

IDENTIFICATION OF GOOD PRACTICES

Title of good practice	How to help local businesses overcome difficulties: SUPPORT THEM IN THE PROCESS OF DIGITISATION: DBPs – DIGITAL BUSINESS POINTS
Start/end date	2017-2022
Background of the good practice	<p>In recent years, in order to boost the competitiveness of Italian companies, numerous industrial policy actions have been planned that, in addition to supporting investments in innovation, research and development through fiscal measures, have sought to promote a new business culture focused on enabling technologies, digital skills and new business models, essential to maximise the benefits of the fourth industrial revolution.</p> <p>To support companies in achieving the above purposes, the Enterprise 4.0 Network has been established, consisting of numerous access points distributed throughout Italy that employ a variety of methods to pursue the common objective of accompanying and supporting companies in their digital transformation through the following activities:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Dissemination of knowledge on the benefits of investments in Enterprise 4.0 technologies. • Supporting companies in understanding their digital maturity and identifying priority areas for action. • Strengthening and dissemination of skills related to "enabling" technologies. • Business orientation towards digital transformation support structures and technology transfer centres. • Stimulating and supporting businesses in carrying out industrial research and experimental development projects. <p>The national network was established employing an approach that is both synergistic with and complementary to the structures that make it up, namely:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Competence Centres (CCs), highly specialised centres in the form of public-private partnerships between the worlds of research and business.

- Digital Innovation Hubs (DIHs), represented by trade associations that offer specific training and support for their respective fields of competence (industry, commerce, crafts etc.).
- Digital Business Points (DBPs), made up of the Chambers of Commerce, with the aim of promoting the broadest dissemination of digital culture in micro, small and medium-sized enterprises (MSMEs).

The Chambers of Commerce are therefore assigned a fundamental role in promoting the digital transformation of companies, especially those of smaller size that are struggling to seize the opportunities offered by the fourth industrial revolution.

Of particular pertinence in this context is the Decree of the Ministry of Economic Development of 07.03.2019, which, as part of the menu of services that Chambers of Commerce are required to provide throughout the national territory, identifies the following actions to support the digitisation of companies:

- Information services supporting digital solutions, innovation, I4.0 and the digital agenda.
- Support and guidance services related to collective demand.
- Promotion of DBP - digital business point services.
- Personalised digital assistance, guidance and training services.
- Interaction with Competence Centres and other national and regional partner structures.
- Specialised services for digitisation in collaboration with special companies and other structures of the Chamber of Commerce network.

1 ROLE AND INTERVENTION MODEL OF THE CHAMBER OF COMMERCE NETWORK

Interventions of the chamber of commerce network are planned on a three-year basis.

To ensure the achievement of the objectives set out in the Enterprise 4.0 Plan referred to in the introduction, in the three-year period 2017-2019, and for the upcoming three-year period 2020-2022, the Italian Chambers of Commerce have created a network of points composed of 88 DBPs capable of offering training, information and basic orientation services to MSMEs.

To date, at the end of the first three years of activity, the DBPs have achieved important results by bringing companies closer to the processes of Enterprise 4.0 digitisation and by promoting the spread of the culture and practice of digital solutions.

Specifically, the main milestones achieved **at a national level were:**

- Organisation of **over 3,000 info-training events** that saw the involvement of **about 200,000 participants**.
- Design and dissemination of two tools for measuring the digital maturity of companies, to be applied regardless of the company's sector and size: self-assessment (SELFI 4.0), guided assessment (ZOOM 4.0).
- **Completion of more than 40,000 assessments of digital maturity – both autonomously (SELFI 4.0) and guided (ZOOM 4.0).**
- **Over 5,000 actions aimed at the 4.0 network.**

Given the positive results already achieved in the first three years, a new three-year project was planned at a national level for 2020-2022, which, in addition to consolidating and strengthening the actions already carried out in previous years, intends to address the issue of **emerging technologies** (artificial intelligence, blockchain etc.), **digital skills** and **e-leadership** (innovation manager) by leveraging links with vocational schools and competence centres.

The Project also aims to support the construction of "**cross-cutting skills networks**" capable of combining digitisation with **innovation** and **sustainability** (e.g. smart cities, mobility, circular economy), also "crossing" Education and Work (e.g. green jobs) and Tourism (sustainable tourism) projects.

In the planning for 2022, particular attention will be paid to the issues of environmental sustainability and the green transition to promote the development of sustainable technologies.

2 ACTIVITIES CARRIED OUT IN 2017-2021 BY THE REGGIO EMILIA CHAMBER OF COMMERCE

The *Digital Business Point* (hereinafter DBP) of the Reggio Emilia Chamber of Commerce is one of the DBPs present throughout the country with the aim of **disseminating, supporting and training local companies on the issues of digital innovation** and promoting the adoption and implementation of the technologies called "Enterprise 4.0". The point is available to **all companies in the province of Reggio Emilia** in any industry that want to initiate or further advance their digital growth and transformation.

In almost four years **the DBP has become a point of reference for companies in Reggio Emilia interested in digital technologies and innovation issues** thanks to the results achieved on the ground, the number of companies supported and the fruitful collaboration with local innovation actors. All the services provided by the DBP and its Digital Promoters are free of charge and do not involve any type of cost for the companies involved.

At national level, the DBP project is the **response of the Chambers of Commerce Network to the request of the Ministry of Economic Development** to create a network of digitisation information and support points for companies to implement what was originally called the "Enterprise 4.0 Plan" and today is the new "Transition 4.0 Plan".

Since 2017, the DBP of the Reggio Emilia Chamber of Commerce has implemented the following lines of action:

- "I4.0 Digital Vouchers Call" to concretely support companies in Reggio Emilia that invest in innovative projects through grants for the purchase of consulting, training, hardware and software selected from an extensive list of eligible technologies.
- Mapping the digital maturity of companies through two types of assessment (SELFI 4.0 and ZOOM 4.0).
- Seminars and training events to disseminate the basic knowledge of "Enterprise 4.0" digital technologies.
- Specialist assistance and one-to-one meetings with companies interested in exploring one or more of the "Enterprise 4.0" technologies.
- Programme Agreement with the University of Modena and Reggio Emilia lasting two years, in order both to foster interaction between the business and academic worlds and to concretely stimulate innovation in the company through the development of prototypes.
- Partnerships with the Reggio Emilia Technopole with the aim of supporting companies in carrying out R&D, technology transfer and initiating collaborations with research bodies and laboratories.

- Spreading information on economic incentives in the field of "Enterprise 4.0" and digital technologies.

- "Digital Excellence" project with training and specialised assistance in the field of Digital Marketing to help companies seize all the opportunities offered by the Web.

- Spreading information on the digital services offered by the Chamber of Commerce (Entrepreneur's Digital Toolbox, Digital Signature, Electronic Invoicing, National Service Charter, Electronic Payments, Certificates of Origin in digital format).

2. 2017-2021 RESULTS

Below is a detailed list of the activities carried out and the results achieved by the Reggio Emilia DBP during the three-year period 2017-2021 thanks to constant awareness-raising, information and support activities organised in the area related to "Enterprise 4.0" technologies and the issues of digital innovation.

2.1 I4.0 DIGITAL VOUCHERS CALL

Between 2017 and 2021 the Reggio Emilia Chamber of Commerce launched the I4.0 Digital Voucher Call as part of the DBP project to promote the spread of digital culture and practice in MSMEs in all sectors through the economic support for Enterprise 4.0 digitisation initiatives implemented by local companies alongside the other services offered by the DBP.

The I4.0 Digital Voucher Call disburses grants equal to 50% of the costs incurred for the purchase of consulting, training, hardware and software for projects related to the use of I4.0 technologies.

The total resources allocated in this programme were €20,250 in 2017, €630,000 in 2018, €400,000 in 2019, €961,000 in 2020 and €850,000 in 2021

For a total of €2,861,250.00, facilitating 347 companies in total [the number will grow with the second selection of recipients for the 2021 call]

2.2 SEMINARS AND TRAINING EVENTS

Between 2017 and 2021 Digital Promoters organised about 50 seminars and webinars (the exact number is 48 if you only consider the events actually carried out with the DBP logo) to train and inform companies about technologies, funding opportunities (calls, economic incentives etc.) and focus on specific sectors or supply chains (Agriculture 4.0, Parmigiano Reggiano cheese, etc.).

The seminars/workshops were held in partnership with some of the main players in the local innovation ecosystem such as the REI Foundation, DISMI-Unimore Dep., Bi-Rex Competence Centre and MADE Competence Centre.

2.3 SELFI 4.0 DIGITAL MATURITY MAPPING

The digitisation of any company starts with understanding its own digital maturity level. To accompany companies along this path, the DBP of the Reggio Emilia Chamber of Commerce offers a free service for assessing the level of digital maturity. Companies can choose between two types of assessment: SELFI 4.0 and ZOOM 4.0. **SELFI 4.0** is a self-assessment in the form of an online questionnaire that companies can complete autonomously. Based on the answers provided, the company is issued a report that summarises the levels of digitisation achieved in each process/area assessed.

ZOOM 4.0, on the other hand, consists of a guided assessment performed with the aid of a Digital Promoter from the DBP who personally visits the company to perform a more in-depth survey of the production processes in order to provide guidance on the most appropriate digitisation solutions to pursue. At the end of the assessment the company receives a final report with an indication of the current level of digitisation of the various areas examined and suggestions on the technologies and/or specialised technological structures to contact to implement the recommended solutions.

The DBP of the Reggio Emilia Chamber of Commerce has actively promoted these two assessment tools in the area and has raised the awareness of companies in the province as to their usefulness, even helping them complete the assessment process itself.

As at 30 June 2021, a total of 349 SELFI 4.0 and ZOOM 4.0 assessments were **completed by companies based in the province of Reggio Emilia.**

2.4 SPECIALISED ASSISTANCE AND ONE-TO-ONE MEETINGS WITH COMPANIES

Digital Promoters have offered constant support to companies in Reggio Emilia interested in exploring the innovations and opportunities of “Enterprise 4.0” technologies, digital marketing and/or interested in learning about the digital services offered by the Chamber of Commerce. Support for companies has resulted in numerous one-to-one meetings, mainly held at the headquarters of companies that have sought support from the DBP.

During these meetings, Digital Promoters provided information and proposed solutions starting from a precise analysis of the specificities and individual business needs. Matching was frequently done to help companies get in touch with and assess possible collaborations with highly specialised organisations such as Unimore, Reggio Emilia Technopole and laboratories of the E-R HighTechnology Network.

In total, 224 one-to-one meetings were held between 2018 and the first half of 2021, i.e. since Digital Promoters started raising awareness in the area. These meetings were further complemented by remote support provided to companies by email and telephone.

2.5 PROGRAMME AGREEMENT WITH DISMI-UNIMORE DEP.

The Reggio Emilia Chamber of Commerce has entered into a Programme Agreement with DISMI-Unimore Dep. for the provision of support to companies in Reggio Emilia through DBPs.

The joint project between the Chamber of Commerce and DISMI-Unimore Dep. has the objective of implementing the methods and technologies defined as “Enterprise 4.0”, allowing companies of all sectors and sizes in the area to work with the academic and research worlds in order to develop process and/or product improvements.

The selected companies were able to launch projects that involved the use of "Enterprise 4.0" technologies through the design and development of innovative prototypes produced by the DISMI-Unimore Department team.

The project consisted of two one-year initiatives, the first in 2018 and the second in 2019.

In 2018, **12 one-to-one meetings** were held with local companies, and **three companies were selected to proceed with the conception and development of an innovative prototype**.

In 2019, on the other hand, **25 local companies** were involved for a total of **72 one-to-one meetings**, of which **42 meetings** were held in the presence of the DBP Digital Promoters. Based on the fact-finding meetings held with each of the companies involved in the project, **10 companies were able to proceed to the conception and development phase of an innovative prototype** produced by the team of DISMI-Unimore Dep. researchers.

The project generated best practices and success stories that were presented during a workshop held in late 2019.

2.6 PARTNERSHIP WITH THE REI FOUNDATION TECHNOLOGY TRANSFER CENTRE

In 2019 the Reggio Emilia Chamber of Commerce announced a “Call for the collection of proposals for the enhancement of public research results and for the promotion of digital culture among SMEs - 2019 - Project Code RPI4.0 - Help code RNA CAR 8310”.

The call implemented guidelines established at a national level by the Italian Union of Chambers of Commerce seeking to foster the promotion, dissemination and technological transfer of patents and technologies selected from the catalogue of the National Research Centre (CNR) and/or ENEA and/or other public research centres in order to identify public patents and technologies not covered by patents that are potentially interesting for local companies and the economic fabric of the province of Reggio Emilia.

As part of this collaboration, projects will be developed to support companies in the areas of culture, skills and technology transfer having to do with digital transformation and Enterprise 4.0.

The REI Foundation Technology Transfer Centre, which finished at the top of the ranking, and the DBP of the Reggio Emilia Chamber of Commerce will work closely together to carry out the following activities:

- Organisation of seminars on Enterprise 4.0 technologies.
- One-to-one consulting and specialised support on “Enterprise 4.0” technologies.
- Foster the promotion, dissemination and technological transfer of patents and technologies selected from the catalogue of the National Research Centre (CNR) and/or ENEA and/or other public research centres in order to identify public patents and technologies not covered by patents that are potentially interesting for local companies and the economic fabric of the province of Reggio Emilia.
- Organisation of Digital Talks with technical focus on specific aspects of “Enterprise 4.0” technologies involving entrepreneurs, managers and ICT experts to promote sharing.
- Feasibility study in order to facilitate the launch of tangible projects that provide for the implementation of "Enterprise 4.0" technologies in the company through the use of the skills and resources of the High Technology Network of Emilia Romagna.

The activities envisaged in the “Call for the collection of proposals for the enhancement of public research results and for the promotion of digital culture among SMEs - 2019 - Project Code RPI4.0 - Help code RNA CAR 8310” ended on 30/06/2021.

2.7 PARTNERSHIP WITH THE BI-REX COMPETENCE CENTRE

In 2021 the Chamber of Commerce signed a partnership with the Bi-Rex Competence Centre as part of the DBP project, with the aim of further strengthening the support offered to MSMEs in the area looking to initiate or consolidate their digital transformation. The Bi-Rex Competence Centre will provide its experts for the joint organisation of webinars on the topics of “Enterprise 4.0” technologies and will offer support to the DBP Digital Promoters to provide follow-up service and specialised support to companies that have requested the ZOOM 4.0 digital maturity assessment.

In 2019 the Digital Business Points of the Chambers of Commerce were certified among the PA's 40 best practices at a European level. This was recognised by the European Institute of Public Administration (EIPA) as part of the European Public Sector Award (EPSA) for the best European public administration projects presented by 28 countries.

Good practice abstracts and objectives

THE STRATEGIC LINES OF ACTION FOR THE THREE-YEAR PERIOD 2020-2022

In light of these results and the stated objectives, the actions planned for this three-year initiative are divided into two lines:

Line of action 1 - continuation and consolidation: aimed at consolidating the important results achieved by the DBPs, reinforcing the services already offered in previous years while also ensuring initiatives capable of increasing their level of recognition and identity throughout the country.

Line of action 2 - reinforcement and development, aimed at introducing new additional initiatives in areas with greater potential to improve and expand the support and guidance services offered to micro, small and medium-sized enterprises, in close cooperation with the training chain (e.g. vocational schools), with the associations (national and European DIHs, EDI), research and technology transfer (Competence Centres, Technology 4.0 Transfer Centres, FabLabs) worlds; all favouring approaches capable of combining “innovation and sustainability”.

Line of action 3 – Digital Voucher Call: continue actions to support digitisation **through the granting of vouchers to companies.**

	<p><u>Line 4</u> – actions will be taken to encourage companies to rethink their export strategy, focusing on digitisation and access to digital platforms and marketplaces.</p> <p><u>Line 5</u> - environment and digitisation.</p>
<p>Beneficiaries (direct and indirect of the planned actions)</p>	<p>All businesses in the area of any sector.</p>
<p>Actors involved (public bodies, companies, training institutions, trade associations, universities etc.)</p>	<p>Chambers of Commerce, technohubs, competence centres, digital innovation hubs, universities, trade associations, companies.</p>