



JADRANKA RADOVANIĆ

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Opening of Proceedings – Thursday 27th May 2010, 10 a.m.
Mole Vanvitelliana – Ancona

Authorities, kind guests, welcome to you all and thank you for being here at the opening of the 10th Forum of the Chambers of Commerce of the Adriatic and Ionian Area.

It is a great honour for me to open the proceedings of this Edition of the Forum in this marvellous setting of the Mole.

The Forum has been active for 10 years; they have been demanding years, but full of enthusiasm. From an idea which started in Split, here is a planned reality which has grown and become a point of reference for many. The reality of our association has changed; there are more participants and it has become more complex; from 6 chambers belonging, today there are 37 chamber bodies representing 7 countries: over the years it has developed and taken shape, even obtaining results and recognition within European institutions, which today are our point of reference.

All this through the dedication of the main characters in our story: I refer to the then President Bocchini and to the Secretary-General Franco Del Mastro who supported my idea of the Forum and to all those who work in it with flair and ability.

A particular welcome to our international guests, to the presidents of the Italian and foreign Chambers present, to the representatives of the Economic Bodies, which look out onto the two shores of the Adriatic: Italy, Croatia, the Federation of Bosnia and Herzegovina, Montenegro, Slovenia, Greece and Albania.

My greetings and particular thanks go to the representatives of the European institutions who wanted to honour us with their presence.

Thank you to all the local institutions, the Marche region, the province of Ancona, the town of Ancona that we thank particularly for having allowed us to open the Forum in this splendid place, which looks over to the other shore of the Adriatic.

My wish is that at the end of the proceedings, our plans, but also our friendship will be even firmer and more lasting.

Today more than ever, one has to work in networks and united to face the crisis and re-launch the economy of the whole Adriatic-Ionian basin. Thank you again and let's work well.



"Small Business Act — The Forum's commitment to support SMEs in the Adriatic-Ionian area and future prospects",
Friday 28th May 2010, 9.30 a.m.
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Dear colleagues and guests, the delivery of the plaques reminds me of ten years ago when we promoted the initiative of inviting all the Presidents of the Chambers of Commerce in our basin with the aim of tackling themes of mutual interest in order to find, where necessary, the best solutions to the problems we had in common. This has been my personal initiative, in which I believed and for which I consider it necessary and strategic that we meet each year to check on our progress.

The first person who replied to my invitation, who took up this initiative, was Mr Bocchini, whom we met on numerous occasions. Today, with us, is his wife who supported us, helped us, just like Mr Del Mastro who helped us even during the exhausting war period: he gave it his all and supported me enormously.

On this solemn occasion I would like to congratulate and thank other very important people who then replied to my invitation: the President of the Montenegro Chamber of Commerce, Mr Vukmirovic, the President of the Pula Chamber of Commerce, Mr. Vidulin, the President of the Bosnia-Herzegovina Chamber of Commerce, Mr. Lasic, and the President of the Zara Chamber of Commerce, Mr. Jurlin. These influential people met for the first time ten years ago, believing in this idea and today we are seeing the results: ten years ago there were six of us; today there are 37 Chambers members to the Forum who share needs and initiatives of the Association. Everything that we have achieved in these ten years, through Workgroups, you have seen in the short film: together we have been able to manage so many projects and today we represent about 6 million SMEs.

What I cannot forget and which must always be recognised is the great, and decisive, backing that the Marche region and the province of Ancona have offered in supporting the initiative, from the start, with significant finance.

At that time we needed resources and they helped us, supporting the projects, from female entrepreneurship to tourism, to transport, i.e. crucial sectors where the presence of influential institutions has helped us to overcome the obstacles we faced. Today, therefore, I am addressing my thanks to the present authorities hoping for their support also for our future activities. I hope that other institutions, other bodies too will be able to recognise our work.

We have organised various institutional presentation visits in Brussels, illustrating the activities of the Workgroups and to the Arbitration Court, i.e. the body created with the aim of co-ordinating the various legal systems by availing ourselves of lawyers and experts in the sector. Today Ms Trsun is here – she is the vice-president of the Arbitration Court. In collaboration with other colleagues she has believed in this body contributing to co-ordinating a legislative framework in support of the search for ad-hoc solutions. I believe that we must organise ourselves so as to leave our heirs, our sons and daughters, something that can be read as an example, so that future generations will be able to follow the paths already mapped out by the Forum.

Even though recognising that countries in the avant-garde like those of the Baltic have set up a similar body, it is said that our Forum looks like "good practise" and it is not at all easy to find one in other realities.

A proverb, in Dalmatia, goes like this: "we can see what happens on the other side of the wall". We have seen the other side of the wall, we have been far-sighted, always developing and extending new themes, over the course of these ten years. We have set up six Workgroups (Agriculture, Environment, Women Entrepreneurship, Fisheries, Tourism and Transport) and this year we have promoted a new Workgroup dedicated to EU Project Management, which is a crucially important sector in the prospect of future growth. We have carried out a great number of projects together, some are already complete, others are in the management phase.

We have realised the need for constant training to bring us up to the required standards and procedures, as well as to the Community rules of reference.

The rules and regulations can be transposed into national legislation, but the staff responsible for their correct application needs constant training, so that far-sighted work, transferable to future generations, can be truly effective.

We have also been the pioneers for this work, casting ourselves onto the international scene, not only onto the regional and national one. The present realities in the Adriatic-Ionian basin are numerous and varied and this involves the need to share instruments of work in order to find solutions of common interest. Our problems are very specific and we need to search together for the means to face them.

We have neither gold nor oil, we have innovative ideas; the people in these areas have always had a strong ability to transform initiatives into concrete projects to be carried out. I hope that future generations will always have, in their hearts, big values, professional ethics which combine expertise and moral values in the mutual respect of differences, without fearing the results of others, in fact on the contrary they will be able to form the basis for new activities to develop together.

This is my message: moral and ethics in the heart. My thanks to you and to all those who have worked with us these last ten years. Thank you to the young people who I hope will be able to follow on and extend our initiatives, so that they can start up other projects through the Workgroups, searching within the groups to create favourable conditions for all the economic subjects who work in our basin of reference.



I would like to give my personal thanks to the President of the Region, to the Mayor and to the Ambassador. I would like to thank and congratulate the President of the Ancona Chamber of Commerce who from this year has taken on this new and important task.
Thank you everyone.



RODOLFO GIAMPIERI

Vice-President of the Forum of Chambers of Commerce of the Adriatic and Ionian Area President of the Ancona Chamber of Commerce

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Authorities, kind guests, I welcome you all to the opening of the 10th Forum of the Chambers of Commerce of the Adriatic and Ionian Area on behalf of the Ancona Chamber of Commerce.

It is not for the sake of convention if I tell you that it is a great pleasure and privilege today to be able to provide the means for this edition of the Forum, in which we are the host country.

After its debut in 2001, when we inaugurated the first plenary session of the Forum in Ancona, and then the seventh, we find ourselves again hosting a very special edition of our annual meeting: that of the tenth anniversary.

Two five-year periods have passed, many things have changed, today's international scene is very different from that which saw the birth of our association: from a social, economic, political, even climatic point of view.

The Euro, new in 2001, is the only currency known by a generation, we call ourselves and feel ourselves to be European citizens, the energy and environmental question is not an eccentric affectation but a need affecting everyone, just like the wave of the economic crisis, which has spread throughout the world. Europe has pulled itself back and shown what it can do; it forces us to face up to what there is and to start again and reinvent ourselves.

The reality of our association has likewise changed; it has a greater number of participants and is more complex; it has 37 chamber bodies in 7 countries. Over the years it has developed and moved on, obtaining significant results and recognition, even within European institutions, which are today our point of reference.

All this has been possible thanks to the dedication and will of the protagonists of this adventure, starting with one of the main authors: I am referring to Jadranka Radovanic, President of the AIC Forum, to whom we have been linked through a relationship of respect and profitable professional collaboration for some time. Our compliments also to her for her management of the chairmanship, for the passion and energy dedicated to the project over these ten years.

A particular welcome to all the international guests, to the presidents of the Italian and foreign Chambers present, to the representatives of the Economic Bodies which look out onto the two shores of the Adriatic: Italy, Croatia, the Federation of Bosnia and Herzegovina, Montenegro, Slovenia, Greece and Albania.

Our greetings also go to the representatives of the other partnership networks linked to the Forum and with whom we have been able, over the years, to set up a solid cross border cooperation: the Forum of Adriatic and Ionian Cities and Towns, Uniadriion, which links up the world of university and research, the Permanent Secretariat for the Adriatic-Ionian Initiative. A warm welcome also to the representatives of the network of our system of chambers of commerce, both national and regional.

To our great satisfaction, the 2010 Edition is part of the calendar of initiatives that, on a European level, comprise the second "European SME week", a campaign developed by the DG Enterprise and Industry of the European Commission with a view to promoting events throughout Europe to encourage and support small and medium-sized enterprises in this particular time of crisis.

Therefore I would like to greet and thank the representatives of the European institutions for their attention and participation.

We owe a lot to the collaboration with all the local institutions, the Marche region, the Province of Ancona, the town of Ancona which we particularly thank for accommodating us today in this splendid Mole Vanvitelliana, suspended between sea and land, like a ship about to put out to sea on the Adriatic-Ionian route.

I would like to remind, particularly the international guests, that this Mole – early work of Luigi Vanvitelli, one of the major Italian architects in the period between the Baroque era and Neoclassicism (the same one who designed the bell tower of the Santa Casa di Loreto Sanctuary, which you will have surely seen) – was commissioned by a pope, Clemens XII, with the aim of making the port into an infrastructure capable of playing the role of Roman port towards the East: it seems to me that this tenth Forum could not have been opened under better omens and a more striking *genius loci*.

I would personally like to thank the chamber staff who have worked extremely hard in the organisation, which has not been easy, of this event; an event which is so important for us and who will accompany us with the usual professionalism and commitment during these very full days of work.

People who work in the shadows with commitment, enthusiasm and passion: if the spotlights are turned on us, it is only thanks to them.

The presence of the Forum in our city is a valuable opportunity for our region, the opportunity to think of ourselves as a link for this Adriatic-Ionian area and to measure up with a historical vocation of an Eastern gateway and crossroads benefiting from differences, which are exchanged, communicate and enrich one another.

A promenade, dedicated in its final stretch to Luigi Vanvitelli, separates us from another civilian monument which speaks very eloquently of the role, which historically this city and this region have held: it is our Loggia dei Mercanti, "our" because it is the representation office of the Ancona Chamber of Commerce, however it is "of everyone".



As the world of economy, which generates development, employment, well-being and social peace, is of everyone. Closely linked to the commercial life of Ancona, the Loggia building faces onto the sea and port. Fulcrum and synthesis of the Adriatic interchange, the monument represents one of the masterpieces of the architect and sculpture Giorgio di Matteo da Sebenico, who was a Dalmatian sculpture and architect.

An international festival dedicated to the Adriatic and the Mediterranean each year celebrates the history of the link running through all the countries, which look out onto our sea.

Everything conspires to make this province and this region, which culminates in its geographic longing to be on the opposite coasts, with the Greek Ankon, the point of landing and setting off on future development projects in the whole of the region.

We must be aware of the fact that we are in the right place at the right time.

My wish is that at the end of the proceedings our plans, but also our friendship and acquaintance, will be strengthened. We would really like the olive plants adorning this building today not to remain a symbol but to express the definite desire and common feeling of this association, which has in its premises and objectives harmonisation, integration, economic growth and therefore also social and cultural growth of the population and regions of this whole geo-political area.

As I was saying just a minute ago, much has been done in these ten years.

The role of the Forum has been developed, both on a national and Community level.

We believe it is of prime importance to continue to present the area as a whole to the European Union, informing the Brussels-based institutions of the characteristics and needs of our SMEs, and committing to developing specific projects, in all our interests without any specific ones predominating, without prejudices, without colonialism but with the greatest democracy and shared objectives and purposes.

The links set up with the EU and the accreditation course with European institutions have allowed us to obtain an important recognition this year, namely the sponsorship of the 'European Social and Economic Committee' and to participate in the first edition of the European Parliament of Enterprises.

After Slovenia and Greece, Croatia has also embarked on its journey towards Europe: we hope that this journey will soon be possible for all the Eastern Balkan countries which are not yet part of the Union.

We need, today more than ever, unity and cohesion, indispensable when facing the crisis and re-launching the economy of the whole Adriatic-Ionian basin; we must put aside all individual traits.

A hard and stimulating programme of work is waiting for us in the next 48 hours: in the Workgroups we shall talk of Tourism, Transport, Fisheries and Aquaculture, the Environment, Women Entrepreneurship and Agriculture, as well as EU Project Management.

The Adriatic and Ionian International Court will also meet. This is a strategic organ of the Forum, which was established to resolve economic and commercial disputes arising from the presence of different regulations, based on heterogeneous legal principles that can represent an obstacle to the development of relationships, traffic and economic-commercial trade within the area.

Tomorrow is a particularly important and intense day. It will be dedicated to the plenary session on the work done, to the presentation of documents from the Workgroups and augmented by discussion with high-up representatives of European institutions on credit and innovation as instruments for competitive revival.

To close, allow me to remind you that to take a break from all these meetings, essential as well as demanding, the setting of our bay of Portonovo will be there to welcome you all; even this is full of historical fascination linked to the sea (from the Napoleonic fort to the Romanesque church, an unexpected jewel found where the mountains finish and the sea starts).

And finally, but no less important, a cultural event has been organised right on this Mole, an exhibition with the mysterious and suggestive title, "*Tramare e mare*" ("Between Plots and Seas"), dedicated to manufactured artisan textiles which bear witness to the circulation, commerce and trade of raw materials in the Mediterranean. My thoughts turn to Penelope's shroud and to the Homeric desire to travel as a cultural exchange and enrichment.

Let's work well and have a good stay in Ancona.

"Small Business Act — The Forum's commitment to support SMEs in the Adriatic-Ionian area and future prospects",
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It is with great emotion that, together with you, I am celebrating the 10 years of the Forum's activity, so many intense years, and now I am launching today's work, which is so special and full of meaning. Thank you to the President Jadranka Radovanić, in repeating my deep respect for you, I want to thank you for the work and enthusiasm you have devoted throughout these 10 years to our Forum, 'infecting' all members of our organisation. Without your strong drive we would not be here today.

I would like to thank the Italian and foreign Chambers, the authorities, the representatives of the European Parliament, the embassies, the institutions of Brussels, the territorial bodies, banks, universities and all the entrepreneurs and their associations, whose presence has proven the interest in our organisation and the desire to accompany us along this path that began back in 2001.



I would like to give my special thanks, together with yours also, to Giampaolo Giampaoli, President of the Ancona Chamber who led the Ancona Chamber of Commerce before me, because he has believed in and dedicated much effort to our Forum's projects.

I would also like to dwell on the importance of the participation in this Edition of Mr Mario Sepi, President of the European Economic and Social Committee who, besides the patronage granted to the Forum, generously wanted to be with us today to show his interest and the interest of the European institution he represents towards the work of our association.

Particularly sincere thanks to the President of the National Union of the Chambers of Commerce, Ferruccio Dardanello. With his presence here today he has intended to emphasise the importance of our work and of international cooperation, a means to economic growth and social cohesion. Thank you Mr. President for the trust that you have shown.

Finally a heartfelt thanks to the entire staff of the Ancona and Split Chambers of Commerce and the member Chambers of the Forum, who have worked with great enthusiasm and commitment to organising this important event. Without them all this would have been impossible.

We have travelled a long way and there is still a long way to go.

As you know well, we are living in a particularly delicate era, which started more than 18 months ago, in which every European country and not only European, including Italy, has seen negative rates of growth.

The worst moment seems to be behind us, but the forecasts suggest a still weak upturn and rather long recovery times.

Long recovery times and times exposed to many uncertainties and all the after-effects of the explosion of the model of roaring and poorly regulated globalisation, of incredible growth doped by debts, and of the supremacy of finance.

Today the "real economy" makes a comeback, brought about by businesses and work, which really needs to be reviewed.

We are all aware that to return to the old production model is not possible. Nothing will be the same as before.

We must look forward and from now onwards think of more innovative elements which must be taken into consideration by our businesses and introduced into their organisational and production processes.

We are at a crossroads between decline and a new model for development.

And we are deeply convinced that the "new expansion" must develop on a strongly "Mediterranean scale", an area of about 400 million people. It is about a demanding challenge, which requires joint effort on the part of businesses and institutions and which can lead to bringing back competitiveness and social cohesion.

This is our role; this is our task and the contribution, which the Forum of the Chambers of Commerce of the Adriatic and Ionian Area will also undoubtedly be able to offer. Today more than ever Europe must be enlarged; there must be cohesion and unity so as to look to the future.

These are the arguments, which, very briefly, I thought it appropriate to share with you and which have induced us to dedicate these days of work to an extremely important and topical document. I am referring to the 'Small Business Act', the political document produced by the European Union and devoted to Small Enterprises that aims to create a context, in which SMEs can prosper, optimising the individual talents of future entrepreneurs to improve the global political approach and confirm the principle of "Think small first" in decision-making processes.

A principle coined by the same President Dardanello "to think large one needs to think small first". The other large perspective, which is outlined, is the trend towards "sustainability", i.e. to a new development model that turns the relationship between production and regions into an element of competitiveness.

And this is exactly the same approach that was taken, far in advance, by the Forum right from the very first year of its establishment.

In today's plenary sessions, we will discuss two matters of great interest for the area's countries: 1) access to credit in order to re-launch the economy; 2) innovation for a competitive recovery.

Both themes speak of recovery and of levers, which are absolutely necessary to create the conditions from which to start again and restore trust in all business players, particularly in SMEs, which are the basic backbone of our areas.

As far as credit is concerned, the EU and Member Countries must facilitate SMEs' access to credit, in particular to risk capital and microcredit, and develop new products and new services, as well as a legal and economic context which encourages prompt payments in commercial transactions.

Obtaining suitable finance can be a big problem for entrepreneurs: after administrative responsibilities, it is, for them, their second anxiety.

Furthermore, entrepreneurs, in particular small ones, should be directed and helped to learn about the advantages and disadvantages of the various forms of credit and ways of presenting investment plans to potential financiers.

And this is why banks and enterprises must collaborate to recreate a solid link based on trust.

It is vital that "the banks return to the businesses", check the quality of the entrepreneurs, their plans, their dreams and aspirations and the effective value of their equity, also valuing intangible assets which today risk being guiltily overlooked (history of the entrepreneur, value of the brand, organisation, client portfolio, etc.)

We demand assessments of credit merit that pay more attention to quality than to quantity.

Unfortunately, in the reorganisation of banking institutions the removal of decision-making centres from the regions mean that we have not gone in this direction.



As far as innovation is concerned, in the “Small Business Act”, amongst the 10 principles for carrying out the EU policies, the 8th one is dedicated to the following theme i.e.: “To encourage the updating of expertise in SMEs and every type of innovation”.

SMEs must be encouraged to invest in research, to participate in programmes of help for Research and Development, in transnational research, in the grouping together of businesses and in the active management of intellectual property.

In the EU, only 3 SMEs out of 10 stated, in 2007, that they had new products or income from new products. That is why it is important to integrate SMEs better into the research community and to strengthen the links between universities and SMEs.

In addition it is necessary to encourage the active management of intellectual property on the part of SMEs, allowing, for example, on-line invoicing (e-invoicing) and on-line administration (e-government).

Support must be given to the efforts of overstretched enterprises to become more international and to become enterprises with a high rate of growth. This can be through participation in innovative clusters, encouraging networks of enterprises which, together, can form a significant critical mass to face the enormity of the global market.

To help the business system deal with this difficult crisis, I believe that the local and community institutions must celebrate an international debate to compare notes on measures implemented in the various territories in order to help leave this crisis behind us.

Overcoming this phase is certainly no easy task, and there are many different levers we will need to use. I believe that to overcome the unfavourable forecasts, we need to focus on internationalisation, tourism, product type differentiation, quality, the promotion of territories and ecologically compatible and sustainable productions.

But these themes must not remain as a slogan: enterprises must do their part, but also institutions are called to behave responsibly and coherently and overcome individual considerations, to create real teamwork where winning must be the aim of everyone. The risk of failure is the failure of a development model.

Another opportunity to leave the crisis behind us will be the creation of a Mediterranean free trade area, a topic already dealt with in the last Edition of the Forum in Agrinion in Greece, which will transform our seas into a single, large market, one of the largest and most important of the world.

This is a unique opportunity for the economic and strategic growth of the entire macro area, which looks set to increase commercial exchanges and investment flows between all the countries involved.

We need to face up to this challenge, without particularism, designing maritime infrastructures, modernising telecommunications and harmonising maritime legislation, like one large area.

Fragmented and frightened societies, like ours have become, need objectives which join them and motivate them.

We believed that it was sufficient to encourage the “individual advantage” to make progress (individualistic vision), but the sum of individual ambitions has not generated a collective ambition. Quite the opposite.

I will be very interested to listen to the suggestions and indications made by the speakers to come, with the spirit that marks the Forum: we are not merely neighbours with whom we attempt to stay in good relations, rather we are here to give a new input to the entire business system, considering it as a single, large business basin working towards the realisation of a homogeneous macro-region with common perspectives and opportunities.

A link emerges between our regions that is not merely of a commercial nature, but which strengthens as the process for the approach and adhesion to the European Union progresses, despite the fact that there are still clear, significant differences between the individual States. However, once the individual States manage to see themselves as a single region, these differences will become opportunities, where each will find its place according to the specialisation and particular features that will be outlined during this phase of great change.

To promote this transformation, we need to continue to present the area as a whole to the European Union, informing the Brussels-based institutions of the characteristics and needs of our SMEs, and committing to developing specific projects, in all our interests. Otherwise there is a real risk of being marginalised.

The links set up with the EU and the accreditation course carried out with European institutions have allowed us to obtain an important recognition this year: the patronage of the European Parliament, the patronage of the European Social and Economic Committee, the patronage of the European Commission, Italian representation office.

This is an honour for our work and represents for us all a valuable recognition to continue with courage and passion: the talents of the Forum.

In recent years, we have created important links and collaborated with all the international organisations of the macro area of the Secretariat for the Adriatic-Ionian Initiative at the forums of the cities and universities. But our voice must reach Europe, through other interlocutors too.

Such as, for example, thanks to Eurochambres, the European Association of the Chambers of Commerce and Industry, which organised in 2008 in Brussels the first edition of the “European Parliament of enterprises”.

The Ancona Chamber of Commerce has had the honour of participating and so we hope that this will also happen in the second edition, which will take place this year in October.

The problems of the small and medium-sized enterprises of the Adriatic-Ionian macro area do not differ much from those of the other countries of the European Union, as, in fact, we have been saying since 2001.

To conclude: this coming together of us all, which has encouraged reciprocal awareness and trust between ourselves, must lead to ever more concrete projects being carried out to attract the attention of the European Community and the necessary resources to support tomorrow's growth.



We must favour “efficiency” over “propaganda”, defining paths of responsibility because I have been deeply convinced by a phrase quoted a few days ago: “the mind is like a parachute, it only works when it is open”. Thank you for your kind attention, we wish you all the best with your continued efforts.



ALESSANDRO GRAFINI

Ambassador –Secretary-General of the Adriatic-Ionian Initiative

I believe that I am ending this first phase, therefore, even if briefly, I feel I must say a few important things and make a few clarifications, also in the wake of what President Spacca has already very well illustrated.

We are celebrating the tenth anniversary of the Forum of the Chambers of Commerce of the Adriatic and Ionian and in the same month, ten years ago, the Adriatic-Ionian Initiative was set up, just a few hundred metres from here, in the prestigious office called "*Palazzo degli Anziani*" where, on 5 May, this anniversary was celebrated by the Council of ministers of the eight Member States. Therefore let us remember two institutions, the Forum of the Chambers of Commerce of the Adriatic and Ionian and the Adriatic-Ionian Initiative. They were formed in Ancona in different fields and at different levels; I will clarify that the Adriatic-Ionian Initiative is an initiative which operates at government level. Let us remember that in 2000 there were still acts of war on the other side of the Adriatic, therefore the primary aim was to make a general contribution to creating peace in the area, through co-ordinated policies which might serve to balance the situation on the two coasts, also in view of European integration.

A very specific aim of all of us, of the Italian government, in particular of the Foreign Office, is that all the countries in this area might join the European Union. Croatia, as we know, is about to join and the other four countries, Serbia, Montenegro, Bosnia-Herzegovina and Albania, are also supported in this process by initiatives promised by the Adriatic-Ionian Initiative which do not conflict at all with the process of entry to the European Union; on the contrary, to a certain extent, they help.

As you have been reminded, relationships between the Forum and the Adriatic-Ionian Initiative were strengthened two years ago with the creation of the Permanent Secretariat. It is interesting to note that the Permanent Secretariat was decided by the eight countries. I say eight and not seven, because Serbia is not part of the Forum but already has links which we hope will become stronger. The eight countries unanimously chose Ancona for a variety of reasons. Ancona has always had very close links with Split but also with Albania, with the other shore of the Adriatic; it has a certain prestige, but there was also one concrete fact: that the enlightened, I stress enlightened, position of President Spacca allowed the structure to be made available and this was fundamental.

The structure of the Secretariat has its offices in the ancient citadel of Sangallo; therefore, in a way, it is also symbolic for the city and the region.

I believe that in the last two years the Secretariat, with its light-handed but valid structure, has contributed to the continuing work and expansion of the Adriatic-Ionian Initiative.

This has been the year with an Italian President and it has ended in the last few days. It has been a particularly full and useful year, given the synergy between the Italian President and the offices of the Secretariat at Ancona.

The very fact that I am a member of the Foreign Office, working now with an international organisation, has obviously helped matters. Therefore this year three interventions have taken place. They were, respectively, of a political, technical and parliamentary nature. I remember with particular gratitude the Polytechnic University of the Marche and Chancellor Pacetti who held cultural celebrations, workshops and inaugurations.

Coming to the practical conclusion, in this year of office two results have been achieved. Both innovative, which have never been achieved before. The first is to have signed protocols. Two have already been signed. The first, regarding small and medium-sized enterprises, was developed thanks to the collaboration of the Secretariat of the Forum of the Chambers of Commerce of the Adriatic and Ionian via its responsible bodies and was signed at Verona last February, by the eight ministers of the economy. This protocol needs a follow-up, a focal point. We are just now speaking with the Forum of the Chambers of Commerce to ensure that this happens. It is a protocol which proposes not only an exchange of best practices but also to create common services, using those which already exist, such as the Arbitration Court, already operating in the field of the Forum of the Chambers of Commerce. There is also talk of female entrepreneurship which sees in the Forum an appropriate dedicated Workgroup. It is therefore a protocol which indicates some possible areas of cooperation which will certainly be taken advantage of and implemented.

A second protocol was signed the day before yesterday in Rome under the presidency of the Minister for Agriculture, Mr. Galan, at the Ministry for Agriculture, and this is also a significant and important innovation. Up until now the Adriatic-Ionian Initiative has concerned itself with maritime questions, now it has also become involved in the rural sector and it seems to me that it is a very demanding protocol, because it creates a permanent network between the Ministers for agriculture of the various countries, inevitably favouring positive spin-off in the respective territories.

A protocol regarding tourism is in the process of being drawn up and it takes into account, naturally, the Adrion Project which was developed in this term of office.

Another, cultural one, will, I hope, soon be completed.

As President Spacca said, the latest idea is to also draw up a protocol on fishing. Or rather, during the Montenegrin presidency, the Secretariat being here in Ancona, we intend to start the procedure, relying, if necessary, on the Fish Fair and on structures which already exist in Ancona.

The second result is extremely important and is a medium to long-term project, as stated by President Spacca: 2014 should be the year in which Greece and Italy, the two Member States of the Adriatic-Ionian Initiative, will each have, for six months, the Presidency of the European Union. It is right to explain that this is a European macro-region strategy, therefore it is somewhat difficult to achieve; it is not something which can be achieved in one day. I would like to claim the merit for Ancona, for the small structure of the Secretariat which, last January, took its inspiration from



what is being done in the Baltic Sea and in the area of the Danube. In an illustrated memo and document, which was then continued through an official statement from the ministers, it put itself forward to do something similar with us. We have the disadvantage of having started a little later, but the advantage of being a very homogenous and co-ordinated area, which already has an institution. The institution is the Adriatic-Ionian Initiative, its Secretariat, which is already an existing pivot in as far as the European Union does not want any additional institutions for the macro-regions; it wants to use the one that we already have and this is already something. This something is also linked to the Forum of the city, to the Forum of the Chambers of Commerce and to Uniadriion. Therefore it can constitute a push from the bottom which should be coupled with a push from the top, i.e. from governments, because these European macro-regions should include, summarise and replace all the policies which existed before joining. Thus they should result in a wide and co-ordinated, and therefore more efficient, plan.

I can assure you that the Secretariat has made itself into the promoter of this initiative, in fact it drew up the basis of the statement of the eight ministers; it will always be vigilant and this will surely become our priority in the next few years. Thank you.



FERRUCCIO DARDANELLO

President of the Union of Italian Chambers of Commerce *Unioncamere*

“The reform of the Italian Chambers of Commerce for the development of the territories”

Thank you everyone, thank you Rodolfo, thank you Alberto, thank you to the hospitable Marche region, which for the second occasion in a very short span of time allows me to be with you and experience the emotions of this land. It enables me to make a contribution, which the Italian system of chambers of commerce, in my own person at this time, can convey in a day like today, which is so strategic, so important, a great precursor of innovation for the future of the people's Europe, the Europe of businesses, the Europe on which we must build, somehow, the future of our youth, of the new generations.

I have come here today particularly because a Forum which sees Chambers of Commerce working together within this new Europe, which we are building appeals greatly to me, on both a personal and professional level. I am also the child of a border country, like you, like the friends on the other side of the Adriatic. Many years ago, I had already realised and understood, following the guidelines given to us by that great European maestro, Jacques Delors, that the future of our Europe would probably not be a Europe made up of countries, but a Europe made up of regions, i.e. those areas with a cultural, historical, ethical and economic similarities and which could put their potential together in order to tackle together this great journey to which we shall, I believe, dedicate not only the rest of our lives but also the lives of new generations. Our task would be putting together those communities which had had reasons over time for remaining separate from each other, because of historical scars, the same scars that should instead become pivotal to enhancing the new potential and tangibly bringing together the great wealth, the great ideas, the great determination of people in neighbouring territorial areas.

The journey I have carried forward was a journey, which saw a great mountainous chain, the Alps, as a divide and even a scar; it was therefore difficult to put these communities together.

Here in front of us, on the other hand, there is a community, which has before it a beach and the sea, a community which can be easily integrated, easily brought together. These “motorways of the sea”, which must more and more characterise the very infrastructure of our country, will allow you to make this new journey quickly, extremely quickly, I would say. A journey, which looks forward and which looks intelligently on anyone who has been able to engage in this process, in whatever manner. Today this process is represented by the economic system, which gave life to and started this engine and which set this alliance mechanism in motion. Once again I want to express my enthusiasm by saying that the system of chambers of commerce is the precursor engine of the great processes of transformation of our country but not only of our country, of these eight European flags of today, but which then formalise all in the great blue flag with all these coloured stars that frame it.

Where I come from chambers of commerce have anticipated this idea, then, intelligently, the Regions have come to understand the importance, the necessity of it. We have actually created, in the European area, the Mediterranean Alps Euroregion. Today this region is recognised and has its headquarters in Brussels. In this area there are five regions, which border onto each other; they plan, carry out projects and create conditions that enable them also, intelligently I would say, to use important community resources. For the 2007-2013 seven year period there are about 3 thousand million Euros available to encourage, in some way, all the transnational, cross-border alliances, to give to projects and to encourage this type of alliance.

The Chambers of Commerce anticipating this journey, the Regions that must somehow find a way to join together to tackle these projects, the economy and politics, will give life to this great dream, to great new opportunities, making the most of what we are. Specifically, and I believe that it is by now well-established, increasing the value of that Small Business Act that Europe wants to recognise in some way: the small European enterprise. We well know that in this part of Europe, where we live, small company have created the basis of success, including economic success, of our country. They continue to carry out this function and give important answers even at difficult times, even at times when it is difficult to plan differently for the future.

I wanted to compare this small and medium-sized enterprises to crystal, because crystal is precious in its wholeness and is fragile, like a small enterprise is fragile. This really is the year of fragility for the small enterprise. But it is also the year, in which the same Europe has finally recognised its major role, a role which up until yesterday called the small enterprise fine, useful, important, but not as useful as it is recognised today. The small enterprise has the ability to oversee the country, to change when necessary, to grasp all the reasons in order to give answers on all aspects, from employment to growth, to necessity, to current economics, to the economics of our markets.

We must certainly help it and from this alliance we must also identify strengths. We all know that at the moment strengths do not just mean innovation; they mean not only being able to compete in order to compete better, but also to have sufficient resources to be able to allow business players in turn to change, to be able in some way to imagine growth processes.

Napoleon said: “without money there is no war”. Yesterday I spent a magical night in the Napoleonic Fort, so we have further reinforced the meaning of this concept. We must encourage competitiveness and help SMEs to relate to these eight communities in the Adriatic area. We must also encourage exports, not only of ideas and culture but also of goods. We must also guarantee – this is a mechanism that I wish to suggest to President Spacca – the creation of some means, which the same National Unioncamere has conceived, to insure the small entrepreneurs who cannot use the large



guarantee channels, to be able to guarantee even those operations, even small or initial ones, which together can be worthwhile and give a new perspective and new potential. For all this process, and I am proud to say it, the system of chambers of commerce is there, not only the Italian one.

There is the European system of chambers of commerce and the world one. There is no corner of our planet where, leaving aside the colours of politics and people's temperaments, there is no point of reference such as a chamber of commerce. We are an extraordinary system linking nations, potentials and giving worth to the things that we are doing, as well as providing new relationships, which can be kindled and, in some way, changed. The day before yesterday I was in Istanbul, where the Meeting of *Assocamere Estero* was convened, i.e. the meeting of all of our representatives in every corner of the world. I was there on behalf of our country. Just think about it, we have 75 embassies in every corner of the world, which are bearers of our culture, our experiences, our products, our work. These are 75 embassies, which must and will become part of a network like we are trying to form, a great, new means to enhance the value of 'made in Italy' and the value of the things that we make. This very high level machine, which forms part of a large system and which probably, up until now, was not working as well as it should, can signify for us in this new Europe that we are building new and important opportunities for our people, in particular for small businesses. This means that small businesses, thanks to a protocol that we have very recently signed with minister Urso, will have new levers, new opportunities to be followed, helped, accompanied, to give, even in terms of numbers, new responses for their own future. There is a large, strong mechanism which must emerge and is indeed emerging. Language between ourselves is still an obstacle and probably one of the limiting factors, which we still have. The new generation, more than us, will probably succeed in overcoming these obstacles which seem banal but are not; on occasions they are quite significant.

But there is this process of growth, this process of sharing, this desire to be together, this desire to exchange experiences and even the means, in order to become even more important. Our reform, dear President, I shall explain to you, perhaps in Rome, perhaps at our offices, to get you to better understand how this great national organisation can hopefully even give rise to reforms, which can take place within one's own country. Ours is a public institution; it includes in its business register overall 6.5 million businesses; we represent the whole of our economy. The Italian Chambers of Commerce represents industry, craftsmen, agriculture, tourism, commerce, the whole economic panorama of our country and this is our great strength, because we represent, in just one institution, what the Italian economy is. The Italian economy can, in some way by its action, pass on the positive elements and encourage the mechanics of competitiveness, putting together new values and new opportunities. I hope, therefore, that this day, this intelligent and appropriate Forum that you have been able to set up in this magical Ancona bears the fruit that everyone is hoping for. Entering these buildings, this *Loggia dei Mercanti*, gives one the sense of how this city was in the past, what it is today but what, I hope, it might become even more in the future, in this European future, in this Mediterranean, in this sea which once we called "*nostrum*" (ours), which must become even more ours, also within the sphere of economic relations. Let us not anticipate, let us not give others the opportunities that this Mediterranean should provide for us. It is a large area, with 500 million citizens, 500 million people, which must grow, which needs technology, goods, direction, opportunities. All of us in the Ionian-Adriatic area are ready, thanks to the Chambers of Commerce and to the strategic and important help of the Regions and of Europe, to give the responses that this area needs in order to grow. I believe that today's Forum can give rise to new stimuli, new ideas, and, I hope, new enthusiasm to proceed in this direction.



MARIO SEPI

President of the European Economic and Social Committee

"Access to credit in order to re-launch the economy"

I would like to thank you for this invitation, not only because it gives me pleasure to speak in Italian again and in Italy, but also because both the chosen subject and the institutional body that has organised this meeting seem to me to be very much in keeping with the aim and task of the European Economic and Social Committee. I see that there really is an important activity being carried out, which encourages the growth of links that will be very useful in the future, when the countries on the other side of the Adriatic join the European Union. Croatia is now one step away but the other countries, as well, will gradually join, therefore at that point these links that you have created will become important in order to carry out the necessary activities of the European Union.

The problem of globalisation has completely changed the meaning of foreign politics. The fact that you are developing this type of link, the fact that Chambers of Commerce exist throughout the world, means that foreign politics is another matter. Once upon a time there were only diplomatic and defence policies, today things are different because globalisation persuades and obliges us to find a new way of tackling these subjects. In this phase civil society becomes the protagonist. If it does not become a protagonist, the same thing will happen as happened at the G20, i.e. no solution will be found, because if diplomats and governments handle economic-social problems, then we end up in the situation in which we find ourselves now.

A few days ago I heard President Lula at a meeting of heads of state of Latin America. He was saying "we are impressive and we continue to repeat the same documents without doing anything". In my opinion this statement of impotence derives from the fact that they do not include civil society in this type of discussion. Instead you show, here, that it is possible to create an arbitration court without any problems, and that therefore, when sensitivity is our civil society sensitivity, fair solutions are found.

I don't think that everyone knows of the European Economic and Social Committee and therefore I shall tell you just three things about it.

The Committee is made up of 340 members from 27 countries and think of the effort: 22 official languages and 3 alphabets. Its work is to help other European legislative institutions and it is from the European Economic and Social Committee that the Small Business Act came about, thanks also to people who are very near you. Yesterday, speaking about it at dinner, I realised that they were the same people with whom I was talking.

I would like to emphasise just two matters which I consider to be very important regarding this problem of the relationship between small and medium-sized enterprises and globalisation, which is the most fundamental problem at the moment.

The first matter concerns the new Treaty. It seems to me that in individual countries, not only in Italy, the innovations that the Treaty of Lisbon introduced are being neglected.

The Treaty of Lisbon greatly changes the European Union. First of all it broadens its jurisdiction, because if you think that foreign policy and security policy form part of the Treaty and therefore become a Community matter, that is obvious. But not only this: the Treaty presents a series of opportunities, of openings for participating in the life of the European Union. These must not be ignored, debating whether it is more important to have a permanent President or a President on a rotating basis.

Let us leave these institutional discussions. The problem is that today, for the first time, through article 11 of the Treaty itself, a concept of participatory democracy is introduced. This is a concept that provides for the possibility beside institutional democracy, which remains the fundamental point, for civil society organisations to participate in decisions and in legislation. The corresponding article is divided into two parts: one part is concerned with the citizens' initiative, which means that if a million signatures are collected in Europe, the Commission can be invited to deal with a certain matter; the other, even more important, provides for consultation with civil society organisations. This is important because if we manage to make it work it will become an factor of great importance to us all.

Take great care that this thing does not fall down, because in all the European countries, unlike other continents, other situations, participatory democracy already exists. There are channels and places of consultation between institutions and civil societies, which work. This is now being transferred onto a European level and should attempt to reduce that democratic deficit which has been discussed for ten years in Europe, with the problems that you are all aware of. If, on the other hand, there were this participatory democracy, in my opinion citizens would feel much more involved and would probably find a little of that enthusiasm of which President Dardanella spoke earlier.

There are two other elements, which I wanted to emphasise, which only partially concern the matter of small and medium-sized enterprises. First of all, a horizontal social clause, which means that all Community legislation must be evaluated with regard to its impact in social terms, then a protocol on services of general interest, which would be public services, which requires a European standard. I believe that there is the possibility here, even as far as small and medium-sized enterprises are concerned, for them to be included in this to develop their own policy.

The second matter that I wish to speak of is the economic crisis.

I think that the analysis is fairly clear now: it is not a structural crisis of the economy, it is not a war, it is not an unexpected fall in demand, it is a problem arising from the hegemony of the financial markets on the economy in general and on society. I believe that this is now clear to all but it is difficult to see how to get out of it. This situation of

finance dominating the economy has brought enormous costs, which are not only those that the Nobel prize-winner Stiglitz is calculating, i.e. the public expenditure that has been incurred in the last few years to save the banks and financial institutions. It also concerns the resources which have been removed from the actual economy during these years and particularly concerns all that social anti-expenditure ideology, social anti-services which has happened and which we shall no longer have. In my opinion the amount countries have spent to save the banks can be calculated; what we have lost with the situation of the hegemony of finance on the economy cannot be calculated.

Turning to our problems, I believe that this situation is perverse, because in order to relaunch the economy the countries, central banks and the European Central Bank have created liquidity, so there is a huge liquidity in the world, only this liquidity does not go towards recovery or relaunching the economy, it goes to the profit of the banks, which are the only ones who are coming out of the crisis. This is a perverse situation in my opinion, because it is clear that one cannot reduce liquidity in a moment of crisis like this, so if there is no real regulation – not only the regulations in the Basel 2 agreement – we shall not have financial direction. We must find means – certainly, not the five-year programme of the Soviet Union – to direct these trillions circulating around the world and amounting to 3-4 times the world GDP towards productive aims, towards the actual economy, towards the social sector. This can also be done via means, which do not violate the free market or the freedom of enterprises.

I don't think we should have many illusions about these meetings like the G20, G8 etc. because probably nothing of importance will result from the meeting of the ministers in Vancouver. We must turn our attention to Europe and work in Europe to find a serious regulation and develop rules which are not only for the banks but are also for the large investment funds, for the unprecedented speculation which is happening now, for example, in raw materials and so on.

Chancellor Merkel has decided, for example, that uncovered purchases are no longer allowed, in Germany. This must be broadened; we shall lose something on the Stock Exchange for a few weeks, but it would really clarify the situation and would reduce this strength of world finance.

Then we must return to a different banking system. You know that there is a big debate at the moment about the big banks, which cannot be allowed to fail and therefore have a certain freedom of movement, but I think that we must return to the old banks, to local banks, to banks which know the area and can relate to businesses.

It is no coincidence that in Italy the crisis of the small and medium enterprises is much less serious than in other countries, because a solidarity has been created in the territory, what I call the "social capital" that has resisted this type of crisis. I think that this should be an objective that we can suggest and which will bring finance back to its role of sustaining the economy, rather than independently developing products that only serve to increase their own profits.

Up to a year ago, there was a prevalent ideology concerning the fact that the real problem of companies was not to produce, but to increase the value of their shares. I believe this ideology was mistaken and, in my opinion, to be condemned ethically. This is why I want to hold this discussion, because there is also a problem for European institutions and I will explain it clearly to you: we receive input through statistics or through what comes from Brussels. What comes from Brussels is always very filtered, not very clear, there is more than the abstract nature of numbers or the abstract nature of theories. On the other hand, Europe must listen more and more to the people to really understand the problems and study them in depth. This is one of the reasons why I have come here and why I have launched, with my President, this strategy of "go in local", that is to go and speak to the people on field, because it is there that the problems are really understood, and it is important that we continue like this. I would like to end with two observations. The first is that it seems to me that the association, the movement you have created, which has been working for ten years and is becoming ever more of an institution, is already a success, therefore I hope you will continue for another ten years, perhaps in the European Union.

I will end by responding to President Giampieri, when he said that the mind is like a parachute, that is, if it does not open it is useless. I say that not only is it useless but it is dangerous as well: we are seeing something of this. Thank you.



MASSIMO BIANCONI

President of the Marche Regional Committee of the Italian Banking Association ABI

Speaking as the President of the Marche regional section of the Italian Banking Association ABI, a full member of the Chamber of Commerce and of the Chambers of Commerce, restrains me more than if I spoke as general manager of the bank, a leading one in the Marche area, or if I spoke on behalf of my friends who represent the cooperative credit banks, which have had an important role in this region.

It is not controversy, it is a statement.

So I shall explain a few numbers, to let you know what has already been done, what is being done and what can be done by the system. I shall also explain how we can also collaborate to increase cross-border dynamics in this macro-region, in which I think it would be very interesting to set up and where it is necessary to create ever closer and tighter links also between the banks that operate this side and the other side of our sea. Even here I have some difficulty, because there are, for example, banks which have done a lot in our region and very large banks which operate with their operating and distribution structures, both in the Marche region and the other side of the Adriatic.

But a reply to President Sepi: I believe that generalising, in financial matters, is a mistake; all of us have experienced this, even if finance does not mean just banks. He also said: from the moment that the stakes increase, with derivatives, we have seen that the economic area of Europe, which is currently the strongest or one of the strongest in the world, at least looking at the past, is attacked by speculation and by financial levers, which come about through all those instruments that we still criticise today but which, I agree with President Sepi, if they are not overcome, will not allow us to leave this situation behind us. Yesterday I was speaking with an entrepreneur from around here, a leader in the charter of boats and navigation, who was telling me that even here there are people who take boats and keep them whilst waiting for charter fees to rise, so even that is another form of speculation.

I would, however, like to explain that the Italian banking system, sometimes reproached in the past for not being avant-garde, has shown that instead it was in step with the times of having a healthy economy. It is an economy, which helps enterprises and creates employment and wealth for the families and the people who live in a region, in a country. I believe that this is what we must deliver today. No-one in Italy, except for a bank, has needed to resort to Tremonti bonds. A little controversy: the banks, which were listed on the stock exchange, were not the beneficiaries of the Tremonti bonds, so even here there should be something to say on the fact that, clearly, it could have been distributed more equitably. However all the Italian banks have found a solution within themselves; it did not cost the Italian state anything to intervene in a crisis situation of such great proportions. But I don't want to go any further with these introductions, because it seems to me that time is short, and I would like to give some data, which will suffice to give the idea of credit trends with businesses in Italy and the Marche region.

You can see from the slide that the top part in two colours, red and blue, represents the Marche region and Italy. The supply of credit to businesses in these years, from December 2008 to January 2010, fell. The growths, which started from 6.2 and 5.99, the same in both Italy and in the Marche, took a direction whereby the Italian figure was to have a lesser credit supply, hence there was a drop of 2.85, whilst in the Marche region it was 0.95. This shake-up in the data would show that probably the capacity of credit for the small and very small enterprise or enterprise in general, comes from medium-sized local banks and from the small and very smallest banks.

Below you can see the trend of the GDP, which has registered falls of 6.50, 6.10 and 4.70, because when the amount of available credit falls and it is clear that if industrial production falls, banks cannot just give money for the sake of it.

Going forward we see the trend of bank overdues in this period, which unfortunately is the sign of a suffering economy and of a business with problems and difficulties. You see that unfortunately the Marche region, for a reason that is also quite clear as it is a region with a large number of small and very small enterprises, has more difficulty in competing in a world market and this weighs heavily on us all, because it is clear that if a bank has overdues from enterprises, it must find the resources to manage this within itself. Therefore you see that the data has a certain significance.

In as far as financing production companies goes, unfortunately even here we have Italian data showing us see how the manufacturing industry has had the greatest downward trend for reasons that we all know. Construction has been slightly down, services have maintained their level.

Going to the Marche region, you can see that the region has perhaps a more marked problem in a certain period, but I believe that our entrepreneurial structure and the ability and courage of our entrepreneurs have been set in motion and it seems to me that, even if it is hard work, there is a certain drive towards recovery.

As far as leasing is concerned, in particular in the Marche region, leasing has continued to increase and I am proud to emphasise, as general manager of the only leasing company in the area, that mine has been the company, which has helped most to ensure that there is no shortage of leasing contracts. Leasing, obviously, just supports companies in their industrial investment, so I believe that this is a particularly valuable element in times of crisis when there is a need to rethink the way of running a business.

The main evidence about which we have read shows that both in Italy and in the Marche region the number of jobs continued to increase, even though at a slower rate, until November 2009. Since then numbers have gradually reduced. The Marche region has a better trend, as it seems to me that local industry, even though it has had a worse trend in respect to the rest of Italy, has had perfectly adequate help.

What are we doing, as a banking system in general, to co-ordinate our banking systems, the banking systems of all these regions, of all these countries, to be able to start to collaborate and make ourselves available to our Italians who go to other countries which face onto our sea and, vice versa, for those of other countries who come to Italy?

In Italy last year there was a notice on the suspension of debts of small and medium-sized industry and, in March 2010, 9.5 billion were cancelled vis-à-vis 128,000 applications. Therefore you can understand the effort not only in terms of liquidity but also in terms of equity, which the banks have had to make in this period.

An agreement between *ABI* and *Cassa depositi e prestiti* (i.e. the Italian Bank for Deposits and Loans) has been operational since May 2009. Its aim is to supply up to a maximum of 8 billion to banks, for distributing finance to the small and medium-sized industry, by instalments, on particularly good terms, both for investment and for working capital. A guarantee fund for small and medium-sized enterprises has been established. It is an instrument facilitating access to credit for these companies and it was financed with two billion Euros. This fund gives guarantees; therefore there is a guarantee direct to the banks, which removes the absorption of equity for the banks.

Here we digress briefly. It has been noted by everyone how the banks have been hit not only by the crisis but also by the regulations already in force as well as by those of the future. Basel II imposes on the banks equity elements so that for each lira lent it establishes how many cents each bank must have of its own capital. This creates problems of which we have spoken many times. But what worries us greatly is Basel III or rather regulations like that of the MiFID, i.e. another European regulation that no-one mentions and which could greatly affect the future of relationships between bank and enterprise and the availability of funds for businesses. Basel III imposes dramatic restrictions requiring the holding of even more equity than in the past; banks must therefore hold high levels of liquidity in order to be able to lend. But even more worrying is the MiFID regulation, which I hope will be revised following an adequate discussion, since it will also affect products sold by banks, so if banks sell their own bonds, for example, they cannot do so above a certain level because this would mean selling a concentrated product to their own clients. You probably know that if we issue bonds, we do so to obtain liquidity, which we can then circulate to businesses. If instead of issuing these bonds, which perhaps will also concentrate a client's investment but in a fairly transparent manner, we buy securities or bonds from other countries which have problems, I believe this will put depositors' investments in much greater danger and will also further endanger the ability of banks to give credit. These are subjects of which one speaks little but I hope that they can be brought to the attention of everyone.

The agreement between ABI and SACE. This agreement was finalised to supply a guarantee of up to 50% on bank loans for businesses which are owed money from the public administration, so even this is another important element because it allows the banks to factor these loans at zero, since they do not have to have capital as there is a guarantee from SACE.

An agreement protocol between ABI – Ministry for Economic Development – Italian Industrialists' Association Confindustria – the Conference of the Chancellors of Italian Universities CRUI. The agreement protocol tries to outline a method for defining an economic assessment of patents. This is very interesting because we are starting to think in a different world, i.e. in a world in which one does not need to invest only in sheds, machinery or things which can be materially identified, but rather in the whole phase of intangible things in which we must compare notes, ourselves the banks, learning to assess them, with the entrepreneurs, learning to cause them to emerge appropriately. So the subject of patents. Earlier Drudi recalled that there is a delegation, which will leave the day after tomorrow to go to China. As Banca Marche we have made an amount of money available, so that we will contribute to the expenses up to 30,000 Euros, accepting not only expenses with reference to the stand but also travel expenses. A further 30,000 Euros also for anyone they invite to Italy. Therefore, if they invite a Chinese person to come to their own company, that person can be accommodated by the company which will be able to get finance. I hope that colleagues from other banks, as always, will consider this innovation in a positive way. This is another important element.

Then there is a national innovation fund, for which there is a ceiling of 60 million Euros specifically for the economic use of patents.

The special project of the Lisbon Strategy is to increase businesses' awareness of what is available from the European Economic Union, so as to enable everyone to be able to access various information that can make businesses grow through being aware of opportunities which are available to them, both from the European Community and from other bodies and institutions

Then we have innovation contracts; these are also very important. Two billion is available to enable 30,000 researchers to work and resolve technological challenges of the near future and I believe it is important today, for businesses, to intervene not only in those traditional elements of innovation. We all know that today business production lines work at 50-60% and that is certainly not necessary. What is necessary is to find new ways of running the business, new patents, new products, new marketing methods.

Local initiatives, by local I mean in the Marche region, since I am the President of ABI Marche and not of other ABI sections in other regions, are aware of a very important and significant project between Confindustria, banks and universities. We have identified four areas of intervention, which are: research and development, internationalisation, generational transfer, grouping of enterprises and dimensional growth. This gives an idea of how we are trying to work as a system, how we are trying to all intervene together, putting ourselves all in the same boat, both the companies, in this case Confindustria (but it could also be extended to others, even to the small and medium-sized enterprises), our centres of knowledge and culture which are the universities and the banks. Therefore to intervene is to come to an understanding of how to manage these problems which are central to the future of our businesses.



Confindustria Marche, all the universities in the region, Banca Marche, Banca Popolare di Ancona, CariFermo and the cooperative credit banks have all participated.

Here we will identify what we can do for each of the four projects. Not in detail because they are quite intuitive. I believe that this will give rise to quite practical solutions to be able to intervene with bank products rather than with collaborations, funds, and on the other side the universities will be able to collaborate.

The great problem of our small and very small enterprise is that of working as a system, or network. There are these matters which are difficult for small and very small companies to manage, like innovation, finding new markets, representation, research and development.

Here I wanted to give the idea, as we are always saying, but it seems that as well as repeating it we are practising it, that we must all take part, as players, in strengthening our desire to be part of a process which will intervene in a crisis which is of this time and is very structural. So the banks must: avoid credit crunch; strengthen the partnership with the Credit Guarantee Consortia *Confidi*, which is a central point of our action and has played a large role in the past, in the present and will do so in the future; pay more attention to the cost of credit, to guarantees, to risk profile (but this we must do with someone else); inspire confidence in the system and not spread mistrust. Businesses must increase their level of capitalisation: we have said this many times but unfortunately we have never practised it. Then, communicate with full transparency and safety with their partners, because I believe that the time is past for having little transparency; invest in research, in new markets, in products; maintain the protection of costs and risks; assess a possible need to change the company organisation, with the possibility of mergers, combining rather than investing in research and development.

Credit Guarantee Consortia *Confidi* and professional associations. I must say with great pride that in the Marche region now there are three Credit Guarantee Consortia, out of 24 in Italy, which are authorised in accordance with regulation 107. I believe therefore that the Marche associations once again have shown great ability: to be a Credit Guarantee Consortia compliant with regulation 107 means to be a Credit Guarantee Consortia that saves the banks a very large amount of equity. This could allow the banks to give even more credit and to charge less for it. I hope that other Credit Guarantee Consortia operating in our region will soon adapt and organise themselves.

The Credit Guarantee Consortia associations must supply high added value services, spreading awareness of activities carried out; accompany enterprises in generational changes together with banks, with dedicated counters. Earlier I showed a slide that I can make available to you so you can understand what is happening in that sector. Then it is important to encourage processes of grouping, of innovation and of infrastructuring.

The State and public administration. The Marche region, I must say, is strongly present. The institutions of the Marche region and the Provinces have given strong support at this difficult time. I hope that they will continue to do so in the near future.

It is time to prepare, without delay, steps to encourage work and businesses; use of Community financial resources; efficiency of public expenditure; prompt payment of the credits which businesses boast about and here I emphasise that this is one of the sores of our country, a payment system which is too confused, almost shamefully so, because sometimes enterprises go into crisis, not because things are going badly but because they cannot manage to collect their credits.

I believe that we should all make an effort. There do not appear to me to be any recriminations between the groups, it seems to me that the Chambers of Commerce in particular have made a great effort, we all need to collaborate, be available and open (like a parachute), but you have seen too that with a parachute you must pay attention, because if what is above you falls against you without opening, your parachute is useless. Thank you



MICOL MARTINELLI

Director of International Affairs at the Eurochambres European network

The Eurochambres association was formed in the '90s with the specific mandate to fill the gap of a not having a representation of chambers of commerce in Brussels. Over a period of time it has taken on more in-depth work, in planning, in design management, with a view to other countries joining the European Union. We cover practically all the European territory and more. Within our group there are also future members and our friends from neighbouring countries. Within the framework of the neighbourhood policy we have 46 members, with 45 national associations and one transnational association. We represent more than 2.000 chambers of commerce, both national and economic, at a regional and national level; we therefore cover 90 million entrepreneurs, most of whom are subject to taxation and also to legislation set by Europe. In this respect we represent all interested parties, in both economic and industrial sectors, in particular those who are in the European Union. We want to develop the plans of the European economic chambers with regards to various sectors.

As I said previously, the focus of this presentation must really be on innovation, which is the subject theme of the afternoon session. Allow me to point out the three most important contracts. The first one is the 2020 European Union strategy, which identifies innovation as one of its most important principles. We could have a sustainable economy in Europe. The other is the manifesto of the European Chambers of Commerce and Industry, which was signed between our members a few months ago. The manifesto stated explicitly that innovation must be one of the important and fundamental elements of European economic policy. Finally, the global European context, in which it was stated that the European Union must support European factors and must also involve those markets that are less well-developed.

With regards to the position of the European Chambers, Eurochambres, after consultation with its own member chambers, has decided to concentrate particularly on innovation. I am telling you what our position and our status on this aspect are, on the basis of all these policies which have been suggested to us. Above all, we must focus particularly on the challenges and also on cross-border cooperation. Each innovation policy in Europe must have added value. In addition we must concentrate not only on research and innovation, but also on services of innovation, design, innovative marketing and on many other aspects. This means that innovation must have a content that is more understandable and we must have better combinations of plans, between regional, local, national and European programmes, because it often happens that both regional and local authorities are managing different programmes, different aspects of planning without the necessary awareness by the national comparator organisations. There must be a simplification of the European plans on the aspect of innovation and this is fundamental.

The entrepreneurs consider that all information referring to innovation, plans, research, should be collected and then disseminated, distributed through the Chambers' networks, or else through the main authorities representing entrepreneurs in Europe.

Finally, a monitoring centre for innovation has already been set up. This means that the monitoring centre must, in some way, identify all the innovative strategies in Europe to obtain co-ordinated action and distribute models amongst the Member States of the European Union. After consultation with our member chambers we fear that there are still some obstacles stifling the innovative potential in Europe. In particular the first obstacle for SMEs is that an integrated, uniform market does not exist, in particular in the services sector and in the capital market sector. In addition, there are still different international property systems in the Member States. There is still limited access to finance, or rather to State incentives.

Expenditure in research is still too little. As a matter of fact, not enough money is invested in research in the Member States. Finally, there is still a widespread attitude towards red-tape and a widespread opinion that bureaucracy is too heavy and that the administrative procedures are very slow and do not manage to sort out everything.

This was a picture that I wanted to share with you, to be able to show all that we are doing. In fact, we need to lobby, so that our institutions can become more 'present'. To this end, next month we shall organise an event at the European Parliament which is called Entrepreneurship, which is an important liaison within the European context. With this we want to see steps taken to optimise the position of entrepreneurs.

You can find an invitation to this event in your folders.

Given that at the beginning I said that innovation is always present in the European global strategy, this is the real reason why we have decided to make it into a main factor, specifically in this sector in Europe: to be the first main centre, that the European Union has supported, in the Indian market. India was namely chosen as the first country for this experiment and to carry out this test, specifically because it is one of the economies that is strongly developing and increasing at a very fast rate. It has more than a thousand million inhabitants, a population with great potential for exporting or importing European technology into their market.

In fact, technology needs to be promoted in India, in particular in four sectors: transport, energy, protection of the environment and biotechnology. A registered office has already been set up in New Delhi, as well as three regional offices. Anyone can come there, knock at the door, ask for any information regarding business in India.



Accordingly, specific sectors have also been organised, so-called missions, delegations; various events have been organised to transfer European experience for example to India, which, up until now maybe seemed to be a rather distant market that overlooked or not well accepted because of the cultural diversity. The reason we are in India is to help European factors enter the Indian market. This is our aim. Thank you.



SANDRO PETTINATO

Vice Secretary-General of the Union of Italian Chambers of Commerce *Unioncamere*

To begin with, thank you to President Radovanić and President Giampieri for the invitation, an invitation which the Chambers of Commerce have always welcomed, practically from the start, with great enthusiasm, because, as President Dardanella said, the closeness of our systems, of the Regions, of the Chambers of Commerce, of the Italian local bodies and of the Eastern part of the Adriatic is a blueprint that must definitely be shared and encouraged even more.

Before joining this morning's discussion I wondered what it is that really unites our countries, what the elements are, which in fact bring realities like the eight countries on the other side of the Adriatic close to Italy. Because it is not history, not language, not currency but there is something which, in my opinion, has not yet emerged clearly, which makes this reality into a really strong community: the small enterprise.

I remember a few years ago when President Radovanić explained the reasoning in business terms. We have business systems, which are very similar because they are characterised by a great inventiveness, by a great desire to specialise in one's own business interests. The idea, in some ways, is of a spirit of sacrifice to fight against a thousand problems. A short while ago Mr Bianconi quoted some, appropriately: bureaucracy and so forth, but with a great enthusiasm which our enterprises have, from both this side and the other. The word enthusiasm comes from *ente-os*, which means "in God".

In reality we often have a God, who is oftentimes not very common – but that's another story. There is a great enthusiasm uniting us and we have the same problems, the same failings: our enterprises are small or micro-firms; be careful when speaking of medium-sized enterprises, because in Italy there are 4,300 of them out of 6 million. We have a system of enterprises, which are undercapitalised. An enterprise does not resort to finance because it is small, it does not want external people within the management and our enterprise consists of one man who does everything, with a few employees.

These are the characteristics of our enterprises.

I was wondering: how can these economic systems find common points of connection?

To begin with, one point of connection is the enterprise itself, because an enterprise means, in the end, people. In this large Adriatic area, the enterprise means the family, it means the people, it means the consumers and the citizens, it means the people. Let us then identify the areas, in which we can try to increase, through common interests, this community made up of millions of people.

In my very short speech I am going to suggest to you three specific lines of intervention. It is a piece of work to be done together, with all the players.

The first concerns commercial and economic relationships between us. One important point is certainly to encourage countries, which are not yet in the European Union, to join it with all those regulations that must be clearly put in place, but which also encourage lasting commercial trade. I do not believe in a two day business mission, where products are sold – short business visits are certainly useful but then someone else arrives offering a lower price than yours or with a better quality and outdoes you.

Instead, I believe in lasting economic relationships.

The suggestion that I want to make is to find a method, through which systems of encouraging investment in our countries, dedicated to the small enterprise to help it find the way to make commercial trade links more lasting – large companies do this by themselves, as medium-sized enterprises also do, more or less. But how? By encouraging commercial agreements between enterprises, encouraging the system of networks, districts, sectors. I don't know what the best slogan is, but there is certainly a complementarity between Italian players and players from other parts of the Adriatic Sea, in which we can come together not only for trade but possibly also to create businesses together, because it might be the case that an Italian enterprise produces one part of the product, then its friend in Serbia or Croatia produces another part and the market, perhaps the Russian one, is the market outlet for both. It is not very easy.

A second proposal concerns commercial policies. I have not found in Italy, nor do I believe that they exist in other foreign countries either, financial systems, which facilitate and guarantee someone who wants to invest abroad. Earlier we were speaking of Credit Guarantee Consortia and Mr Bianconi appropriately also cited the work of the Credit Guarantee Consortia and their rationalisation. Why don't we try to identify in the Marche region or other areas a line of activity between banks, Credit Guarantee Consortia, Chambers of Commerce (which are, moreover, the largest financiers of the Credit Guarantee Consortia) dedicated to standing surety for anyone who puts money into operating abroad on a lasting basis?

I can assure you that out of 800 Credit Guarantee Consortia in Italy there is not one with a line dedicated to backing exporting enterprises. Particularly at the moment when the entrepreneur has some difficulty in risking his own capital and his own personal resources, because the market is not at its height, trying to identify a line that guarantees the small enterprise wishing to put money into a commercial operation with a foreign enterprise could be a lasting and logical intervention.

The other aspect, on the other hand, concerns quality. Globalisation has decidedly changed the quantities of products from Europe, including the eastern Adriatic area, to Eastern markets. We will never be able to compete with markets like India or China and we can never aim for the quantity, or the price, that is clear. The only solution is to aim for innovation and quality, because it is here, perhaps, that Italian systems and Eastern Adriatic systems can compete



significantly. But to produce quality, innovation is necessary and to make innovations, interventions aimed at training operators are needed.

The other day we reached an agreement with the Ministry of University and Scientific Research for students in secondary schools, therefore children of 16, 17, 18 years old, to be trained to, one day, follow enterprises in the policy of internationalisation, to introduce, already at 16 years old, innovation as a determining concept for the growth, including professional, of our students. This work is producing results, because it has been developed over eight years and many of these trained people have since become, I will not say inventors, however producers of innovative instruments that have found their position in the market. If we don't start with innovation at the beginning of the adult life of our new entrepreneurs, afterwards it is too late.

The same applies to forms of representation of the enterprise abroad. A small enterprise cannot afford a specific consultant for its business, who will accompany him abroad, freelance business people are necessary, from small enterprises, not competitors obviously, who can be consultants to go abroad, knowing the markets.

These are the measures that the Chambers have put in place over the last few years. I think it is time to say it, because a little while ago President Dardanella made a speech, which was more political. He did not say it openly, but over the last eight months Chambers of Commerce have put in place three very important measures.

One concerns the implementation of neighbourhood programmes in the Adriatic, i.e. the IPA programme, in which we have involved more than 25 Chambers of Commerce out of the 30 involved in the Adriatic area. The Ancona Chamber of Commerce has been an important witness, with two important projects, like Adrion and Itac. The proximity mechanism based on friendly links with the Chambers of Commerce in other countries has undoubtedly worked. Unioncamere will continue with this work also with the other programme concerning the Mediterranean. This is the ENPI which has all the difficulties that these programmes have, because they are confused, long, bureaucratic but in the end they bring results, particularly for countries on the foreign shore. This is an action that we will continue to carry out.

The second important aspect is without doubt an innovation. The day before yesterday there was news that the Ministry of Economic Development, in this time of large financial cuts in Italian finance and the public budget, has restored 2 million Euros dedicated to countries in the Balkan area in this case and has released these resources, so that the Italian Chambers of Commerce with seven countries in the Balkan area can carry out projects of common interest over the next 22 months. Our Chambers know about it, and I hope that the Chambers in other countries have also already had appropriate contact with our system. Within the space of a few months, from September onwards, about fifteen specific projects will begin, on innovation, quality, infrastructure, partnership programmes, commercial trade relationships through B2B meetings with these countries.

They are public resources, to which the Chambers of Commerce will add the same amount of resources from the enterprises. I have said this because the money is not from the Chambers of Commerce, but from the enterprises, specifically for these projects.

Like the one on the Mediterranean, a broader Mediterranean, one which goes from Croatia to Morocco. It is an important programme which the Chambers of Commerce have launched and which, in the next few months, will see more than one and a half million Euros spent on to encourage incoming actions on these countries.

The last aspect is that of rationalisation. Every week the system of chambers of commerce, in agreement with the economic categories, creates more than ten entrepreneurial initiatives in the Balkan or Mediterranean area. That is a lot, but it could be almost a waste, in some ways, since the aim is also to rationalise them. But here is the most important aspect that I believe will be highlighted: information. I believe that there is not enough exchange of information, or there is not the means, perhaps there is a little jealousy regarding communication and letting your neighbour know what you are doing. Our country is characterised by too much parish loyalty – it is the country in which whoever has the most powerful parish wins. On the other hand, we must work together in order to work better. It is possible – the Chambers have been doing it for two years – to do less or follow the same activities, but to do them better, with more companies, more partners, fewer resources and to do it whilst paying attention to the aim of neighbourhood, with an aggressive commercial policy but with a logic of sharing interests.

The final aspect is that of institutional networks and here I am putting forward a suggestion that the Ancona Chamber of Commerce has already put into action with the International Arbitration Court, moreover an instrument which is a feather in the Chamber's cap. The Italian Chambers are skilful in institutional networks. We have a business register, which more than twenty European countries envy. Perhaps they do not yet know the other winds of a widened Europe well, but our business register is a tool that is really a feather in our cap, thanks also to an Italian regulation, which makes it compulsory to register – Italy is one of the few countries providing for this obligation.

Holland adopts a similar system to ours. It allows anyone to find out immediately how many enterprises there are today in our country, how many there are in the province of Ancona, who is their administrator, which sector it is in, what type of activity it follows, its balance sheet in optic format. No other country has this great means of knowledge, which is an instrument of knowledge, not certainly of development, but it is preliminary to all the rest.

We believe that on this aspect, where we have already worked together with the other countries of the Forum, it is perhaps worthwhile also developing common actions, on condition that national regulations allow it, because a common regulation base is obviously needed.

You will think it is strange, but the day before yesterday Iraq requested to start up a common project with the Italian Chambers and we are assessing this action, because it is not very easy ground, especially when it comes to the training of government officials on the business register.



The other aspect is the system of conciliation and arbitration. Italy is in the avant-garde in this sense. Before resorting to the ordinary court, recent Italian legislation lays down that voluntary proceedings of conciliation and arbitration should be started. We believe that if there is to be a common, future, imminent market between our countries and the countries on the Eastern shore, there must be clearly a system of regulations, both before trading and afterwards in the event of disputes. And we hope there will be such a system, because if there are disputes this means that there is also a working market, but one which must be well-regulated, a common, joint and homogenous model providing norms also on the settlement of disputes. Some good work has already been done on this with our friends on the Eastern Adriatic and we believe that it is worth developing it and placing more emphasis on this.

These are five or six proposals that I wanted to bring to the meeting, because in the end tools like the Forum, which are instruments made *ad-hoc* for enterprises and the people, must also somehow find a strong connotation even with operations. It seemed to me to be an initiative to suggest and to carry out over the next ten or twenty or hundred years of the Adriatic-Ionian Forum. Thank you.

ANTONIO TENCATI

Professor of Milan Bocconi University

Thank you to the Forum for the invitation, thank you to the Chamber of Commerce. It is an honour to be here for this important edition, the tenth, therefore ten years of activity and work. I believe it to be very significant that this meeting is dedicated to small and medium-sized enterprises, innovation, supporting competitiveness.

But I have been asked to make some remarks on the basic environmental themes linked to innovation, to then analyse them in a systematic way with the aim of acquiring a wide view on the concept of sustainability.

I think it is interesting to identify how the ecological variable, according to the sectors and markets, can contribute to the creation of value, can support the ability of an enterprise to develop, and therefore contribute to the development of the local community. Therefore, according to the various sectors and markets, the ecological variable can be the condition to remain in the market, a barrier to entry, a factor in the rapid obsolescence of processes and products, a lever for the reduction of costs, an element of differentiation, an important variable in the choice of investment, a crucial, important opportunity for the creation of new businesses, a basic factor for the creation and consolidation of relationships of trust and a driver for the development of system innovations.

I would like to briefly analyse these diverse characteristics of the ecological variable in order to effectively clarify how this factor can contribute to the success of enterprises and can support innovative dynamics.

With reference to the concept of the ecological variable as a condition for remaining in the market/barrier to entry, I would like to give an example relating to the management of waste. 1991, The Topfer Decree, in Germany – extensive responsibility with regard to the management of packaging and packaging waste – introduction of the “green dot”. As you see, now a consolidated association at European level, there are various countries which use the green dot to identify enterprises which follow policies of adequate waste management, in fact behind this system there is no single method of waste management but in each case the enterprises, to be able to enter the market, must adopt this green dot. Thus in Germany, sooner or later, specifically because of the German example, with the 1994 European Directive on waste management and subsequent interventions at a national level, the topic of extensive responsibility of the producer becomes a constant with regard to the policies of waste management nationally. Therefore, to be able to enter the market, wherever the green dot has been adopted, you must take part in a system for the collection and management and salvage of waste. Thus the environmental variable becomes an unavoidable condition to enter or remain in the market.

It is also evident, however, that the introduction of a system of this type has led to measures and interventions of redesign, for example of packaging and therefore of robust innovative interventions, with significant cost reductions through control over packaging, and therefore a reduction in materials.

The environmental variable can also be a factor in the obsolescence of products. Thus technologies, even right in the middle of their life cycle, absolutely effective and efficient from a production point of view, can, in a very short time, be excluded from the market. An important example of this point of view is that of chlorofluorocarbons. Thanks to the Montreal Protocol we have begun a progressive phasing out; we have witnessed a reduction in the concentration of chlorine in the troposphere since 1994, with the introduction of subsequent substitutes. However this has meant the removal from the market of a completely reliable technology. We can identify various examples of this type: asbestos, leaded petrol, persistent organic pollutants.

In fact the interesting and important aspect is to understand the possible future trends as regards this particular analysis of the environmental variable.

Which might be the next products or processes which reveal themselves to be unsuitable from an ecological perspective and which will therefore force enterprises to quickly identify substitutes? And then, looking at some current dynamics, I think for example of traditional endothermic engines and as you can see there are various technologies currently in competition on the developing market; we also think, for example, of the disputes and survival for some enterprises, with regards to PVC production. With reference to waste management, we think again of the whole subject of dumps. We must, however, think about the fact that the production of waste which will end up on the dump is substantially residual or is anyway intended to be greatly reduced over time.

Another absolutely crucial and important element is the interpretation of the ecological variable as a lever for the reduction of costs. I believe that this point deserves special attention, because in many cases one thinks about the possibility of seeing the environmental variable as a driver for innovation or new business opportunities, but only long-term. In fact, through a careful management of processes and activities, a significant result can be achieved in a short time, for example, connected with the reduction and control of production costs, we think particularly of the problem of the management of waste.

An example that I wanted to tell you about here is that of the programme introduced in 1975 by 3M, ‘Pollution Prevention Pays’, which allowed total savings of more than 1.2 thousand million dollars. There were also many small interventions of redesign and efficiency. On the other hand, the environmental variable can also be an element of differentiation and can therefore allow a position to be taken which leans towards sustainability in the markets through a redefinition of the value proposition orientated specifically towards the environmental variable.

Here I wanted to give the example of Wal-Mart, not only because it is a global leader in large-scale distribution – consider that in the 2010 tax year which for Wal-Mart ended in January 2010, it had a total turnover of more than 400

thousand million dollars – always identified as the “bad boy” with regard to its management of sustainability, particularly in relation to corporate management, trade union relationships – the major strength of Wal-Mart is the reduction and control of production costs so that it can offer low price products on the market – then in 2005 it introduced a challenging programme, absolutely of reference, regarding sustainability policies and in fact last year, in the second part of 2009, it asked all its top level suppliers, more than 100,000 suppliers, to supply information with regard to the management of production methods of various goods and services supplied to Wal-Mart. This is in view of the introduction of an index of sustainability for all products, which will arrive on the shelves in Wal-Mart sales outlets. I think you can realise what this means for the supply chains, therefore, in particular, for small and medium enterprises at a global level, considering also that the policy of the sector leader will undoubtedly influence the other players in the market.

This element of differentiation can also be very valid with regard to public administration in the area, the town halls, the town councils, and here I will give you the example of Cittaslow: over 130 towns with under 50,000 inhabitants in more than 19 countries – between 2009 and 2010 the United States were also added, showing a different cultural climate. Cittaslow is based specifically on an offer at a territorial level, based on sustainability, on increasing the value of traditions, on increasing the value of its strengths at a territorial system level and, for example, this observation also concerns the promotion of production methods and alternative energy methods. For example, in connection with Cittaslow there is a network for promoting the use of hydrogen as a sustainable form of energy, particularly through a green chain.

Another case of the utmost importance to all our enterprises is that of the ecolabel, particularly thinking of the latest revision: the idea, therefore, is to promote products and services with a high environmental compatibility and sustainability profile.

But more generally it becomes important to consider the ecological variable as crucial and fundamental in the choice of investment, because ecological implications cannot be ignored if one wants to be able to correctly assess the advantage of an investment. As a further observation, just consider that a correct quantification of the costs linked to environmental management can even, in some sectors, be around 18% of the operating costs. It is therefore clear that not considering these items means not having full knowledge of the cost profile of a choice of investment and neither therefore of the risk profile. This is why, for example, the whole subject of hidden environmental liabilities becomes fundamental in order to be able to make an accurate assessment during mergers and acquisitions. This subject also becomes fundamental in order to assess, for example, the sustainability of various energy chains. This is why I have allowed myself to make reference to observations concerning the nuclear cycle. The environmental variable is also a basic driver for the promotion of new businesses, in connection, on the one hand, to the evolution of regulations, on the other hand, to the maturing of new collective needs. We have already referred to the industry of waste management, to the recycling and salvage industry, to the whole topic of water treatment, to the discussion of environmental certification, reclamation and consultancy, development of renewable energy.

From this point of view, a very significant example is the company Ecomagination, promoted by General Electric. Even here, since 2005 and in a few years the company's total turnover linked specifically to highly sustainable productions, e.g. engines with a low environmental impact, turbines, water purification systems, filtering and so on, has reached around 10% of the total turnover of GE. Thus, with regard to the final 2008 evaluation, this is around 17 billion dollars out of 183 billion dollar total turnover. The sector of environmental management, or more generally of sustainability management, therefore shows very strong improvement dynamics and plenty of room for the creation of new businesses or for redefining its own business in a sustainable manner.

From this point of view, another very interesting example with reference to the development and effort put in regarding hydrogen cars, is Chrysler. There are two other examples offered by two competing players, i.e. Honda on the one side, which has already launched particularly in California a hydrogen model that is not sold but leased to customers, and the third generation of Toyota Prius. This has shown how, by working on completely innovative solutions that are considered as insignificant by the major players in the sector, one can attain a position of leadership in the market.

There is finally an absolutely fundamental and significant aspect. Let us consider what has been happening to BP these last few weeks: the ecological variable is a fundamental element in building relationships of trust with the various publics of reference. The lack of careful assessment of the implications of the environmental variable on the management of the enterprise and on its links with different stakeholders can lead to risky situations or even to crises, which are disastrous for the lasting development of the enterprise.

From this point of view the example made is typically that of the “NIMBY syndrome” — not in my backyard — but we must also consider the causes at the origin of this situation, which for example led two sectors crucial to the development of our country into conditions of extreme difficulty. These sectors are energy and waste management; the basic reason for one was inadequate communication and for the other inadequate involvement of the territory. Here again the environmental variable becomes fundamental in order to combine approval, quality of choices of investment and quality of life at a territorial level.

Decommissioning and reclamation and the whole subject in relation to environmental accidents. It is ever more emphasised, during the morning too, that the success of enterprises is linked to intangible resources and from this point of view its reputation and trust become an essential element. If we think of the network connections at the origin of the



success of small and medium-sized enterprises, i.e. the business capital that constitutes the founding element of communities, we see how these subjects are absolutely essential for looking after the development of the territory.

Another example from this point of view is the progress made by Nike for about fifteen years on social and sustainable themes. Here again we are dealing with a player who in the middle of the 1990's was identified as the "bad boy" and who completely changed its approach and became a leader in the sector of clothing, sportswear specifically because of the pressure of the various publics of reference. Nike's new corporate responsibility report has only just been published, but the interesting part is really the analysis of the concept of social responsibility. According to Nike it is not an add-on part, but it is the sustainable enterprise thanks to innovations made. So once again the environmental themes of social responsibility are strategic factors at the origin of the success of the enterprise and this has obviously a fundamental impact on the chain and therefore on the role of small and medium-sized enterprises. Finally, this is a general summary assessment regarding all the observations that we have previously made. It ought to be clear from now on that sustainability can no longer be tackled as a separate intervention, it requires innovative efforts to be made at a territorial level and this is also an assessment on the basis of political choices. I am thinking of the new "Europe 2020" strategy, led by the European Commission at European level. Traditional interventions of command and control, traditional policy interventions are no longer sufficient to deal with the challenges of sustainability. Public bodies, enterprises and civil society must work together.

Collaborative networks must be constructed in order to achieve system-based collaboration, which therefore involves the various players, in order to achieve positive solutions or win-win-win solutions, that is they are winners from economic, social and environmental points of view. Just to emphasise one of the subjects that I believe to be at the basis of the discussions held over these few days, I have presented an example of this collaborative logic at system level. The example refers to a foundation, which only in 2009 became fully operational: it is the International Seafood Sustainability Foundation which was formed by the major players in the fishing industry, in particular of tuna, also sees the involvement of civil society associations like the WWF and is aiming specifically at collaborating with regional bodies for the management of fishing areas. From this point of view, please allow me this final thought: that the AIC Forum can be a platform of system innovation for sustainability. Working on a regional area of this sort allows the identification of solutions; I am thinking, for example, of the management of the fish population, which can be sustainable through the collaboration of different players. From this point of view let us also consider the subject of logistics. Here ports play a crucial role and the AIC Forum has an important role to play in this respect, too.

I believe that this can be extremely relevant and crucial for the development of the territory of the Adriatic and Ionian area. Thank you very much for your attention.



ANDREA XHAVARA

President of the Durres Chamber of Commerce and Industry.

Albania's ambition to join the European family is now, I believe, clear to all. Proof without a doubt that this is an important priority of Albania is shown by its participation in NATO, its serious commitment to completing the conditions for visa liberalisation, requesting the status of candidate country for membership of the European Union, as well as the extensive reforms in all aspects of the country's life, accompanied by the extraordinary investment in the infrastructural network.

But it is just as clear that the map of European integration, above all, calls for specified standards to be reached in all fields of the political, social and economic life of Albania. And this observation also applies, clearly, to relationships between the **State and Businesses**. It is true that we have a *Government Consultation Workgroup with Businesses* and that we have shared suggestions on new rules or laws affecting entrepreneurs. However, the new phase which is spreading through our country requires a new, more suitable, level of relationship between state and businesses.

In other words, Albanian entrepreneurs already need a change and an improvement in the general approach policy to businesses; they need new rules, a new and clear agreement with their country.

In the spirit of the "Small Business Act", the Albanian Chambers of Commerce are looking to prepare a draft Agreement to meet the needs of the country's current situation. Amongst its essential points, the new document emphasises a number of things, including the following.

The creation of an environment in which SMEs can flourish, where businesses are supported and respected; the further reduction in obstacles and costs involved in forming a company; the strengthening of a public administration to serve SMEs, dedicated to facilitating their activity as much as possibly, greater liquidity in favour of SMEs, support for SME management skills, aimed at increasing their competitiveness,

technological innovation and relationships with the global market.

More specifically, considering that private business is the major contributor to the State's budget, the draft stresses that part of this budget should return to it. That it could be returned to the business in the form of support through technical assistance, credit at facilitated conditions, grants and guarantees and many other similar instruments, which have now become the standard practise in Europe.

Finally, the draft highlights the Chambers of Commerce system as one of the potential drivers of the ideas and actions incorporated into the new Agreement.

The delegation of some new functions to the Chambers of Commerce can create a wide range of services to businesses in one centre. In the meantime, the voice of the Chambers of Commerce, in collaboration with the widespread interests of the SMEs in the discussion organised about the problems of businesses, would greatly reinforce the faith of the entrepreneurs in the institutional resolution of their problems.

Having dedicated this plenary session to the "Small Business Act" shows an appreciation of the major role of the actual economy created by the SMEs, in the creation of well-being and employment in every country. Therefore, to complete its mission the Forum could address **a brief focussing on the SBA** to the Governments of the Member States. I believe that this would be a valuable support for the SMEs in Albania, as well as for member countries of the AIC Forum and those in the process of joining the EU.

MARCO PACETTI

President of Uniadriion

I must apologise if this is going to be a muddle – I prepared my material in English, but I have now decided to present it in Italian, so as to be briefer.

Uniadriion is the network, which has been existing for years, i.e. since the start of the Adriatic-Ionian Initiative; it is therefore the oldest of the concrete actions implemented and it is a programme, which has enabled the building of a network of more than 35 universities in the area, but which has a continuously increasing demand and which, for a long time, has been the most widespread concrete initiative in the sphere of the Adriatic-Ionian Initiative. In the short presentation that I shall try to give, I have roughly divided the whole period of work that we have carried out together with colleagues from other universities in the area, into two—three periods.

A first period up to 2004, then a second period from 2005 to 2007, a third period up until now and the following period, that of our hopes, on which I shall say something more in the final session.

I shall say at once that this is not the first time that I have been a willing guest at the work of the Forum and, as I have said on other similar occasions, the activity of Uniadriion fits perfectly in many sectors with what the Forum has been doing for some time and later we shall see in which sectors in particular.

As is well-known, the full initiative began at the Ancona Conference in May 2000.

The programme linking universities initially had at its centre six planned lines of action, typically those of the Ancona Conference. We must compare this to about ten years ago, when the initiative started. One basic theme was the war against organised crime, a theme which today is no longer on the agenda, fortunately for us all. Then other themes: the themes of economy, tourism and cooperation between small and medium-sized enterprises, and this is a central theme for the work of this Forum; environmental protection and sustainable development – my colleague Tencati's speech specifically deals with one of the themes still at the centre of the focus, both of Uniadriion and of the Forum – then cooperation and maritime transport; inter-university cooperation and culture, which many of these themes include by their nature.

All the subjects of the theme-specific workgroup, which started due to the Adriatic-Ionian Initiative on cooperation have given excellent results. This is not surprising, for someone who knows how universities work, because universities are institutions which, even in difficult times from an economic, social or especially political point of view, are capable of keeping communication channels open. I must say that, particularly in the first years of this initiative, this was also fundamental in supporting the successive broadening, politically, which developed from the initial task of the Adriatic-Ionian Initiative.

In the first group of years from 2000 to 2004, i.e. the years in which we had many resources available, eight projects were started. Two concerned the creation of 7 focal points. In countries other than Italy we have provided, in each of the capital cities, telematic type equipment which allows many e-learning type activities to be carried out, so as to be able to increase exchanges of information without excessively moving people, which is complex and certainly more costly. We have organised 5 master degree and higher education courses, specifically on the themes to which I made reference earlier: sustainable transport, sustainable agro-industrial development, cultural tourism, development of small and medium-sized enterprises, particularly in the hi-tech sector. Finally the Tour Adriion project, which aimed, like many of the activities that were later addressed by this Forum, to promote a sort of regional tourism with a strong IT connotation, so that it could allow an overall approach.

Apart from the important figures made available by our Government, I will just say that this first series of activities from 2000-2004 involved more than 300 people including professors, tutors and post-graduates – this was the highest moment of Uniadriion.

Subsequently, between 2005 and 2007 – as I said, 35 institutions started to work together – there was a certain slowing down, because after the financial enthusiasm of the first years the first economic difficulties arose. However, work continued on some activities which had already begun and had started to stand on their own financial resources, really because it had been possible to network activities, knowledge, people and research centres capable of working together. It then continued with a series of master degrees. I am listing the various stages to specifically emphasise one aspect, i.e. how many of the themes we have dealt with over the last few years cross over with the activities that are at the centre of the activities of the Forum of Adriatic and Ionian Chambers of Commerce.

I am talking, for example, of this course that we have called "Development of innovative enterprises in a transitional economy", "Development of sustainable economy in rural areas", "Political and economic aspects in the area", overall, "Democracy and human rights". But even a general interdisciplinary master's studying the Balkans, sustainable transport - logistics and economic integration, a specific theme of particular interest for the area – inter-Adriatic cooperation and local development, investment in conservation and the evaluation of cultural heritage, is another theme which is strongly linked to the Forum activities, because it is central to what is now called sustainable tourism.

Let us come to the latest years. I was explaining previously how all the Forums, all the activities, after an initial surge are feeling the effects of a certain period of fatigue. However Uniadriion's results have been so interesting and considered so politically important that even in the two general meetings of the Adriatic-Ionian Initiative at Foreign



Ministries level, i.e. those promoting diplomatic work, both under the presidency of Croatia in Split in April 2008 and later under the presidency of Greece in Athens in May 2009 it was several times emphasised by official representatives how the Uniadriion programme was greatly appreciated because of its results and that it constituted one of the best practices, and how the institutions which carry out activities in similar fields should cooperate in this area.

This was thus a transition phase: later on central governments, but in particular the Italian government, strongly supported the initiatives of the Uniadriion network, in view of the increasing difficulty of unilaterally financing sufficient resources for the active programmes. We are trying to change our strategy and start to use the network of trust. This network was set up between elements of Uniadriion to work on variable geometry, but all using together the name of Uniadriion, which in the meantime has become known as a network of university cooperation in the Adriatic-Ionian area, as a sort of umbrella brand, i.e. a brand within which there are various types of initiatives with variable geometry. The various focal points of the network go and look for resources where they can be found, no longer being able to rely initially on initiatives from the central government. I believe that this is a theme, which is now common to all the forums and to all the various groups arising from the main Adriatic-Ionian Initiative.

However we have managed to continue to do some things, even with financial restrictions. The steps that we have already undertaken include ongoing activities and projects, which we have suggested, particularly as a result of the Board meeting held a few weeks ago here in Ancona. With this new strategy, however, the Board expressed once again the interest of all participants in Uniadriion's activities, which everyone intends not to abandon but to strengthen, although knowing that some strategies will be changed, particularly as regards financing activities.

What has happened in this latest period? A trilateral protocol has been finalized between the universities of Belgrade, Ancona and Bologna; this is the example of what I previously called a sort of variable geometry strategy. Thanks to the resources of these universities this has directly enabled some significant initiatives to be carried out, in particular, for example, a very interesting initiative that we started with Bologna and Belgrade, to evaluate the archaeological site at Vinimacium. This is a very important 3rd century AD site about 80 km south of Belgrade, which is particularly interesting from a tourism point of view and which will therefore add value to the area and improve it economically.

We have also carried out an initiative to spread scientific culture. This almost makes me laugh, because we are talking about a country like Italy, in which the love of scientific culture is underground... We went to export to Belgrade where, on the other hand, love of scientific culture is much higher, we went as sponsors, moreover with extraordinary success, with this mobile laboratory which was fitted out together with the Golinelli Foundation in Bologna, which was extraordinarily successful, at least in Belgrade.

There was more success in Belgrade than in Italy, if we are to be truthful.

Other ongoing activities include the following. Always in the same logic we submitted some projects within the SEE community programme, i.e. a project that we have called Ecobar. The leadpartner is the Polytechnic University of the Marche. It provides for the inclusion of highly qualified institutions, four of which Italian, including the Central European Initiative which has its offices in Trieste, three institutions from Serbia, three from Bosnia-Herzegovina and one from Romania. The project, with a value of about a million Euros, has two objectives. Firstly, an experiment in environmental salvaging in a series of very polluted sites in Serbia, using phytological techniques, and a demonstration of the possibility of using biomass, which would anyway be dispersed, for the widespread production of electrical energy. The project was submitted in March this year; it has passed the first assessment; we are expecting it to be successful, with a clear path, by this summer, at the latest autumn.

Another initiative which we have promoted, still under the umbrella of Uniadriion: it is still within the SEE programme and concerns a conservation and promotion project of common cultural heritage through cross-border cooperation between Bosnia-Herzegovina, Croatia and Montenegro. So we are precisely considering the same themes, which are central to your thoughts. We have discovered that in the municipality of Trebigne in Bosnia-Herzegovina there is an area on the borders of three republics with extraordinary tourist attractions, which are worth improving. They are not only natural tourist attractions, but there are also, for example, six monasteries from the 4th to the 14th centuries, one of the first narrow-gauge railways, built at the time of the Austrian Empire, with a whole series of possibilities to improve the economy, which seem very interesting. We have also submitted this project and are waiting to know the outcome. Do not be surprised that initiatives which, in the end, result in an economic improvement begin with university cooperation. We have always wanted to link the highest scientific function and university research with concrete improvements for resources and the land.

This is an asset that we have always put at the centre of our activities.

The Uniadriion programme starts from ten years of very positive experience and for a good period of time it has been one of the most vital and productive initiatives of cooperation within the Adriatic-Ionian Initiative. This means that a lot has been done to promote the integration of countries, some of which have in the meantime joined the European Union and others which are applicants and the procedures are in progress.

So, in some way it has really contributed to filling in that hole which still remains on the maps of Europe. A new phase must begin, the universities have already decided to go this direction, because the overall scenario has changed but the integration work which can be done in this area has not yet finished.

I said earlier that the Board of Uniadriion met recently, on 20 April. On this occasion it made a series of decisions which I consider to be interesting. To begin with, we decided that the permanent Secretariat of the Adriatic-Ionian Initiative will be in Ancona, next to the permanent Secretariat of the whole Adriatic-Ionian Initiative. We believe



this is reasonable. For historical reasons the Secretariat was first in Ravenna, then Forlì; now we believe that to increase synergies as far as possible or, if you wish, reduce costs to the minimum, to be directly next to them, in our city, in the prestigious office of the Secretariat of the Adriatic-Ionian Initiative is the best strategy.

We are thinking about the Presidency, which for now has been deferred to me, but the aim is to work as main politics work, i.e. with presidents on a rotating basis between the various participating countries.

Then it was decided to give full support to the strategy that the Adriatic-Ionian Initiative has taken on, i.e. the creation of an Adriatic macro-region. We had already taken up our position on this matter, even before the political choice from the governments, because we have already started to develop a research programme within the network, very similar to the "Bonus 169" programme. 169 is the number of the article of the current treaty, which allows funds for block research to be given to certain organisations, trying to take advantage of the experiment which was carried out in a similar geopolitical situation, that is the Baltic Sea, where this Bonus programme was financed after several years of intense work.

Bonus is the acronym for this organisation which is actually called Baltic Organisations Network for Funding Science. They managed to put all these on the network; we have already had a meeting during our Board meeting, also with the general secretary of this initiative who is Finnish, and we have started to organise ourselves to try a similar operation, which will specifically support the general strategy of the creation of the macro-region.

At the same time other activities will start, some courses which we have called El Adrion, "el" because we want to do it through e-learning, in particular for the sector concerning agriculture. Two courses are already substantially ready and available for the Uniadrion network, the first K Adrion, Common Agricultural Policy, which is particularly about new policies; the other Farm Adrion, i.e. a course on Farm Business Management.

Finally, a political-type decision. In order to simplify and coordinate the many current initiatives in the area it was decided to start up a network of networks, which we have called Meda Adrion, which unites all the existing networks apart from Uniadrion, which also have variable geometry, but who have within them, however, a strong university participation and interest in the area. Besides Uniadrion, there are other associations in this area: the Emuni Initiative, based in Slovenia which unites both Adriatic and Mediterranean universities, and also another network which is called Unimed, University of the Mediterranean. We are trying to bring them all together, so that no-one misses the fact that the Adriatic and the Ionian form part of a larger sea which is called the Mediterranean. Thank you for your attention.



BJÖRN GRÖNHOLM

Secretary-General of the Commission for the Environment of the Union of Baltic Cities

Ladies and Gentlemen, It gives me great pleasure to be here. I was invited as representative of the Countries of the Baltic area to share some experiences with you. For me this is truly a great experience, a great challenge, I am pleased to be here with you amongst friends.

I have been working with your region for more than fifteen years. My organisation is not the Chamber, it is not the network of Chambers; we represent the network of cities and towns but we really have so much affinity with your region, with your territory. So many characteristics are integrated with 8 countries, which are members of the European Union, we have numerous institutions and networks; thus I hope that you will also succeed in doing the same thing here. We have also had the process of integration, lasting for about twenty years and now we have new challenges, new commitments, new duties.

As a network of Baltic towns, next year we shall celebrate a great anniversary, twenty years since our constitution. Today we have 106 member towns. You can see that our member countries are from all parts of the Baltic, from Norway to Russia.

Our members are varied: we have small towns of 5,500 inhabitants, up to capital cities like St Petersburg which has 5 million inhabitants, an enormous population. This is a chart of our region, of our towns. These large spots are the towns which have responsibility, superior expertise; we work on very practical, very much 'alive' projects and our main aim is to work for balanced development from an environmental, economic and tourist point of view. We have our General Secretariat in Poland, one President and three vice-presidents. We have an executive body which meets two – three times a year and we also have 13 subject committees which work on projects, or else on the main aspects. I, personally, have an office in Finland. In addition, we have numerous associates in various countries; we cover practically all the countries in the Baltic region.

Our activities encounter various cultures, religions, faiths, languages and just like you, we also have many difficulties. We have already been working together for about twenty years but up until now we have never had any problems. This is a great success for us.

We focus on our commitments, our work, our activities and we have confronted various problems, like migration from the small towns to the large cities.

The economic crisis is ever present; we have problems with energy efficiency, with sustainable transport, with traffic. We also have the sea with big problems, because it is one of the most polluted seas in the world. These are all very important aspects to be considered in order to improve ourselves, to become an attractive region, to make our towns attractive, as Professor Pacetti said.

We are working with the new macro-regions; we are specifically working on the issues of the new macro-regions. In our network we are working on projects which refer specifically to the projects we are focussing on, both small and large. It is important to work with the network of our member cities and towns; we work with mayors, with people in public administration, but we also cooperate with other regions, with other towns and cities. Obviously we have various tools with which we work and now we are also trying to use videoconferencing in order not to travel too much. We keep our services up to date; we always re-evaluate, and have done so for twenty years, from the integration of a cooperation. It is no minor achievement, but today we already have a first macro-region in Europe, we have our regional strategy, we have the strategy for the countries in the Baltic region.

In fact, the consultations lasted for two years and we knew, at the start, what the result would be of these consultations. We have four mainstays to our strategy: we must protect the environment, we must be a well-balanced region, economically sound, we must be safe and we must be accessible and attractive. These are the aims for all European regions, including also the Danube region and the Adriatic-Ionian region.

There are so many networks, the world is always changing, there is always movement and all these networks are important. We must have a permanent interaction with our towns; we must always listen to what they are doing. We are continuously enhancing the activities, we are improving our cooperation. We must have measurable and clear aims and we must also strengthen our image. This is essential for each organisation: it must be clear, precise and clearly specify its aims. It is not easy to achieve, but there are keys to success in every organisation, in every network. Specifically the creation of the network and the work are important. We must be involved in national, European and international activities, we must be ambitious, have ambitious aims and projects and we must always look at best practices in order to be very strong. Local authorities, cities, towns are the big clients, they are the big purchasers if we look at the global market and in that sense you must know that only a small number of people can work alone. On the other hand if we all work together, in a network, then we are stronger. This is the message for any type of organisation, and I believe also for your organisation.

I would also like to wish you, for this great anniversary, a useful and profitable collaboration with all your interlocutors and I truly hope that we will have a profitable cooperation in the future. My office is in Finland where we have a multinational team which speaks a Baltic English, i.e. an English with Polish, Swedish and German pronunciation. We speak slowly; we try to learn a lot. This is one of the keys to success. I believe it is also a model which you could introduce into your organisation. If you would like any further information, I am at your disposal. Thank you once again and I truly wish you the best of luck.



EMILIO D'ALESSIO

Secretary-General of the Forum of Adriatic and Ionian Cities and Towns

I would like to thank the Forum of the Chambers of Commerce of the Adriatic and Ionian Area, with which we have been collaborating for many years. I would like to say that, for this reason, I shall not make an institutional presentation today about our Forum. Instead, I will use my ten minutes to put forward an argument on what I consider to be the most important, most topical subject which has been discussed during these two days, that is the subject of the Adriatic macro-region, which seems to me to be the fulcrum of all that we are thinking about, considering and discussing here.

The Forum of the Adriatic and Ionian Cities and Towns is the oldest of the Adriatic networks. We were founded in 1999, we celebrated ten years last year and this year we shall hold our 12th Meeting, which by the way we decided upon just this morning, when our board met today here in Ancona. The Meeting will take place in Split on 21-22 October and I hope that President Radović will be able to be with us for the occasion. It will be the 12th Meeting of the Forum.

On this map you can see our member cities and towns; one is missing because just this morning we came to a decision on the admission of Kotor, Montenegro, which is our new member from today.

I was speaking of macro-regions. Let's start with the Baltic. Björn Grönholm who spoke before me is an old friend, we have worked together for many years and last year, when I read that the Commission had finally approved the strategy for the Baltic, I immediately wrote to Björn, saying "please, don't tell me what the strategy is because I know and can find it in documents on line, tell me what part your towns had in this strategy, how they managed to exchange views with the Commission, what capacity they had to amend and take part in this process?" Because I believe that this is important for us, the networks.

It is from this that I discovered, as I thought by the way, that the Baltic networks starting with the towns' network had the opportunity to have a direct input into constructing the strategy. I understood how important it is, as always, to work together at every level, at a subsidiary level, then vertical, with every level of government able to exchange views with the others and to do their best to resolve problems, and of course at a horizontal level, with the opportunity for all subjects, from network stakeholders, to local governments, to national governments, to be able to have a common objective, which in this case was actually a strategy, a particularly interesting and important strategy.

What does the Commission say in practice? How do these macro-regions start? They start because of common characteristics or challenges, says Brussels. It is said that they must have an area which has the ability to join together different realities but with the same problems and the most interesting thing is that this definition then leads to other things, much further away, but which could some day become very important.

For example, the famous theory of the three 'nos'. When the Baltic strategy was drawn up, it was said "this strategy is based on three absolute 'nos'". What are these 'nos'? They are no to new funds, no to new laws, no to new institutions. Thus meaning: don't think that something different is coming, don't think of new over-sized structures, don't think of bundles of regulations, because it will not be like that. It is a question of using what we have better, so more coordination of resources, more general coordination, an ability to coherently put into practice all the laws that there are, that we know are not too few, but possibly more than necessary, and finally minimum structures to be able to have the maximum efficiency and the best possible flexibility. Therefore it is a strategy which starts by removing, not by adding and this, I believe, is an absolutely innovative concept.

What is the second innovative concept? Where should the centres of responsibility be?, who decides?, what and where? Here it is also very clear and direct: the responsibility must be placed at the lowest possible level, or rather at the level nearest the people, at the level in which one can act in the most appropriate manner.

This is why I, representative of a town network and who was an administrator for many years, have a little of this practicality which I have inherited, I am very pleased about this. This is because if we have any regrets in Italy and perhaps also in other Adriatic regions, it is specifically the difficulty of recognition of local government and their extraordinary importance in the progress, in development, in their ability to talk with citizens, in their ability to involve stakeholders and other subjects in the choices.

This is the Baltic area and it doesn't interest us, in the sense that what they have done interests us; we are interested in collaborating with them, as we are so doing.

For five years now the Forum of Adriatic and Ionian Cities and Towns has invited the Union of the Baltic towns to its meetings but other things are happening and one of them is our Adriatic macro-region which is coming into being through this plan. This plan that you see is the plan of the Adriatic Euroregion, which is quite another thing in reality. The Euroregion, as it is, is the federation of the regions which face onto the Adriatic. Whereas in Italy and also in Croatia there is a type of government which has regions or else counties, there are countries like Montenegro and also Slovenia which do not have regions.

Then there are those like Albania which also has a different federal structure.

The Euroregion here ends with the Island of Corfu, which is the only part of Greece which is included. Therefore it does not go into the Ionian like, on the other hand, our Forums, which go as far as Igoumenitsa and Patras, so even farther south.



The space as you see is much reduced in this area, so the Euroregion cannot be identified as the Adriatic macro-region, because we already have other, very fierce competitors. If the Baltic macro-region and the Baltic strategy of the Commission was approved last year and is already working, in August last year the European Commission also decided to start a macro-region of the Danube area and a series of deadlines has already been fixed for this.

The macro-region of the Danube area will have its draft plan ready for next December, i.e. very soon, and this Baltic plan and this Danube strategy will then be ready to be applied from 2011. On this map, all the yellow part is the macro-region of the Danube, you will therefore realise that this includes more than half the areas which we define as the Adriatic macro-region, or rather is all the Croatian coast, all the Slovenian coast, all the Bosnian coast, all the Montenegrinian coast and all the states behind. Here we are talking of national states. Only Albania, Kosova and Macedonia of the Balkan zone remain outside, whilst to the north the macro-region reaches even as far as Moldavia and part of the Ukraine, obviously including all of Austria, Hungary, the Czech Republic, Slovakia, Romania and Bulgaria.

If you also consider that the new European Commissioner for regional policies is called Johannes Hahn and is from Vienna and the old European commissioner was called Danuta Hübner and was Polish, you can understand why the Danube strategy is obviously a priority. This means that it is in the interests of the Austrian Commissioner for regional policies to ensure that this reality is put into practice. It is not a good plan for us, because we see ourselves as somewhat with our backs to the wall. However, we have the joker to play, because in the Commission's model it is also stated "be careful, macro-regions are very flexible areas, they do not have binding borders, they are areas of relevance". Certainly, seen like that, it is enough to make you laugh; it is as if we were to say that Ancona is an Alpine macro-region, which it obviously is not. However, we are told that there is nothing to stop two macro-regions being superimposed, nothing to stop the areas of the macro-regions being different according to the factors which they must deal with. I will give a trivial example: if we speak of transport it is clear that speaking of the Danube area it is reasonable to speak of an area which extends from the Adriatic to the Black Sea or from Austria to Macedonia. If we speak of more practical things like tourism, like territorial logics, this type of area will probably be much wider.

Here is the first thought: what should and could be the borders of the Adriatic macro-region, and on what sort of lobbying should we construct this macro-region? Because there is also the following point: what you see is another map, of German origin, showing the Danube macro-region and here the area of influence can be seen to include Macedonia and Albania and Kosovo and even north-east Italy and parts of Switzerland, therefore practically half of Europe. In addition to the whole of the Ukraine and it even spreads into White Russia and Lithuania.

In short, we must think about other questions. There are, moreover, realities which have existed for a while which claim our attention. What you are perhaps not aware of is the so-called *Alpe Adria*, a structure which has been in place for twenty years and also wants its own independence and identity. It starts around the area of Slovenia and eastern Austria, particularly Carinthia, Styria and other regions, but also includes Venice, Friuli and Lombardy, so also in this case there is a certain north Adriatic centrality which is another important element in the creation of the Adriatic macro-region.

From this base which is the minimum possible, we must be able to go forward and create a realistic hypothesis. On 13 April last year, at the Committee of the Regions in Brussels a day's seminar took place on macro-regions, in which a lot was spoken of the Baltic macro-region and the Danube macro-region and also of a third macro-region which is in the process of being launched, that of the North Sea – English Channel, already identified and already under construction.

There was no talk of a Mediterranean macro-region, not even a mention, not even a possibility of comparing notes. There is an initiative of the European People's Party, which as you know is the first political group of Parliament and also of the Committee of the Regions, which stated that on the occasion of the Open Days in October (i.e. the European Week of the Regions which takes place each year in Brussels to discuss relationships between regions, local authorities, European and local Commissions), the EPP, as announced by its President Michael Schneider will organise a seminar to study the possibility of potentially having Mediterranean macro-regions.

I am telling you as Chambers of Commerce, I am telling us as the Forum of the Adriatic and Ionian Cities and Towns, I am telling Uniadria, I am telling the Adriatic-Ionian Initiative, the Marche region, the State-Regions Conference: let us work to put this hypothesis into operation, let us do it together with data, with serious, objective construction, with borders, with hypotheses, with plans, with the ability that we have to work in networks and to understand that we are already late in starting. This lateness must be overcome and we must all, together, be able to bring this basic plan for our development, as soon as possible, to its realisation. Thank you.



DANIELE MANTUCCI

President of the International Court of the Adriatic and Ionian Area

The development of commercial relations between the various countries of the Adriatic-Ionian area has been greatly slowed down by the fears that business players have with regard to times, costs, unknowns and possible disputes. Perceiving this problem, the Forum of the Chambers of Commerce of the Adriatic and Ionian Area has created a bold and very innovative tool, which is the International Court, over which I have the honour of presiding. The International Court of the Adriatic and Ionian Area carries out an activity, which is essentially outlined in two main and fundamental branches. The first is the so-called ADR methods in the administration sector, i.e. alternative procedures to state jurisdiction, aimed at resolving disputes. I refer, first of all, to arbitration which is, so to speak, a decision-making procedure, through which the parties in dispute reach a binding decision to their dispute. However, I am also referring to so-called soft procedures, amongst which, primarily, is conciliation. This is a facilitating and not coercive, procedure, to settle disputes and leads the disputing parties to find a solution, which essentially satisfies both of them. This is done through the intervention of a professional mediator who persuades the parties to overcome illogical prejudices contrary to their own interests, and to reach a rapid and improved solution with respect, perhaps, even to their initial positions.

From this point of view the Court has equipped itself with rules of procedure allowing a rapid solution, which is not costly and is economically efficient for both parties. Above all, it is a positive procedure. The uncertainties which exist in internal legal systems with regards to resolving disputes, concerning time-scales for resolving disputes and outcomes of such disputes, are increased in the international field. Italians know how long civil proceedings can take, how uncertain the outcome of such cases can be, but certainly anyone who has experience of contract management or simply of international affairs, knows that these difficulties increase, multiply considerably when different legal systems are in play, when the disputing parties come from different countries.

The International Court has rules of procedure and has equipped itself with a list of arbitrators, who are extremely professional and available for the settlement of disputes through arbitration.

But the Court has not just done this; the Court is not just for this. The Court has actually created and is creating and is putting itself forward to promote the integration of legal cultures of the various countries in the Adriatic-Ionian area, because we are certainly only at the start of this type of work. Certainly the aim is not one of a single legal system; this would be outside the powers and jurisdiction of the Court and of the same Forum; neither would this perhaps be desirable, because it is right that each system keeps its own specific peculiarities, its own traditions, its own history, its own technical solutions. The aim of the Court is to encourage a dialogue between the various systems, a discussion between the different legal cultures which leads to the formation of a common cultural basis, which allows comparison between the various legal systems, between the various ADR procedures, between the various legal and economic operators.

From this point of view the Court has already started work. Last year it ran a training course for arbitrators and ADR officials in Albania, during the current year it will carry out a similar initiative in Greece. The Court is carrying out sound work to create a common legal culture which, even though it is expressed in different regulations, they can, however, talk to each other.

Chambers of Commerce constitute a fundamental working element of this structure. The Chambers of Commerce do not only get the credit for having promised and carried out this creation of the International Court, but they have above all the task of enabling this International Court to work, because it is through the network of Chambers of Commerce that the Court will be able to reach all the different countries in the Adriatic-Ionian area. It is through the Chambers of Commerce that business players can become aware of the existence of the Court and use its services.

All ADR procedures, at least in principle, and all the systems that are alternative to state jurisdiction for the settlement of disputes, pre-suppose in principle a willingness or an expression of willingness of the parties in dispute. There cannot be arbitration if there is no arbitration convention i.e. an agreement, generally a clause in the contract, which makes provision for an arbitrated resolution in the case of a dispute.

If there is no such clause, there cannot be arbitration. The alternative is, unfortunately, uncertainty, the main difficulty in the field of international relations. If there is such a clause and if this clause encourages the use of International Court, some basics and some points are certain: the rules of procedure, the list of arbitrators, the structures that the Court is setting up with all the Chambers of Commerce.

This is absolutely true for arbitration, it is only partially true for conciliation, in the sense that the tendency is spreading in some countries also in the Adriatic-Ionian area and in particular already in Italy, of having conciliation procedures which are obligatory by law. This means that conciliation procedures must in any case be implemented regardless of any such agreement reached the parties, but these regulations are still quite rare in the countries of the Adriatic-Ionian area and anyway can only make it obligatory to try conciliation i.e. try to reach an agreement out of court, facilitated by the intervention of a third party outside the dispute.

In order to effectively reach an agreement there needs, however, to be a willingness of the parties, there needs to be a conciliative culture, there needs to be a conviction by the parties that a good-natured, rapid resolution to the dispute is in principle preferable to a long dispute which will take many years, which will be expensive and which could lead to a less advantageous solution than that which can be immediately reached with a little good sense, by a compromise.



In order that this type of belief circulates adequately, penetrates adequately into the way of thinking of the business players, cultural training is required. The International Court has already started it and carrying it out and it will reach wide strata of society of the countries of the Adriatic-Ionian area, only with the collaboration of the Chambers of Commerce.

Here lies the innovative idea. There are many international arbitration courts, there are many institutions which promote ADR methods, but only the International Court of the Adriatic and Ionian Area has a natural, efficient, capillary, well organised network like that of the Chambers of Commerce member to the AIC Forum and many of them are also physically represented in this room.

The Chambers of Commerce must really get to the bottom of this message; they must become the terminals of the operating network. Business players who knock at their door for business help in other countries in the Adriatic-Ionian area must also be offered, amongst its various services, those of the International Court of the Adriatic and Ionian Area.

This has been a very innovative and bold project, perhaps also an ambitious project which, however, is becoming a reality thanks to the commitment of the employees of the Ancona Chamber of Commerce, who have spent great personal effort on this project. It is also thanks to the collaboration, participation, support of all the Chambers of Commerce of the Adriatic and Ionian Area that make up a formidable network from many points of view and also for the spread of ADR methods, which take up more and more space in the individual national legal systems. It is not by coincidence that in the countries with a particularly advanced legal, social, perhaps even technological culture, like North America, ADR systems have been widely used for many years and are very widespread, in any case much more used and much more widespread than in our areas. Now, however, our legal systems are also paying attention on these problems; also in our national legal systems they understand that a decision pronounced after many, many years, is almost never able to resolve the practical problem in relation to the original lawsuit.

Not by coincidence, a great scholar of law and economy like Adam Smith, already showed a long time ago how the wealth of nations depends also on the efficiency of its legal systems and that part of the legal systems are ADR methods, which are very useful for resolving internal national disputes but absolutely indispensable in resolving disputes with an international connotation.

In the Adriatic-Ionian area the Court is carrying out and will carry out an important role, naturally if there is collaboration with all the Chambers of Commerce of the area. Thank you very much.



MICHELE DE VITA

Secretary-General of the Ancona Chamber of Commerce

These have been three very intense days, which have kept us very busy, starting with the first day when we met as organs of the AIC Forum. Then we had the opportunity to show off our territory, some of our excellent things, to the invited delegations. Yesterday was the central moment of our ten years, with a very large number of participants in all the Workgroups, with great satisfaction, and with the same Workgroups also full of ideas. We are reaching the end of these three days; we shall shortly give summaries of the Workgroups, which will then, in unabridged documents, be sent to all participants, in particular to all the AIC Forum members.

Three days honoured by so many illustrious guests and delegations. The Ancona Chamber of Commerce has tried to bring Ancona to life through the two symbols of this city: yesterday the Mole Vanvitelliana – I heard many favourable comments on the extraordinary building, which the city must bring to life and which we have tried to make the most of with an international event – and the Loggia dei Mercanti. Kindly allow me to make this architectural jewel into the symbol of the Forum, because it was built in the 1400's by one of the most original and complex figures, a Croatian architect-sculptor. It is therefore a building of our country, but with the intelligence and creativity of a Croatian, Giorgio Matteo da Sebenico. So this is a building which truly symbolizes this city, but it is also a symbol of being together; it has been brought to life again today with this event at which the Adriatic and Ionian communities have met again to discuss their future.

We have here quickly retraced ten editions – you have seen this morning on the video. Probably some of you will have seen yourselves in some photographs and in some films of the various editions, which we put together as a reminder of the ten years.

I will try to quickly revisit this long and intense period. I participated in the 2002 Forum and was nominated Secretary-General as a result of the idea which began with President Radovanić, whom I thank on behalf of everyone. Our President has recalled several times in the last few days that at the start there were only six of us. President Radovanić was there and for the Ancona Chamber of Commerce there was the then President Bocchini, and an idea was born. The idea has become today's reality, which is the pride of the chamber system in this area. The Forum today is a transnational association with legal personality. I would like to strongly emphasise this, because being a legal entity allows the Forum to be a candidate for Community and regional programmes as an independent legal person. In addition, since 2008 the Forum has been entered into the regional register of the Marche Region of international cooperation and solidarity.

You are all familiar with the aims of the AIC Forum association, but let us recall them quickly: to promote the economic development of the Adriatic-Ionian area (a lot was said, even then, about the Adriatic macro-region, so the idea was already very topical); to consolidate relationships between the chamber bodies of participating countries. It seems to me that the course that we followed throughout this period has appreciably strengthened, firstly our acquaintance, but also the strength of the Chambers of Commerce in those areas and today Chambers of Commerce can consider themselves more in the system. National law at last recognises, for Italian Chambers of Commerce, the concept of a system and we have endeavoured also to get it recognised for Chambers of Commerce in the Adriatic-Ionian area, even though they might belong to different countries. Our work, which is a mission of all Italian Chambers of Commerce and of those in other countries, is to spread entrepreneurial culture through the involvement of all local players active in the territory. We have noted how trade, apart from the crisis period which has been gripping us of late, but we saw and monitored it even in preceding years, has always increased within these countries, as has also the number of enterprises.

Thus the Forum has encouraged a process of growth and lasting development in this Adriatic-Ionian basin. Its approach has been more and more similar to ours, a project-oriented approach, with a strong thrust towards looking for public, regional, national, Community resources. These have allowed us to promote significant development projects for our territories.

Right from the start we chose not to work alone: we chose to be in a network, together with the Chambers of Commerce and with all the other players in this area, starting with those who were already operating, like the Forum of the Adriatic and Ionian Cities and Towns of which D'Alessio spoke and like the Uniadron network of universities illustrated by Chancellor Pacetti.

The Forum can therefore actively contribute to laying down the conditions and creating the operating instruments for the growth of the Adriatic macro-region and to strengthening these partnership capabilities. This year we have distinguished ourselves with another innovation which has been much appreciated: the Workgroup on EU project management. The Workgroup met for the first time and we saw that it could really be another element of growth for all of us, because one must increase the expertise on what it means to develop, manage, monitor, report on a Community project.

We have been involved with the construction of theme-based Workgroups. We started with three, but ended up with six: tourism; women entrepreneurship; transport; fisheries/acquaculture; agriculture; environment. Already they represent hard work on the part of the secretary and a great commitment for us all, but these are workgroups that we have always tried to characterise by their practical approach and results, starting with tourism. We have worked with tourism over the years to strengthen the quality of what is offered, to encourage joint development of the area through, in particular, the identification of the common brand name Adrion, which represents us in international markets.



Then we have the Workgroup on women entrepreneurship, chaired from the beginning by our President. It intended to promote the spread of the culture of women entrepreneurship, gender equality and the representation of women.

Transport: this workgroup has enabled us to analyse the development of sea traffic in relation to the main ports in the area. We have created an Observatory, which has become a fundamental point of reference.

Then the Workgroup for agriculture: its aim is to encourage the exchange of knowledge around high quality production and also to be a guarantee of food safety and describe even more the typical features of our products, with particular reference to olive oil and wine.

The Workgroup for fisheries and aquaculture aims at the promotion of economically and biologically sustainable management of fish resources.

The Workgroup for the environment is also important, as the environment is becoming an ever more transversal and central theme to our discussions, observations and comparisons. Let's talk of sustainable development. The Ancona Chamber of Commerce is the only Italian Chamber of Commerce to be EMAS registered. We pay great attention to these matters, which we hope will become ever more widespread, even in the countries the other side of the Adriatic and Ionian.

Then we have the International Court, of which Professor Mantucci has just spoken. Even this body represents an extremely important moment. It is the result of a happy intuition, which is today a very topical subject within the development of Community and national regulations. This is because Italy has finally recognized conciliation to be a compulsory procedure, after Chambers of Commerce had worked on this theme for ten years. So having invested in training, quality, the professionalism of this service this means that today the Italian Chambers of Commerce can offer a service that has become compulsory, as was inevitable, seeing the crisis which is gripping ordinary justice. An important contribution therefore.

Today there's 37 of, from those 6 pioneers, therefore the Forum is an extremely important representative of chamber bodies. I would like to thank Ms Frontini for the enthusiasm she brings to her work every day. She believes in the Forum and demonstrates it in her work, as I believe do a group of people who work constantly in the Chamber of Commerce and whom I thank for the organisation and commitment which they have lavished over these three very intense days. They have done all they can to put you all at ease, to make this territory come alive... Thank you, I will join with you all in applauding.

We have realised that we have done many things, Madam President. On numerous occasions we have met European institutions, from being unknown we have become an example of "best practice", we have presented ourselves to the European Parliament on two occasions, we were present at the first European Parliament of Enterprises in October 2008. If today we have illustrious representatives like Mr Mario Sepi, that is the result of much work and daily commitment. I would like to recall now, that whilst we are here, at the same time, a workshop dedicated to credit is taking place, led by Mario Sepi, President of the European Economic and Social Committee, to compare banks and entrepreneurial systems in the territory. In addition, I would like to thank Maurizio Di Genova, who is busy at the moment in the workshop, as our contact for the Unioncamere office in Brussels. So we have arrived here thanks to a whole series of relationships, which we have woven together and which we shall continue to develop with great commitment.

At the first European Parliament of Enterprises there were more than 700 representing the Chambers of Commerce and entrepreneurs from the whole of Europe, who met for the first time in that prestigious place. From the success of that meeting, the European Parliament of Enterprises became a reality, which meets every two years; the second meeting will in fact be in October 2010 and we will of course be present, representing the Marche region and representing the Forum of the Chambers of Commerce of the Adriatic and Ionian Area.

I will not return to the Small Business Act, which was the point of reference of today's discussion, nor to the activities and relationship with the European Parliament because this has been demonstrated by the attention that that assembly has shown us during these last few years by giving us various sponsorship. Let us continue to carry out marketing work with Italian and foreign Chambers of Commerce, because it is a network which does not stop, a network which must spread further. The strong omen is that even Slovenia is participating more actively in this work of ours; unfortunately of late it has chosen to remain on the fringes. Here in Ancona on 9 June there will be a "Country presentation day devoted to Slovenia"; we have established contacts with the Slovenian embassy and we hope they will act as spokesmen to the Slovenian Chambers of Commerce with regard to our initiative.

For us it is very important to integrate with other networks of chamber systems, like Eurochambres whom we first heard of via their representative and like Ascame, which is the network of the Chambers of Commerce of the Mediterranean, and inevitably we can only compare ourselves with it. Ms Frontini has recently represented us at the edition which took place a short while ago in Cagliari, and at the Necstour network.

Amongst the various activities we have carried out are training courses. The Board of Governors learnt the other day, with great pleasure, that out of that training course recalled even by Professor Mantucci, on arbitration and conciliation the first Arbitration Centre in Durres, Albania, was set up. Obviously these are training courses, which produce results and which therefore push us to carry these activities forward with ever more conviction. Together with our Croatian friends we have also discussed training for professional olive oil tasters; EU project management courses, which are increasing the expertise in various Chambers of Commerce on these themes; very important courses for the



management of wholesale fish markets, on themes of incentives and contributions for businesses and fishing cooperatives.

There have been various meetings and seminars. In particular I would like to point out that, apart from the plenary session, since 2006 an annual Congress has been held on women entrepreneurship. This is something which our President is strongly in favour of.

We have initialled protocols of understanding with regard to integration with other networks. I will mention the one with Ascame, which is very important especially for cooperating in the MED programmes; and then the one with ARPAM, i.e. the regional agency for the protection of the environment in the Marche region, with reference to which I would like to thank Mr Paoloni who is here with us: an agreement on the fields of study, promotion and checking of technical criteria on environmental matters to encourage the growth of the entrepreneurial system and for the spread of EMAS registration amongst enterprises. And worth mentioning is, of course, the Adriatic-Ionian Initiative, which is the background of all the Forums with which we are collaborating. We would like to be recognised as the operational wing, from an economic point of view, for the Adriatic-Ionian Initiative. It is a political background, which obviously needs a concrete reality and which for the themes which correspond to our mission can be represented by the Forum of the Chambers of Commerce.

We have actively participated in, and contributed greatly to, allow me to say, several initiatives. In particular I remember the Conferences which took place in Corfu and Athens concerning the tourism workgroup, where we presented the Adrion Project, obtaining important consensus.

Participation in the Meeting at Bari on the subject of the Adriatic Euroregion. From this year the Forum has been enriched with another group: we did not want to call it a workgroup, but rather a group, which has been well attended and has received great interest: I am referring to the workgroup on EU project management, which will therefore become one of our permanent workgroups.

I shall quickly tell you of the principal projects which have been completed. The AFO Project, Adriatic Fishing Observatory; the Marinas Projects and Report, development projects for the network of Adriatic tourist ports; the Retaj Project for the starting of an Adriatic-Ionian tourist region and the development of the small fishing in the region of Valona, financed by the Marche regional law no.9/2002; local poles of development of the Croatian coasts and the development of tourist systems in Albania, financed by law no.84/2001 of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs.

Amongst the main projects in progress, ITAC has perhaps been the project that has most characterised us; the most important also in terms of the extent of the funding in the Interreg III A programme. Here the key words are innovation and technological research. It has been an extremely important project with many participants. Adriontour was the first step. Similarly, the first step of the Adrion Project obtained a small amount of financing, with which we have, however, started to lay the basis for a promotional launch of the unique Adrion tourist brand which, as you know, we identify as a central element around which to plan future initiatives of promotion and communication in the area. Iktimed is a project submitted for financing from funds from the Med programme. It has an innovative and structured approach to technological transfer and to the development of industrial research.

Then there is a series of project proposals, which have been drawn up, submitted, shared and which are now awaiting approval, starting with the Adriatic Economic Cluster Club within IPA crossborder cooperation programme. Through this we intend to build a network of cooperation between cluster districts in the mechanics, wood, rubber, plastic and textiles sectors, including subcontracting, trying to create these forms of joined-up work, which are absolutely essential today, not only for enterprises in countries the other side of the Adriatic and Ionian but also for Italian enterprises, because small and medium-sized enterprises represent 98% of the Italian entrepreneurial system.

Then we have the Mark project for the promotion and cooperation of innovation. Innovation is one of those key words which we are taking forward in the various projects.

Adriportnet is another project, which is still linked to the themes of maritime transport – here too I was speaking of the environment as a transversal theme with respect to the protection of the environment.

Then we have Adrion, which out of all the projects which we have submitted and which are in the process of evaluation, is the feather in our cap and which we are particularly focussing on. It is our priority because it is the symbol of us being together, therefore we trust that this project, which anyway has already got through the first shortlist, will be successful.

We shall put these slides on our site, to increase and encourage better information and the spread of information. I shall skip the programme reports and conclude.

We have rapidly covered what we have done and as you have seen there are many things: training, projects, activities, conferences, initiatives, so many activities to do with relationships and missions.

From 6 people gathered around a table, we have formed a consolidated, structured association that is equipped with its own organisation and comprises 37 Chambers of Commerce members, which I hope will increase even more. What shall we set out as objectives for our future, for the next ten years?

We have touched on the theme of the Adriatic-Ionian macro-region, because it is the fundamental point, so we can firstly hope that the Adriatic-Ionian macro-region is recognised at European level. We shall therefore devote ourselves to it as much as possible, as a Forum; in this, we shall support all the institutions, together with other players, in becoming the economic and social network to build this macro-region. We intend to use our association with European institutions so that the strategic role that the Forum of the Chambers of Commerce can carry out in the proximity and neighbourhood policies for this area, in which we live and in which we believe, is recognised. We want to



consolidate the collaborations and alliances with the other public and private players in the area and with similar partnership networks in other European macro-regions, so we hope that the many seeds that we have sown will germinate in the next few years.

We want to bring about the recovery and sustainable development of our territories by carrying out the Lisbon Strategy. There has been an extremely interesting speech by a delegate yesterday, on the workgroup for tourism, from the European Economic and Social Committee. We are absolutely on the right track, with what we are doing, with regard to the Lisbon Strategy, even from the point of view of tourism as a priority.

Naturally, the mission uniting all the Chambers of Commerce here present is to stimulate the creation of new businesses and economic-commercial trade between small and medium-sized enterprises, under the express guidance of the Small Business Act.

So from an idea, which started ten years ago, we have today become a consolidated network which finds the element that brings us together in the sea. We had started with the slogan 'joined by the sea', we are driven by the desire to be together, we are driven by the desire to live, grow and develop a macro-region seen in its whole with its many strengths. To do this, I urge you strongly, everyone needs to be committed. We as the Ancona Chamber of Commerce, as Secretariat, we shall put everything into it, but everyone needs to be proactive so as to grow and there is also the need for something which we try to put in every day: enthusiasm and passion.

We believe in it and your presence, in extremely large numbers during these three days of work, proves that there is this enthusiasm.

Goethe said "To think is easy. To act is difficult. To act as one thinks is the most difficult of all".

So I shall end with the idea from which we started: I believe that the Forum of the Chambers of Commerce of the Adriatic and Ionian Area has shown that it knows how to act as one thinks and transform this idea, born ten years ago in Split, into concrete actions. Thank you