European Union
European Regional
Development Fund

SPEED UP
Interreg Europe

COMUNE DI FIRENZE

anci toscana

ACTION PLAN

Municipality of Florence
Anci Tuscany

TABLE OF CONTENTS:

PART I – GENERAL INFORMATION 1

PART II – POLICY CONTEXT 2

PART III – DETAILS OF THE ACTIONS ENVISAGED 6

ACTION 1. Creation of a Regional Coordination Hub 6

Relevance to the project 6

Nature of the action 6

Stakeholders involved 8

Timeframe 8

Indicative costs 8

Indicative funding sources 8

ACTION 2. Implementation of a digital ecosystem platform 9

Relevance to the project 9

Nature of the action 10

Timeframe 12

Indicative costs 12

Indicative funding sources 12

6. Appendix 13

PART I – GENERAL INFORMATION

Project Name	SPEED UP - Supporting Practices for Entrepreneurship Ecosystems in the Development of Urban Policies
Partner organization	Municipality of Florence ANCI Tuscany - Association of Tuscan Municipalities
Country	Italy
NUTS2 Region	Tuscany
Contact person (email, phone number, web site)	Carlotta Viviani - Municipality of Florence Phone +39 055 261 6083 www.comune.fi.it Besnik Mehmeti - ANCI Tuscany Phone +39 055 247 7490 www.ancitoscana.it

PART II – POLICY CONTEXT

The Action Plan aims to impact:	x	Investment for Growth and Jobs programme
	☐	European Territorial Cooperation programme
	☐	Other regional development policy instrument

Name of the policy instrument addressed:
ERDF Operational Programme 2014-2020 of Tuscany Region

Further details on the policy context and the way the action plan should contribute to improve the policy instrument:

From the comparison with the European best practices on business incubation, it emerges that the local reality of the Tuscan incubation system lives of too small and too disconnected initiatives that does not allow the development of a support ecosystem for startups able to attract large private investments (such as Startup Lisboa or the ones of Vodafone in Seville, Google in Warsaw, etc.) that characterize the incubation systems of other countries.

In the last 20 years, we have witnessed a significant development of the set of infrastructures created to support the start-ups and the expansion of new enterprises at high technological content (incubators, technological poles, scientific parks, and so on). In general, these infrastructures are organizations offering facilities at different level for start-ups that are “incubated”: open space offices, administration services, logistic structures, business consulting and networking opportunities for companies at the initial stage of development.

It should also be noted that the private investment sector in Italy is much less developed than in other EU countries, hence the need, in order to compete, to reposition the regional incubation system at international level and give it the visibility necessary to be considered by investors from other countries.

The mixed public-private initiatives (where the private part is played by the major players mentioned above) are one of the elements that have emerged as "winning" in the study visits carried out at in the partners’ regions incubation systems, able to trigger a virtuous mechanism of attraction for both new investors and brilliant business ideas, not only national ones but from the whole European innovation scene.

The learning process developed in Phase 1, led us to select 2 GPs: Made of Lisboa and TakeoffAntwerp, both described further.

The experimentation carried out in a local key on the Florentine territory is part of the regional plan as a sort of pilot project to be replicated and extended to the regional area.

Starting from lessons learnt, the strategy of the Regional Action Plan led us to a mapping of the typologies of services offered by the Florentine hubs, both through on-line research and through direct qualitative surveys. In order to better understand the specific needs of the startups and innovative SMEs, we analyzed the results of a focus group and an on-line survey, leading us to highlight the main critical elements of the mismatch between the demand and offer of innovative services. In particular, we focused on the role of the regional policies, which, although having improved their structure in the recent years, would need to put more efforts in seeking a higher involvement of the territories and of the local players operating in them.

This initial mapping has allowed to bring forward two main actions:

1. a participatory process, consisting in an active listening and involvement path, not exhaustive of the regional panorama, but full of contributions from all the participants at the meetings.
2. An institutional agreement setting forth the political commitment of the involved actors towards the development of an innovation ecosystem at support of the start-ups.

The participatory process was developed through two workshops with distinct targets but closely related objectives:

1. a first workshop with the beneficiaries, or potential ones, of the measures and interventions, considered from the DEMAND perspective having the objective to highlight the most critical issues in the path of creation, development and scaling up of a start-up / company)
2. a second workshop with the main actors of the regional incubation ecosystem and institutions active in the area, including the Managing Authority of the ERDF ROP of Tuscany Region, in providing innovative services to start-ups and companies so to consider also the OFFER side. The objective of this workshop was to map the ecosystem services and develop operational proposals.

The main critical points highlighted by the Managing Authority during the participation process were:

1. Difficult access to the information concerning funding opportunities by startups
2. Fragmented and disconnected system at regional level causing a lack of coordination and communication among incubators and ecosystem's actors
3. High percentage of errors in the application phase, due to the complexity of the application procedure and eligibility rules.

Proposals emerged as potential impacts on the policy Instrument in order to tackle the above critical points:

1. The creation of an "official" landing point for information, a sort of intermediation tool: currently, in fact, almost all access to existing services is by word of mouth or through web channels independent of the official path.
2. The creation of an institutional network of qualified and recognised actors committed to promote and support the development of an entrepreneurial friendly background.
3. The publication of a catalogue of qualified services, which illustrates the specific features of the offer of services, matchmaking them with the potential recipients.
4. A continuous presentation and training sessions on calls, having the function of a "transmission belt" between services and users or potential ones.

The main results coming from the policy learning process and from the participatory process were adopted by the Institutional Agreement that was signed in 2018 between public and private actors: Municipality of Florence, Chamber of Commerce of Florence, University of Florence, School of Business Sciences and Industrial Technologies, Nana Bianca, Impact Hub and TSH Collab. This agreement aims to create a virtuous local innovation ecosystem able to stimulate the development of the Florentine innovation ecosystem, both at support of the start-ups of the territory and of open innovation processes generated by all sectors: industry, crafts, agriculture, services and commerce, public authorities and third sector. The objective of the signatories is also to trigger and strengthen the synergy between the different realities of the Florentine innovation ecosystem, as well as promote networking among them, aimed primarily at encouraging cross-contamination phenomena among all the actors in the sector, company representatives and their training and service networks. Finally, the goal is also the definition of a shared process, through which the parties contribute, each for their own specific competences, to the training, selection and insertion of human resources in the development processes of the Florentine ecosystem of innovation.

In order to reach these achievements, the above actors have jointly worked to:

1) support activities designed to promote the attractiveness of the Florentine ecosystem of innovation, by organizing joint events and networking activities
2) coordinate projects and training, scouting, selection, mentoring, incubation, acceleration activities with the aim of optimizing the use of available resources
3) coordinate and share matchmaking processes in response to local requests based on specific skills and competences;
4) organize joint fundraising awareness events (public and private), to support the aforementioned activities.

Based on this policy context, the actions included in this Action Plan are meant to implement the strategy of the ERDF ROP of Tuscany Region 2014 – 2020 set forward by the main actors of the innovation ecosystem at support of the start-ups at regional level boosting the competitiveness of the entrepreneurial fabric, and thus contributing to the achieve the following expected results of the IP 3a) of the ERDF ROP of Tuscany Region 2014 – 2020:

· Creation of new manufacturing companies both in emerging and traditional sectors with market potential privileging young and feminine enterprises;

· creation of new tourism businesses able to offer more qualified services also through the orientation of the respective activities towards the integrated offer of services related to specific types of product and the identity characteristics of the territories.

PART III – DETAILS OF THE ACTIONS ENVISAGED

ACTION 1. Creation of a Regional Coordination Hub

Relevance to the project

This action is mainly inspired by the GP Startup Lisboa, which main goal is to support the development and growth of startups, helping them to attract customers and investors, to scale up and to become global. The main lessons learnt from this GP and applied to this action are the capacity to promote a culture of proximity with all actors of the entrepreneurial ecosystem allowing them to carry out animation, networking and marketing activities as well as attraction of investors, start-ups, etc. that promote synergies between the different actors of the incubation ecosystem. Another lesson learnt consists in the fact that incubators need to be autonomous from the local and regional authorities, even though they may receive financial support from them as it facilitates all the incubation processes and influences positively the perception of the general public regarding the incubator.
The second GP from which the RAP took inspiration has been TakeoffAntwerp, a project started in December 2014 in order to inspire, inform and support students (and youth) to develop entrepreneurial skills or start up a business. The collaboration is based on an agreement between the Association and the city of Antwerp. Both support the project by means of human and financial resources. TAKEOFFANTWERP is strengthened by resources from the Flemish and European Government until August 2018. Before TAKEOFFANTWERP there was no cooperation between the city, the chamber of commerce and the higher education institutes. Since the collaboration more entrepreneurial programmes have been developed and a new innovative ecosystem has been stimulated.

Nature of the action

As already highlighted, the Tuscan incubation system lives of too small and too disconnected initiatives that does not allow the development of a support ecosystem for startups able to attract large private investments. The action aims to tackle this gap by creating a regional incubation ecosystem supporting startups able to “make system” not just between the incubation structures, but also between these and the public institutions that are responsible for supporting the initiatives.
It is therefore necessary to plan and implement more systematic synergy initiatives among the regional stakeholders. The term "initiatives" must include both the services offered by the Tuscany incubators and the policies to support the development of these services, which represent an essential element in order to be able to interact with the big players referred to in the description of the policy context.

By borrowing the model of the Technological Districts recently implemented by the Tuscany Region, this action aims to create a regional coordination room, for the macro-area of Toscany Coast – including the provinces of Massa-Carrara, Lucca, Pisa, Livorno, Grosseto, that carries out a double action, both internally and externally to the region:

1. internally, by systematically performing animation and networking activities for local startups and investors, planning and coordinating a series of services (training, business planning, coaching, etc.), based on a shared methodology and built from the excellences present in the Region and the European best practices, to be proposed and delivered as a standard to the incubation facilities. This activity will increase the performance of the calls published under the ERDF ROP in terms of an increased participation by SMEs and startups as potential beneficiaries.
2. externally, acting as a single interlocutor for marketing activities and attraction of investors, startups, incubator networks and EU projects. The adhesion of this strong regional subject to the European incubation networks (EBN for example) would allow to play a leading role in the community dedicated to the support of startups, thus generating, at an international level, a visibility of the system that currently it is one of the biggest limits to be considered by large investors.

This structure, which could in the first instance resume the experience of the "Tuscan Incubators Network", would also pose itself, representing and having contact with the whole regional incubation system, as a support and accredited interlocutor for the regional offices for a series of activities, such as:

- definition of quality criteria and indicators for the accreditation of incubators and the monitoring of their performance,
- definition of support measures for startups,
- awareness and dissemination (this activity also widely diffused among the European organizations visited during the project) of entrepreneurial and self-employment spirit in the high schools, systematically illustrating to students the possibilities offered by the regional system in terms of facilities, services, relationships and infrastructures to support entrepreneurial ideas.

This initiative has already received the political and financial support of the Tuscany Region through the Regional Law n. 57 of 6 Aug. 2019, which provides the political support to the above process of rationalization of the technology transfer system in the area of Tuscany Coast. The law recognizes the general value of the infrastructures for technology transfer as means of public interest that, developed with the support of the Tuscany Region and on the initiative of municipalities and other public bodies, belongs to the institutional functions of promoting economic and productive development and supporting business activity and establishes a revolving fund aimed at providing economic incentives to the organizations supporting the creation of the coordination room.

Stakeholders involved

Tuscany Region, in particular ERDF ROP Managing Authority and Department of Economic Activities will have the role to support politically, economically and operatively the coordination room.
Tuscan municipalities: Firenze, Prato, Pistoia, Massa-Carrara, Lucca, Pisa, Livorno, Grosseto, Siena, Arezzo, etc. will have the role to support politically and possibly also economically the network of incubators.
Tuscan incubators / accelerators: Bio-Incubatore di Toscana, PONT-TECH, Abitare l'arte, Incubatore del Comune di Minucciano, Incubatore Innovare in Mugello, Polo Lionello Bonfanti, Incubatore Polo Tecnologico di Navacchio, Polo tecnologico lucchese, L'incubatore di Grosseto, L'Incubatore di Scarlino, L'incubatore di Massa Marittima will support the creation and launch of startups and new companies in emerging and traditional sectors. They will be the operative arm of the Tuscany Region for the achievement of the expected results of the IP 3a) of the ROP ERDF.
Universities of Florence, Pisa and Siena and the National Council of Research, will provide also support for the creation and launch of startups and new companies by providing advice to the incubators and startups incubated therein on technological, business development and business models issues, etc.

Timeframe

1. Creation of the regional coordination room: by Dec. 2019
2. Planning of animation and networking activities for local startups to be implemented internally to the region and marketing activities and attraction of investors, startups, incubator networks to be implemented externally to the region: by Feb. 2020
3. Implementation of the above activities: Mar. 2020 – Mar 2021

Indicative costs

30.000 Euro, dedicated to the activity 3) as activities 1) and 2) don't present financial implications.

Indicative funding sources

Funding will be provided via regional resources (i.e. Fondo rotativo per il trasferimento tecnologico - Art. 2 Regional Law n. 57 6/08/2019)

ACTION 2. Implementation of a digital ecosystem platform

Relevance to the project

The implementation of the digital ecosystem platform is born from the need expressed by the territory and the Managing Authority itself during the participatory process driven in Phase 1: Need for an "official" landing point for information, a sort of intermediation tool.
From the participatory process developed across the territory and involving all Tuscan stakeholders, emerged one important challenge to face: improve the access of applications to public calls in the framework of ERDF ROP of Tuscany Region 2014 – 2020.
What the Managing Autority stressed during the co-design approach to the Action Paln elaboration, was the necessity of creating a more solid base of knowledge and competences in order to make calls ERDF ROP of Tuscany Region 2014 – 2020 more visible, as well as to get acceptable applications and thus distribute co-financing to a wider amount of virtuous projects.
The analisys of rejected projects (around 35 - 40% of the total presented on each call) enhances the lack of eligibility criterias and selection prerequisites.
The technical structure as well as the call center created by the MA to support the application phase is more dedicated to overcome technical obstacles, but it cannot give the necessary support to the content itself.
Improve the visibility of calls, improve the base of applicants' knowledge and competences, create a shared and stable support strategy on the territory in order to channel and guide suitable project's proposals to the right calls, all these activities would ameliorate the Managing Autority strategy and the exploitation of funding sources.
Thanks to the SPEED UP project, the Municipality of Florence activated a virtous mechanism, aiming to answer to the challenges described above.

During the learning phase of the SPEED UP project, Municipality of Florence was particularly impressed by the GP Made Of Lisboa - the entrepreneur community of Lisbon based innovators. Main inputs were: Inform. Connect. Attract. Organize. Start up!...and these are as well the same needs of Florence entrepreneurial territory, emerged thanks to the previous analysis.
Starting from the idea of Made Of Lisboa, Municipality of Florence decided to implement and experiment, in a sort of pilot project to be than eventually transferred to the whole regional and even national system, its own platform: a precious instrument to inform, share, and welcome everykind of inputs coming from entrepreneurial world. The Virtual One Stop Shop for innovation ecosystem actors, the official, unique and institutional landing point where questions, projects, needs find their answers and solutions. A common project born from the territory for the territory itself…and even more. Map, info, events, people, funding sources, spaces.

Made of Lisboa has been the start point. The SPEED UP meeting in February 2019 gave the possibility to meet Made of Lisboa managers and improve with them the potentialities of the platform itself: not only a community directory, but something more, an operative system aiming to give concrete answers, info and tools to people, entrepreneurs, start ups and startuppers and even to project ideas.
The Digital Platform will bring as well two other fundamental tools:

- the institutional Start Up Guide
- the Ecosystem Info Desk

Nature of the action

The nature of the platform is to create and communicate effectively the virtuous cycle, which transforms the Florentine environment into a springboard for those who have an entrepreneurial idea or who is already a start-up. The Tuscan territory has always attracted top-level talents and professionals. A human capital that makes the province of Florence a constant laboratory of innovative ideas and solutions and the ideal place for a university or business startup or spin-off. This project was born with the intention of recounting and promoting the set of opportunities for companies and people that already exist in the territories and that flow into the concept of "ecosystem of innovation": a structured system of actors, relationships, networks, places , tools and services.
Starting from a Project Charter, we'll realise the IT architecture that supports the platform. The platform will be then populated with the data collected by the University of Florence and with those that the work team will gather in itinere, thanks to the community created and its stakeholders. The most relevant aspect is that the built architecture will be able to enable interactions between "producers" and "consumers" of values present in the ecosystem, but to get these interactions to work it, it is necessary to promote their use to bring out the advantages. The IT architecture could than been implemented and extended to a wider territory as well as to a more and more large number of actors
The "use" of a "Platform" will generate the creation of an operating and organizational system managed by administrators, implementers and communicators as well as by technicians with system maintenance and implementation functions. Therefore a further phase of promotion and diffusion of the instrument will be necessary, thus able to activate enhancement paths which can benefit, in different forms, both those who will enter the platform with co-productive purposes, and those who will enter it for use its services.
Furthermore it is necessary to understand that the ecosystem is a living body that is transformed continuously, enriched with new resources, loses some, while others transform and take on different roles and weights. Hence the need to guarantee systematicity and continuity to the work of enriching and updating the data banks that support the information that the platform offers visitors and implement the project, enriching it with new actions aimed at achieving the set objectives:

1. Systematic monitoring to implement and update the database
2. Communication to the various target groups concerned to stimulate the use of the platform and increase the reputation of the Florentine ecosystem of innovation.
3. Animation of the ecosystem, to encourage the participation of the various subjects that make it up to the achievement of an overall offer free of unnecessary and expensive redundancies and overlaps.
4. Build an editorial office that also benefits from the contribution of a network of professional journalists operating in the local media
5. Construction and cataloguing of significant and updated statistical data on the ecosystem
6. Dissemination and geographical expansion of the platform
7. Strengthening of the local and international network
8. Strengthening of social and web communication channels

The implementation of the platform is part of a broader framework that concerns the communication of the ecosystem, in order to make it increasingly competitive and widespread. The virtual platform is also supported by two “physical” additional tools:

1. The paper and digital guide “Firenze, Start Up City”
2. The “Ecosystem information desk” located in the city center

For what concerns the additional tool “Firenze, Start up city” guide, it will be the institutional business card of the Florentine innovation ecosystem, not only numbers but also stories and faces of the centers of innovation in Florence. Because even in the digital age, where so much innovation takes place realizes thanks to the contribution of new technological instruments, innovation continues to be exclusively the result of the human capital. The Firenze Start Up City guide will be a useful tool not only for presenting the Florentine ecosystem, but also one easy compass for those who want to choose Florence to sow new ones projects, in order to best fit into an already established network.
The Ecosystem Information Desk will be inaugurated in Murate Idea Park (the heart of the Florence ecosystem) and represent a concrete collaboration between several stakeholders who will manage it: Municipality of Florence, Chamber of Commerce of Florence, University of Florence and School of Business Sciences and Industrial Technologies. The desk will be a free service of the Municipality of Florence, dedicated to carry out information and guidance activities on issues of entrepreneurial interest and intends to give institutional responses to individual and professional needs. Main topics will be: Entrepreneurship, Incubation and Acceleration services, Work, Education and vocational training, Employment incentives, Public tenders and loans to new companies.

Stakeholders involved

Municipality of Florence – project coordinator

School of Business Sciences and Industrial Technologies - in charge of Project Charter and IT architecture Chamber of Commerce of Florence, University of Florence, Nana Bianca, Impact Hub, TSH Collab, ANCI Tuscany, Local and regional Business associations, 5 coworkings (Multiverso, 91c, Fablab, Zoworking, Spazio Costanza), Business Angels (BAN, Open Seed), Tuscany Region, 11 STARTUPs selected as case history are all selected active partners and promoters of the Digital Platform with dedicated activities of data analysis, implementation, communication, promotion and monitoring.

Timeframe

1) 6 months (Sept. 2019) for the launch of the Digital platform
2) 3 months (June 2019) for the launch of the Start Up Guide
3) 12 month (April 2020) for the launch of the Official Info Desk

Continuous update, improving and monitoring of the Digital Platform (up to April 2021 and more)
Update and new improved versions of Start Up Guide (Dec 2019 – April 2020)
Improving and monitoring of the Official Info Desk (up to April 2021 and more)

Indicative costs

100.000 € for the starting phase
50.000 € per year for the management of the platform, the update of the Firenze Start Up City Guide, and the coordination of the Info Desk

Indicative funding sources

Policy Instrument doesn't finance activities like those described, however the reinforcement of the background aims to improve the access to published calls, the exploitation of funding sources and the potentiality of the Policy Instrument itself.
Most of the Budget comes from Municipal own resources. Municipality of Florence is able to cover all costs. Chamber of Commerce and University of Florence will cover costs for the staff dedicated to the Info Desk.
Actually a strategic dialogue with the Tuscany Region is ongoing: during phase 2 we'll monitor the possibility to extend the local platform at regional level and include a Regional concrete participation to the Ecosystem Infodesk