



Italy: In 1999 the city of Genoa launched a business incubator for small enterprises. The objective is to promote and lend support to the creation of new enterprises (in particular commerce and handicraft, following the local traditions) in the historical city centre of Genoa. With several run-down neighbourhoods, this area had a rather bad reputation among locals and tourists. The business incubator is integrated into a large programme for urban renewal, restauration and restructuring of the city centre.

The incubator is managed, in cooperation with the Office for the Promotion of Entrepreneurship Genoa, by Job Centre Genoa (a consortium established and run in partnership between the city of Genoa and Federazione Solidarietà e Lavoro which brings together social economy, trade unions and other structures dealing with the unemployed and disadvantaged). It receives financial support based on national legislation (law 266/97 – “legge Bersani”), which established that direct financing should be attributed to municipalities in metropolitan areas in order to enable the former to support entrepreneurship in disadvantaged urban neighbourhoods. Additional funding was provided by the Urban II programme.

In the case of Genoa, the incubator is a so-called “diffused incubator”. Assisted enterprises do not find themselves physically in the same building, but in different places spread all over the territory.

Interested (future) entrepreneurs have to take part in calls for proposals issued by the city. Emphasis is laid on the creation of links between economic, social and cultural actors and resources. Entrepreneurship is very much considered a lever for local innovation. In their application, future entrepreneurs not only have to describe their business project, but also ideas for the additional contribution of their future enterprise to local social and cultural life. Several cooperatives figure among the successful applicants.