



THE U.S. AND ITALY: Natural Complementary Partners

The Italian Trade Agency's innovative conferences help to illuminate the rich potential for new U.S.-Italy advanced manufacturing partnerships.

Untapped Potential for Collaboration

Marco Saladini, trade commissioner for the Italian Trade Agency in Chicago, is adamant: "There is ground for cooperation for the two sides, both in terms of R&D and in terms of technologies used in manufacturing," he says. "There is a great affinity and similarity in the level of the technologies in use. There is interest for programs of research to be done together and for industrial collaboration."

Settineri agrees. He has talked with both American and Italian industry and academic contacts, including at a conference the Italian Trade Agency hosted in Milan in February, and he says the road appears promising. "I have noticed that there is a strong interest on the USA side on the research and innovation activities carried out in Italy and great appreciation on the level of the engineering schools," Settineri says.

According to Dr. Maurizio Reggiani, Chief Technology Officer at Automobili Lamborghini S.p.A., "Research in Italian universities is at the forefront in many fields. We have even in Italy several collaborations with the universities of Bologna, Milano, Padova, and Napoli, to name just a few, on important topics such as research on advanced materials, vehicle dynamics, and electrification."

Roberto Dolci, president of aizioOn USA Inc., an Italian-born technology consultancy, attended a 2017 conference organized by the Italian embassy in Washington, D.C., that helped connect industry, policy, and academic experts. He says the conference prompted him to work with researchers from three U.S. universities to put together a proposal to the National Science Foundation. Meanwhile, partners from three Italian universities are applying to Italian authorities for funding for a mirroring project.

Dolci says Italy and the U.S. are natural complementary partners. Italy's greatest strength, he adds, is thriving small and medium-sized businesses. "In Italy, you've got lots of entrepreneurs that are involved with manufacturing and supply chain type of operations — and lots of automation — but you don't normally have the scale that we have [in the U.S.]," Dolci says.

ITALY AND THE UNITED STATES ENJOY A ROBUST TRADE RELATIONSHIP, bolstered in part by ties that go back decades. The U.S. is Italy's third-largest export market and a major trade partner related to intellectual property. Still, as Italy's economic recovery gains momentum, experts say opportunities abound for increased collaboration between the countries' companies and research centers, particularly in the area of advanced manufacturing.

"For historical reasons, the relationship is strong, but it could be stronger," says Luca Settineri, head of the Department of Management and Production Engineering at the Polytechnic University of Turin. "I think there is still a long way to go before the potential of the cooperation is fully exploited."

Settineri says Italian companies have "the right products and the right prices" for greater collaboration with the United States, but they need to gain better awareness about opportunities. In that spirit, the Italian Trade Agency has helped to organize innovative conferences that match potential partners from both countries and examine advanced manufacturing trends as they relate to the U.S. and Italian markets. The next 2018 Innovation Days event will be held in Detroit and Chicago the week of June 25th.



Educating Italian Firms About U.S. Practices & Policies

The February conference in Milan emphasized U.S. advanced manufacturing

By Tom Gresham

trends and technology-transfer practices as part of a broader governmental program to educate Italian firms and to help encourage increased spending on research and development and innovation. The event attracted manufacturing-oriented firms focused on near-term market developments, as well as larger Italian companies — such as Comau, BLM Group, and Lamborghini — that already have long-term relationships in the U.S. In addition, the Polytechnic Universities of Turin and Milan helped to host the event and provided an Italian higher education perspective, while visitors from five U.S. universities and two government agencies shared their insights.

Saladini says the conference helped detail the intricacies of industry-higher education collaborations and how they differ between the countries and also helped to demonstrate how successful partnerships can work; for instance, both General Electric and General Motors have invested in projects based at the Polytechnic University of Turin.

According to Settineri, the conference sparked essential conversations. "Giving the opportunity to academics and to people of the business world to exchange ideas and present their most recent activities has helped to have a good representation of the interests and trends of manufacturing on the two sides of the Atlantic."

Dr. Maurizio Reggiani says, "The collaboration with strategic markets such as the United States is essential for us in order to maintain technological leadership in key fields." He cites specific research programs at MIT — one with the Chemical Department led by Professor Dinca and another with the Mechanochemistry lab led Professor John Hart — which "investigate the potential of energy storage in composite body panels as well as high capacitors replacing conventional batteries."

Upcoming Events

The Innovation Days conferences in Detroit will build on the Milan conference to further explore critical issues and encourage fruitful collaborations between some of Italy's leading companies and research centers and universities and their counterparts in the U.S. The thought leadership conference will feature panelists from the corporate, higher education, association, and governmental agency realms, as shown in the event's website. Registered U.S. participants can schedule customized one-on-one meetings with potential Italian partners (also mentioned in the website) in Detroit or Rockford, IL, on June 26 and 29, respectively. "We will be giving the audience several ways to learn and profit from this event," Saladini says.

Settineri says additive manufacturing and automation offer the most potential for U.S.-Italy collaboration. Dolci is willing to bet on the same topics and notes that Italy has higher relative levels of investment in automation than the U.S. right now, and that "it's actually much easier to do that in Italy than it is" in the U.S. in the current climate.

Settineri says that programs such as the Innovation Days Conference help shine a spotlight on the high quality of research and innovation activities in the Italian manufacturing sector. He hopes the conference will promote Italy's strengths in the field and encourage more partnerships to form and flourish. "I would like the participants to get the feeling that Italy is a key player in introducing innovation in the manufacturing world, due to its economic structure and to the quality of its schools," Settineri says.

For more information about the Innovation Days Conference and to register, visit www.id.ice.it

Innovation Days

When and Where: June 26, 2018, in Sterling Heights, Detroit, MI; June 29, 2018, in Rockford, IL

Program and free registration: id.ice.it

Detroit conference topics:

- Advanced Manufacturing and Automotive Prospects and Policies
- Automotive New Technologies, Trends and Challenges
- Industry 4.0
- Invest in Italy Opportunities
- Automotive Supply Chain
- Research and Industry Partnerships

Note: If you are interested in reserving time for one-on-one, business-to-business meetings in Sterling Heights, MI (June 26) or Rockford, IL (June 29), please register online by June 18.