

The role of the Italian Chambers of Commerce in the circular economy

All-FORA online Side-Event
"SMEs towards the Circular Economy"

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The Chambers of Commerce and the Environment

A Chamber of Commerce is an autonomous body governed by public law which carries out functions of general interest for businesses, taking care of their development in the local area.

The mission of the Chambers of Commerce consists in economic promotion, in the development of the business system and the local economy

Each Chamber of Commerce finances its activities through the annual fee paid once a year by each company registered in the Business Register.

There are approximately 6 million companies registered in the Business Register: sole proprietorships and partnerships represent 67% of the registered companies.

The legislation attributes to the Chambers of Commerce competences in environmental matters also in order to support small and medium-sized enterprises for the improvement of environmental conditions.

The companies that interface with the Chambers of Commerce for environmental issues have, for almost 80%, less than 10 employees.

Functions of the Chambers of Commerce

Italian legislation, which incorporates European legal regulations, has assigned the Chambers of Commerce tasks relating to:

- creation and management of lists and registers with an authorization or "advertising news" function;
- collection of communications and declarations on environmental matters.

For these activities, the Chamber of Commerce:

- plays the role of interface between the business world and the central or local PA (Ministry of the Environment, Regions and ARPA);
- pushes towards solutions for the dematerialisation and digitization of information flows.

The objectives on the circular economy and emissions determine a significant need for information for Member States to evaluate positioning, define actions and monitor trends over time

Ecocerved is the consortium company of the Italian Chamber of Commerce system that operates in the field of information systems for the environment.

Ecocerved operates as a partner of the Chambers of Commerce and Public Administrations, in the collection, management, processing and dissemination of data and information on the environmental impact of economic activities.

The activity is divided into four main lines:

- transfer of data and information from the business world to the Public Administration;
- technical assistance, training and awareness of businesses;
- data management and analysis on behalf of the Public Administration;
- communication of the processed information to the socio-economic system

- A portion of the annual fee paid by the companies goes to feed an "equalization fund" which has the aim of making the functions attributed to the Chamber of Commerce system homogeneous throughout the national territory, favoring the achievement of a satisfactory economic balance, the improving their services and increasing their efficiency.
- In 2020 Unioncamere allocated a part of this fund (the total amount of which was 10 million euros) to promote an action program aimed at increasing the skills and services of the Chambers of Commerce on circular economy issues with the implementation of initiatives training, information and awareness raising aimed at businesses starting from the themes introduced by the package of EU Directives on the circular economy.

17 projects were carried out, which involved a total of 9 regional unions and 8 chambers of commerce, which represent 85% of the associated companies and concerned in particular:

- Focus groups with associations and administrations, in order to detect information needs, topics of greatest interest, possible pilot projects.
- Chamber of Commerce personal training.
- Training for companies (basic literacy and operational seminars on fulfillment) also aimed at specific types of participants chosen according to their relevance in the area.
- Supporting and tutoring courses for small and medium-sized enterprises aimed at achieving specific objectives.
- One-to-one specialized assistance with interested companies and organizations and telematic help desk.
- Activation of partnerships with universities, research centers for the promotion of innovation and other organizations operating in the area.



Also in 2021 Unioncamere resolved to allocate a part of this fund (the total amount of which is 14 million euros) for an action program aimed at promoting economic, social and environmental sustainability in line with the Next Generation EU Plan, which will allocate 37% of the resources assigned to Italy to green investments.

Centralized actions, managed by Unioncamere,

- Training for Chamber staff for the implementation of know-how and skills in environmental matters
- Implementation of information actions for businesses, associations and entities (eg Arpa) to support the ecological transition
- Design, development, implementation at a prototype level of interactive tools for the enhancement of environmental data by crossing with economic and administrative information

Actions at regional level, managed by regional unions and chambers of commerce

- Promotion of the by-product chain
- Individual support paths aimed at "circular" pilot companies
- Collection and advertising of best practices on the circular economy carried out by local companies