cannot spread their wings as much as they would want to, be it due to financial challenges, bureaucratic burdens or a general lack of growth opportunities. To enable young people to apply their capabilities and to take charge of their professional future is a key aspect of grassroots policy designs.

After successful joint identification of needs and/or solutions, after co-planning of ideas to create feasible project frameworks, making the necessary toolkit for implementation available is the natural follow-up. The enabling instruments are the practical key characteristics of a policy support scheme and can range from grant financing to access to training, from consultancy and advice services to introductions to stakeholders and networks.

All support schemes enable. The difference of a grassroots support scheme is the approach to implementation. It is much based on community cooperation and clustering, transparency of outcomes and, again, accompaniment, partnership and joint implementation schemes offered by the public institution.

Minimise the bureaucratic burden, facilitate implementation and opt for a direct flow of resources

A big distraction for young beneficiaries of public support schemes is the seemingly endless amount of paperwork and the challenge of mastering regulatory frameworks. It is one thing to present an idea in a project application, which, even if challenging, still relates to the young's creativity and sense of initiative. When young beneficiaries are called to implement their projects, they often face many administrative and bureaucratic tasks, which not only take time away from the actual innovative content of an idea, but even tend to dampen the young's enthusiasm for their own actions. A young social innovator may not be too prepared to face the administrative start-up phase for his/her social business project. A youth set to create an open innovation agenda for his/her community may not be too practical on recuperating resources or organising logistics for tutors. A group of young programmers with a winning idea for a smart new app may not know where to start when it comes to creating a marketing plan for their product. And then there is the time-consuming challenge of mastering periodic and financial reporting and of ensuring that expenditures are made following all applicable rules.

A public body can choose to support young beneficiaries by not only offering finances but by further accompanying them. It can opt to either integrate finances with services or to simply offer services to young entrepreneurs to support their growth. The choice naturally depends on the objective of the policy scheme. Where start-up grants are targeted in order to give aspiring young entrepreneurs an initial boost, grant money is indispensable. However, this does not mean that a public body cannot support the start-up phase with additional services in order to help beneficiaries enhance their skills and experiences in fields important to their company but in which they are still less prepared.

Were support to entrepreneurial growth or increased employability is the main goal, specific services that enable the young to implement solutions for their growth may be a more feasible choice compared to the distribution of grant money. In order to let beneficiaries concentrate effectively on enhancing their entrepreneurial development, public bodies can take over administrative tasks, e.g. in the organisation of training actions (skill development), supply needed advise and mentoring opportunities (business development), or support with ad-hoc specialist consultations (legal, administrative or technical). An advantage of such support instruments is that money need not be exchanged at all and the entire framework of financial reporting from beneficiaries to the public body is avoided.

Service administration times

When a public body opts for supporting young entrepreneurs with services, it is vital that such services be supplied as needed by the beneficiaries' timelines and in the right project stages. If not yet done in a previous phase, joined planning of the needed service's characteristics and definition of a service administration timetable must be carried out in order to allow the youth to then concentrate on other implementation aspects, while the public bodies organises the support service and makes it available at the agreed moment. Timelines are crucial for this type of support because delays directly influence the young beneficiaries' performance. If projects are hindered by delayed service supplies, recognition as partner and facilitator is lost in a heartbeat and the perception of the public body that encumbers with long timelines is quickly re-affirmed.

Accompany with training, bundle resources and avoid dispersion of funds

Certain needs, knowledge gaps and limited experiences are common for many young entrepreneurs. As much as a public body may wish to individually accompany each beneficiary of a support scheme, the numbers of participation often do not leave room for such an approach. Furthermore, complete individual treatment is not necessary or even useful in most contexts and may lead to the dispersion of funds.

Besides individual support services, accompaniment throughout project implementation can take the form of capacity building. This is especially interesting when targeting young entrepreneurs and aspiring entrepreneurs because opportunities for professional training and education remain valuable even in case the business venture does not work out. While beneficiaries implement their core idea using their specific (technical) abilities, a public body can enhance the sustainability of their efforts by offering possibilities to strengthen secondary (but nonetheless needed) skills of young entrepreneurs. For many young entrepreneurs, missing or less developed skills are often related to their lack of business experience, e.g. managerial/organisation skills, business strategy planning skills, product placement or marketing skills, administrative management skills, and similar.

Grassroots policy schemes are based on identifying problems and solutions with a bottom-up approach. For meeting actual demand and creating targeted actions, a public body therefore needs to continue the dialogue with the young in order to jointly identify their needs and co-create support services to tackle these. However, to avoid multiple financing, and thus a dispersion of funds, it is necessary that the public body collects such need assessments and stimulates the creation of need

clusters for which a support service can be implemented. When services are made available to the greatest possible number of beneficiaries, small investments can go a long way.

Monitor regularly and define suitable indicators

Grassroots support schemes to young entrepreneurs and aspiring entrepreneurs are difficult to measure with standard indicators. They represent a different wealth of support, integrating experiences, contacts and tailor-made training. Due to these qualitative aspects, monitoring as well as a dialogue with beneficiaries should be implemented regularly.

The success of a grassroots scheme is not necessarily given by the number of start-ups it creates, it also generates other results which are very much linked to beneficiaries' personal growth. Hence, monitoring of such initiatives needs to be planned keeping all targeted objectives in mind. While quantitative indicators are no doubt a basis for evaluation, grassroots schemes require the regular verification of qualitative indicators as well.

Dedicated staff

Accompanying young beneficiaries throughout project implementation again requires the availability of a dedicated, flexible HR force. Beneficiaries need a direct and uncomplicated communication channel to the public body, which is best achieved by assigning specific reference staff or mediators. The profile remains similar to the one described in Design Aspect Nr.3 and it is strongly recommended to seek young candidates for such reference staff as this supports the creation of relationships with young beneficiaries and eases collaboration.

DESIGN ASPECT Nr. 5: COMMUNITY RETURN

Support schemes benefit young people as individuals or small groups. Grassroots policy initiatives aim to go beyond this direct impact in order to give back to the community from whence they were developed and thus stimulate additional growth and innovative processes.

Why think about community return?

Grassroots policy initiatives have great potential when working with existing communities; they can build on their structures and involve key community members. Communities of young people with an entrepreneurial mindset are quite lively and members show much potential to interact and relate to one another. Young entrepreneurs show an enhanced level of social awareness and a strong sense of belonging (in terms of both society and territory) and therefore tend to include a wish for contributing to the development of their communities in their entrepreneurial projects.

Focusing community return beyond individual support actions can intercept this wish. By creating an impact for a large number of community members, a return scheme can help to strengthen the community's sense of itself, promote equity among its members and stimulate a framework of collaboration and clusterisation of solutions and synergies.

Finally, community return is important after having made community members part of their development process through participatory actions and co-planning of services. When the young are being enable and thus made co-responsible for their professional futures, it is important that they have a tangible feeling of return after participation to the policy scheme.

By the community for the community

Grassroots support schemes for young entrepreneurs build on an open and inclusive mindset, the sharing of knowledge and the accessibility of information. While grant money and specific

acceleration programmes are tools for more individual enhancements, many support services offered to young entrepreneurs can be interesting to other community members as well. Creating opportunities for community involvement can extend the impact of the public body's investment while it enhances beneficiaries' visibility and aids their networking efforts. Such an approach further contributes to shaping new community leaders who can inspire and stimulate activation of other youth by example.

By creating access for other community members to support services created for and with beneficiaries, joined participation can also become the starting point for more stable cooperation between a beneficiary and other community members (e.g. community members become suppliers, partners or employees). Such collaborative by-products of a policy scheme can directly influence the community's professional development and contribute to the creation of an entrepreneurial culture among the young.

Transparency and accessibility of information

A transparent management of the value created by a public support scheme can facilitate community return. Training materials, advice given by professionals on aspects of general interest, beneficiaries' experiences – there are many possible outcomes of support services rendered to beneficiaries, which can continue to be interesting to others afterwards. The key is to collect and edit all useful outputs, to ensure the usability of materials under open access and to create user-friendly platforms via which interested people can benefit from the available knowledge and resources.

Communicate available outputs to spread community return

When community return is an objective of a policy scheme, it is important to integrate this aspect into the policy's communication strategy. Due to their direct involvement, beneficiaries will always be much more aware of consultable resources, while their reference community may not pro-actively search for usable outputs of a support scheme.

When a policy creates a patrimony of knowledge and resources, the public body does well to gradually disseminate information on the available outputs as they become available, as well as to communicate where to find/consult them.

Stimulate multiplier effects

A particular form of community return is the multiplier effect. In the framework of grassroots policy schemes this regards the re-creation of approaches and services by beneficiaries and other community members. Co-planning projects and services with beneficiaries can lead to co-creation projects implemented by young entrepreneurs with their reference community. A participatory approach to need/solution identification for a policy scheme can lead to the adaptation of similar approaches by young entrepreneurs in their business practice.

Multiplier actions that copy approaches or the philosophy of a support policy are not a bad thing. They do not substitute the public body because the scale and scope of actions is much smaller among young entrepreneurs. But they create activation within a community, they stimulate continuous bottom-up innovation and strengthen a community's autonomous development processes.

A clear strategy from the start

Data on tangible community return cannot simply be collected at the end of an initiative in order to verify the extent of it. When a policy scheme aims at larger community return, it must ideate a clear strategy for this and implemented it from the start.

Valorising outputs from support services rendered to beneficiaries needs preparation and planning in order to create beneficial resources for a larger public. Especially when working with education and

training services, the correct preparation of outputs for further use is crucial. Lecturers need to be involved, contents deliberated, and materials collected. Once a policy instrument is launched and running, time is precious and ad-hoc return schemes are difficult to realise.

Monitor community return

This is also true for monitoring community return. Community return develops throughout a policy scheme's duration and as it aims to engage the largest possible number of community members at undefined time points, it is difficult to intercept secondary beneficiaries with the standard final questionnaire.

A dedicated strategy with adequate indicators must be identified a priori in order to be able to implement it throughout an initiative and evaluate the impact of community return along the way. Do other community members pick up opportunities? Are multiplier effects created and collaborations facilitated? Is material consulted/downloaded/watched?

Monitoring community return is not an easy task but it can be facilitated by diversifying channels and sources. Registration of access and use of online materials can be as much of help as collaboration with community leaders in order to verify local impacts. A strategy and corresponding tools will primarily depend on the policy scheme and the targeted community return and taking time to structure it before launching an initiative can greatly enhance the quality of available data.

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