

## PRESS RELEASE

### YOUTH EMPLOYMENT

#### **START-UPS AND INNOVATION: PUBLIC POLICIES AND COMMUNITY INITIATIVES: UNIPOL'S COMMITMENT**

**Public policies and socially responsible undertakings play a fundamental rôle in encouraging young people to develop new business ideas.**

**Unipolis Foundation has set aside €300K for the 'Culturability' competition, which sponsors 15 cultural and creative start-ups founded by under 35s.**

**287 young people living in Apulia have entered, with 74 projects being submitted. Apulia was the Italian region with the third-highest number of entries.**

**Cultural tourism, training and e-learning, publishing and literature, organizing festivals and events, design and crafts are the sectors of greatest interest to budding young entrepreneurs living in Apulia.**

*Bari, 9 July 2013* – Villa Romanazzi Carducci in Bari was the venue for today's meeting 'Youth Employment – Start-ups and innovation: public policies and community initiatives', where among those attending was **Nichi Vendola**, President of the Region of Apulia. The meeting was part of the event organized to present **Unipol's 2012 Sustainability Report**.

The meeting provided an opportunity to reflect on and discuss youth unemployment, which is even more of a social and cultural disaster than an economic one, and what public bodies and businesses can do about it at a time when, according to the latest ISTAT figures, **the unemployment rate among 15-24 year-olds across the country was 38.5% in May whilst in the region of Apulia it was 41.5% at the end of 2012 (Eurostat figure).**

Against this background **the Unipol Group deems it important to encourage a new ethos of innovation, both technological and social, and willingness to accept responsibility and take risks:** all those working in public bodies, society as a whole and the marketplace must provide advisory services and training for new business ventures in order to respond to the need to create jobs, and this is being done thanks to far-sighted public policies and the commitment of socially responsible businesses.

A solid response to these requirements is provided by the competition '**Culturability - Cooperatives do it together**', promoted by the Unipolis Foundation – the Unipol Group's charitable foundation – the aim of which is to **support cultural and creative start-ups founded by young people under the age of 35**. This project, in which culture, creativity and innovation are factors for the growth and wellbeing of communities, as well as individuals, encourages young people to set up new businesses in the form of cooperatives that focus on innovative and sustainable projects with a substantial social impact.

In a little over two months, between 21 February and 30 April, **2,932 young people submitted 824 business projects** through the website **www.culturability.org**, where all the entries submitted to Unipolis can be seen.

**581 projects**, 70.5% of the total, got through the first stage of checking that the requirements of the competition had been met. **74 of these projects were from Apulia**, the region with the third-highest number of entries after Emilia-Romagna and Lazio.

**32 projects** were from the province of **Bari**, followed by **26** from **Lecce**, **5** from **Foggia**, **4** from **Barletta-Andrea-Trani** and **Brindisi** and **3** from **Taranto**. A total of **287 young people under 35 living in Apulia** submitted eligible projects, 154 of whom were women and 133 men, with **an average age of just under 29**.

**Most of the 74 entries from Apulia** were on-line projects covering cultural tourism, training and e-learning, publishing and literature, organizing festivals and events, design and crafts.

The substantial number of entries from **all over the country led the Unipolis Foundation to set aside €300K**, more than the €200K envisaged initially, with the result that **15 new businesses will each receive a grant of €20K** for set-up costs.

**Unipol Banca** and Legacoop (Association of Cooperatives) also expressed their willingness to identify further measures to help young people who entered the 'Culturability' competition to set up other cooperatives in addition to the eventual winners.

In the meantime the support and advice stage began in June with training provided locally, mainly through **Legacoop's** network of services, to enable young entrepreneurs to study the many aspects of setting up a cooperative and perfect their business ideas. In offering advice and specialist help on setting up a business Unipolis will be joined by the other partners in the project: **Unipol Banca** and **Unipol Assicurazioni**, **Legacoop** with its network of services, both central and local, young members of **Generazioni** cooperatives and experts from **SeniorCoop** and **Coopfond**.

The young participants now have until 31 October to submit the final versions of their projects, including business plans, and it is these that the Evaluation Committee will use as a basis for selecting the winners.

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