

Good morning everyone

My name is Matteo Marchi and I'm Councillor for Employment, Youth Policies and Land Development in Cesena, Italy.

The fact that we are all here today shows we are all aware of one thing: the problem of youth unemployment cannot be resolved by local agencies in isolation but it is essential that local agencies do their share of the work by putting into practice organized and focused initiatives, within the limits of their remit.

It is by moving beyond this ambiguity that we can initiate the projects we are now considering. On the one hand, each of us must become extremely creative in inventing effective tools despite the lack of resources we are all working with; on the other hand, we also have a duty not to squander our resources and to coordinate our work with other government bodies who are active on the same issues.

The biggest risk we run in this kind of situation is that, anxious to respond to our citizens' needs, for whom we are often the first port of call, we start up projects that, despite being valid, become a waste of public resources if not properly co-ordinated with similar ventures.

In other words, we must avoid the fragmentation of resources.

With proper co-ordination we can achieve economies of scale that will increase the effectiveness of each initiative. Furthermore - and this is even more important - these initiatives will gain a clear common objective, shared and owned by all.

We must not underestimate this final point: we are all familiar with how even small differences in aims and objectives can make projects vastly different in their remits and put the public in the unpleasant situation where, having to choose between one or the other, they get to benefit from neither.

If this is to be the methodology guiding the development of projects under the banner of Jobtown, we must now understand how we can put into practice this way of working in Italy.

At this point, it becomes essential to identify the partners we need to align ourselves with.

Enter the Regional Council. The Italian constitution gives Regional Councils an important role as regards to employment, education and training. This means that Regional Councils can create laws that Town Councils like ours need to follow and that they can also implement specific government actions.

And it is the Regional Council's role to identify a clear direction for all of us to move towards with shared values, shared aims and shared strategies. This is the political framework we need to be part of and work within.

It is also important to build a technical and administrative framework, so that even at implementation level things will follow the same paths and we will be able to avoid mutually exclusive procedures.

We acknowledge therefore the Regional Council's role as our guide, given by its higher position within government hierarchy and by the functions stated by the Constitution. This does not mean that we must simply be passive followers. On the contrary, it means we have to be equal partners and bring to our debate with the Regional Council our wealth of knowledge of our specific territory, our needs, our visions and our projects. On the basis of all of these and, taking into account the value system and the political programme which brought about the election of each of its committees, the Regional Council will deliver a synthesis document. This becomes the summary of everyone's overarching values, objectives and strategies as well as the shared basis for the work of all interested parties. Let's focus on this fundamental point: to obtain the economies of scale I spoke of earlier, it is absolutely necessary to come to this shared basis for everyone's work. This is where the Regional Council's work is most valuable – in its role as the overall co-ordinator, making proposals, listening to our responses and summarising them. It's the most delicate of jobs but at the same time the one that can give the biggest results, as the effectiveness of all projects we later implement derives from this.

Obviously we need to work at this relationship and it is no easy thing to do. Our attitude as local agencies is important: we have a duty to keep ourselves open and available to dialogue with others. But it's also necessary that we come to this dialogue with clear ideas about what kind of vision we want to share, about what is the real state of health and wealth of our territory, the real pressing needs that require answers. It is up to us to bring this wealth of information to the table. And it is important that in doing so, we follow the same methodology we spoke of earlier, so that this vision is shared by and with all the key players in the

local territory – enterprises’ and workers’ representatives, local institutions, banks, the chamber of commerce and the university. Only if these local agencies share and work towards a common vision of the future can we then provide the Regional Council with up-to-date, detailed and relevant information.

Here’s an example for you:

In this year’s budget, Cesena Municipality ringfenced a fund to support employment, offering financial benefits to businesses taking on new workers. A similar incentive was being offered by the Regional Council of Emilia Romagna. It was therefore imperative then that the two initiatives were co-ordinated to avoid duplication and confusion.

Cesena adopted exactly the same criteria as the Regional Council in its invitation for applications, so that businesses and workers had one clear set of parameters to work on. At the same time, we planned for the possibility of doubling up incentives making new employment contracts even more financially rewarding for enterprises.

How did this co-ordination come about? In Cesena we consulted with business organizations and trade unions and, through the Regional Councillor appointed to our area, we followed the development of the Regional proposal so that we could mirror each other’s documents and offer a co-ordinated approach and practical support to businesses attempting to employ new staff in this time of financial crisis.

It’s a small example but it marks how we need to proceed to keep a common vision of our objectives and of how to reach them. We will only be able to create something important if we continue working in this shared way. And it is only by keeping an open and receptive attitude that we will be able to learn something new or have new ideas inspired by that creativity I talked about at the beginning.

This is what initiatives like Jobtown can do: spark in each and every one of us new ideas and give us a bit more awareness to take home with us.