

» TECHNOLOGY TRANSFER



ITALY AT CERN, A SHOWCASE FOR ITALIAN ENTERPRISES

For companies that collaborate with scientific research, investments in the design and development of frontier technology frequently continue beyond the order, opening up the way for new areas of specialisation and new markets, even abroad. Some thirty Italian business enterprises took part in the fifth edition of "Italy at CERN" on 7-10 October, organised by the Industrial Liaison Officer (ILO) at CERN and the Permanent Representation of Italy to the International Organisations in Geneva, in partnership with the Italian Chamber of Commerce in Switzerland. The three-yearly event is an opportunity for Italian companies to meet the purchasing departments of CERN, a sort of showcase aimed at fostering contacts with potential buyers. The LHC project offered excellent openings for Italian industries and supplying CERN offers opportunities for growth: of the numerous companies that produced ultra-high-tech products, many are small and medium-sized enterprises that have chosen to invest in innovative projects and the development of cutting-edge technology. Italy was second only to France in terms of supplies to CERN for the LHC project. In detail, of the 20 countries that took part, Italy (in 2006) ranked second in the civil engineering sector (23.9% of the total), second for electrical engineering (29.3%), second for mechanical parts (18.9%), third for vacuum and low-temperature technology (cryogenics) (12.7%), second overall (18.6%) preceded only by France (34.2%) and followed by Germany (15.6%). During the years of peak activity to construct the machine and the experiments, the economic return for Italy, in terms of orders for Italian industries, exceeded the investments made. This was calculated using the so-called "return coefficient" which is the ratio between a country's percentage share of the total value of all contracts awarded and its total percentage contributions. Italy, also with the INFN, now plans to take part in the project to construct the large European Spallation Source (ESS) research infrastructure: this represents a new opening for Italian enterprises, since the countries taking part will sign agreements for contributions in kind, i.e. in the form of supplies of machine parts, manufactured by national industries. The Italian ILO offers support and advisory services to companies and will also follow the ESS project. Information will be made available on the www.pd.infn.it/ilo website. ■