



Unioncamere

## DRAFT PROPOSAL

### **"INTERNATIONALISATION OF SMALL AND MEDIUM ENTERPRISES AND STRATEGIC PARTNERSHIPS "**

ATLAS CPP -17

Carlo Spagnoli

According to a census undertaken by the Ministry for Productive Activities in Italy there are 178,000 companies working with foreign countries. About 80% of these 178,000 companies has less than 15 employees.

Italy, therefore, is a country with a lot of small and medium companies that have convenience in founding their own way for accessing international markets.

Nowadays, which is the meaning of the word "globalization"?

According to me this word has at least three different meanings.

The first meaning is foreign trade. It is the most traditional method and it is characterized by the export of products abroad.

Since the end of 1980's a new method of globalization has being developed and it is characterized by direct investments abroad. As known, the opening of Central and Eastern European markets has brought to new opportunities for Italian companies. In countries like Poland, Slovak Republic and Romania, Italian companies, small and medium, have found very competitive costs of labor and of energy than in Italy. This is why Italian companies have established production plants abroad.

The third method of globalization, is the so called company's network. This last method of globalization has been precisely described by Robert Reich, future Labor Minister of President Clinton. In a company's network there are various kind of relations: independent earning methods, systems of external partnership such as joint venture, granting of franchising, subcontracting.

In this dynamic and growing context, what have Chambers of Commerce done?

I believe to can affirm that Italian Chambers of Commerce have developed absolutely specific services in the field of assistance to companies.

As stated in the working document of the European Commission “Create first class services to sustain companies” “all Chamber’s intervention policies, at European level, are characterized by their proximity to local economies that qualifies and makes their mission specific”.

The Italian Chamber’s of Commerce system has concentrated its activities in order to strengthen assistance services to companies as far as contractual, fiscal and customs information is concerned.

The fact that Chambers of Commerce offer these services makes the Chamber’s system specific and at the same time complementary to other public bodies working on the distribution of services for the globalization.

In 2001 the Regional Foreign Centers of Chambers of Commerce have invested for globalization 12,000,000 Euros, Chambers of Commerce have invested 38,000,000 Euros. All together the Italian system of Chambers of Commerce has invested at least 50,000,000 Euros in this sector.

In 2001 at least 34,197 companies were contacted by Chambers of Commerce and 11,666 companies were contacted by the Regional Foreign Centers of Chambers of Commerce.

If we analyze consultant services offered by Chambers of Commerce, we can see that those regarding guidance and training (19%), customs and transports (16%), fiscal matters (10%) cover the greatest part of the offered services.

This result comes also from the analysis of the consultant services offered by the Regional Foreign Centers of Chambers of Commerce. The greatest part of these services is focused on guidance and training (22%), customs and transports (14%), contracts (11%) and fiscal matters.

The analysis of the consultant services offered has correspondence also in the number of initiatives realized in 2001.

As far as Chambers of Commerce are concerned, the initiatives realized focused on training (1390), participation at exhibitions abroad (515) and financial contributions for initiatives of Italian Chambers of Commerce Abroad (343).

As far as the Regional Foreign Centers of Chambers of Commerce are concerned, initiatives focused mostly on training (117), participation at exhibitions abroad (114) and welcome of foreign delegations (69).

In 1989, with the fall of the Berlin Wall, an initiative of the Ministers of Foreign Affairs of Italy, Austria, Hungary and Yugoslavia, created the first nucleus of regional continental that was to gradually expand into the Central European Initiative (in the 2001 the CEI countries are: Albania, Austria, Belarus, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Bulgaria, Croatia, Czech Republic, Federal Republic of Yugoslavia, Hungary, Italy, Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, Moldova, Poland, Romania, Slovak Republic, Slovenia and Ukraina) with the aim to strengthen relationship between the Central European Countries and the European Union.

Some of them belong to the European Union (Italy and Austria), some will become members of European Union (Hungary, Poland, Czech and Slovenia and then Romania, Bulgaria and Slovak Republic), others have signed European Agreements, while others have different links (contractual ties, financial support,) with the European Union and some have no relationship at the present.

In the framework of the Central European Initiative (CEI) activities, the national Chambers of Commerce set up in 1995 in Trieste a multi-regional co-operation in order to create a network to improve business investments and common projects and transfer experiences and best practices in fields such as training, activities for business development and etc.

The collaboration between the Presidents of Chambers of Commerce of CEI Countries is assured by the Secretariat (held by Unioncamere). Every year there is the Conference of the Presidents of the Central European Chambers of Commerce Initiative and this year the Conference will be held in Scopje (Macedonian presidency 2002) in November.

In 2001 the Italian system of Chambers of Commerce, in cooperation with the Ministry for the Productive Activities, gave a contribution to the development of the project about the regional desks for globalization.

At this regard, together with the material network composed by the globalization desks of the Chambers of Commerce, an electronic network called Globus was created.

At the moment Globus involves 82 Italian Chambers of Commerce, 4 Regional Foreign Centers of Chambers of Commerce and 1 Regional Union of Chambers of Commerce together with more than 40 Italian Chambers of Commerce abroad.

The aim of Globus is to offer a first aid service and guidance to companies wishing to have relations with foreign countries.

Globus is divided into various sections: exhibitions and missions, tenders, business opportunities , countries and markets, partners' research, seminars and training, financial tools and international emergencies.

In 2001 more than 200,000 pages of the sections were requested by the users and more than 22,000 users visited the web site.

Carlo Spagnoli  
Unioncamere