

When did you start to think about bringing to life the Incredible Europe concept?

I have spent many years fostering the creative industries in several European countries. Already at the time when I was the Vice-president of the Austrian Creative Industries Platform I felt we needed to work on a joint European level and as a consequence I started the IncredibleEurope Association in 2007. But the Summit itself was a rather spontaneous idea. In January 2009, at the deepest moment of the crisis, we developed the concept, in March we gave the go and in June we gathered 250 changemakers from 23 countries at the first IncredibleEurope Summit. However, it was also a very strategic idea, particularly in times as challenging as these. The summit was the proof that even in the worst crisis a creative and innovative approach can make a difference. The state of the world economy today demands counter-cyclic action and a clear positioning for Europe – an Innovative Creative IncredibleEurope!

Why do you think the EU is not that much interested in developing meaningful programs for its contemporary identity?

Who do you mean by saying the EU? Are we talking about the commission, the different directorates, the national parliaments, the population? The "EU" is becoming a very vague notion. A term without a specific meaning, it can mean so much and at the same time almost nothing. Just consider the fact that in Europe as a continent we are 700 million individuals who speak more than 50 languages but we should be one global player?! What a difficult task! I strongly believe there is an European culture and a European identity which should be further developed and enhanced. To this purpose, at IncredibleEurope we are connecting the most influential creative and innovative changemakers of today and tomorrow. We need to stop expecting that somebody else develops an identity for us. If we want something to change we, as individuals, need to do make the first step.

What is your point of view in the matter of EU identity ? Is the logo and the flag representative for the EU citizens?

What do you feel when you see the logo or the flag? Most of the time – nothing! Obviously it is not possible to consider the EU as a single brand. EU is supposed to be an umbrella brand with many different sub-brands. But there is a long way to go until the necessary emotional connection and perception is developed.

But there are several successful examples and my favorite are the car license plates with the EU logo. When you see them you feel we all belong together but at the same time we have our own recognizable identity.

What was the highlight of Incredible Europe in 2009?

One of the highlights last year was the keynote by the 80-year old professor Luigi Colani, who embodies the idea of IncredibleEurope by combining diverse approaches and skills in hi-tech design, science, philosophy and industry. Celebrated worldwide as the pioneer of organic design, Colani produced some 20,000 revolutionary designs, 70% of which have been produced in series. Colani came especially from China, where he now works, to give critical remarks about Europe but, at the same time to encourage young people, as he repeated on stage. For Colani, Vienna is special as Europe's true hub: "Everything passed through Vienna, so much genius that came from the East", underlining Central and South East Europe as a very cerebral place. Speaking of rocket pioneer Hermann Oberth or aerodynamics mastermind Henri Coandă, whose enormous contribution is little known in general circles, he reminded the audience: "this is your heritage – you must be proud of it!"

Which are the speakers of Incredible Europe in 2010 and which are your expectations regarding this year's conference?

The interdisciplinary IncredibleEurope Summit 2010 awaits more than 40 top-speakers from all fields of work and from all over the world like Edward de Bono, author over 70 books on creative and lateral thinking, Cameron Sinclair, Co-Founder of Architecture for Humanity or Stefan Glänzer, one of the most active business investors in Europe's digital space, just to name a few. The leading position of Europe is in many aspects given but certainly not guaranteed in the future. Global competition and leadership responsibility require a re-learning process. And at IncredibleEurope Summit 2010 the most influential innovative and creative changemakers of today and tomorrow will re-learn to lead and re-learn to create to THINK EUROPE 2049 – ACT NOW!

How do you find and select those amazing speakers?

There are many brilliant brains and it is really a very difficult and strategic selection process. Fortunately, Brainswork has a broad, diverse network throughout the world and at this level we can talk from “freedom of choice”. Every speaker at the IncredibleEurope Summit is a future-oriented and influential changemaker! These are people who can and are making a difference in their own field, who are open to learn from other fields and experiences and are willing to invest their time to act upon a better future. I am very proud to say that none of the speakers is here for money. They come to inspire, to envision 2049 and to act now! And of course to connect and brainswork.

Which are the most important values of this European conference?

IncredibleEurope fosters increased understanding for Europe’s incredible potential in innovation and creativity in every sector of human activity and thought. Our mission is to expand horizons, nurture Europe’s innovative and creative visions and strengthen Europe’s position and brand value in local and global contexts. It is important to note that although we are focusing on Europe it is impossible not to consider the global context. When we envision and act towards the future of Europe we envision and influence at the same time the future of our planet. On a personal level, after the IncredibleEurope Summit the participants are less afraid of the future, they are more confident, they trust their capabilities more and are more entrepreneurial.

Which are your plans for the future, regarding the developing of this platform ?

The Summit in Vienna is the yearly highlight of many other activities. We have seen that not only the quality and diversity of the speakers but also of the audience is extremely important. The same is true for the members of the association and our partners. Facilitating the connecting among these incredible individuals towards influencing our future till 2049 is one goal. I have a very clear vision of where and how IncredibleEurope could develop but I consider it to be a living organism with the capacity to not only adapt to the changing circumstances but to create them. To this purpose, by the end of the year we will have a partner in each European country. We are proud that in Romania we not only already have a partner but Teo Migdalovici from Bitter Almonds is an Incredible Angel!

IncredibleEurope Summit in Vienna, June 10th-11th 2010. www.incredibleeurope.com