

## OUTCOME REPORT

The fourth edition of the Italian Business & SDGs Annual Forum, promoted by Global Compact Network Italy (GCNI), was held on October 14 and 15 in Trieste at the MIB Trieste School of Management. The event was hosted by Hera Group with the support of Assicurazioni Generali, illycaffè, Leonardo and MIB Trieste School of Management and under the auspices of the Italian Ministry of Foreign Affairs and International Cooperation, the Municipality of Trieste and Confindustria Venezia Giulia.

The Forum, which is the annual opportunity for multi-stakeholder discussion on the role of the private sector in achieving the SDGs indicated in 2030 Agenda, was attended by 140 participants, 60 companies, 11 non-profit organizations, 6 representatives of local and national institutions, 11 research institutions and universities.

### **Innovation for the 2030 Agenda**

The fourth edition focused on the combination Innovation-2030 Agenda.

In order to meet the vision of the 2030 Agenda, which aims at achieving sustainable development that leaves no one behind, it is necessary for companies to go far beyond the logic of "business as usual" and to choose a transformative approach - characterized by innovative mindset, dissemination of new business models and testing of disruptive technologies - as well as unconventional partnerships.

All the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) contained in the Agenda are levers for innovation and experimentation of new solutions, with a positive effect in terms of increasing the competitiveness of the private sector.

As underlined by Sergio MERCURI - Minister Plenipotentiary, Coordinator for Sustainability Issues, Directorate General for Globalization and Global Issues, Ministry of Foreign Affairs and International Cooperation - the European Union also identifies innovation as a transversal activator for the transition to sustainability and as an essential prerequisite for an EU economy in line with the SDGs.

### **Transformative approach**

The theme of transformation was topical in the exchange between Stefano VENIER, CEO of Hera Group, and Gabriele GALATERI DI GENOLA, President of Assicurazioni Generali - both companies having a strong presence on the territory and consolidated sustainability profiles. They stressed the central role of concrete actions in the process of advancing the 2030 Agenda. Indeed, according to the two leaders, it is not a matter of starting revolutions within companies, but rather of working day after day and continuously towards the process of transformation. To this end, it is essential to think in an integrated way, to look at the entire business model and to pay attention to the impacts of business operations on the territory and on the communities throughout the production chain.

The transformative approach must take into account both the work and the social dimensions of all corporate stakeholders, which are to be protected in a logic of inclusion and involvement. Therefore, it is fundamental to operate towards a "just" transition.

## Partnership

The institutional greetings and speeches of Stefano FANTONI (President of the Trieste International Foundation and Champion ESOF 2020), Maria Cristina PEDICCHIO (President of the National Institute of Experimental Oceanography), and Federico TESTA (President of ENEA) made it clear how important the role of partnerships among companies, research and institutions is for the achievement of sustainable development. In order to obtain concrete, measurable and achievable results, it is necessary to be open to the contamination of ideas and tools. It was underlined how much science should be connected to the problems of our societies in order to support a widespread welfare for everyone. In addition, the link between technological transformation and the needs expressed by the Italian entrepreneurial fabric, characterized above all by small and medium-sized enterprises, must be even more relevant. Also, these speakers, highlighted how innovation can be "fair" if it produces a positive and widespread socio-economic impact.

## Competitiveness

The connection Innovation-2030 Agenda was explored more specifically toward the end of the day through four thematic focuses: inclusion, resilience, circular economy and sustainable finance. These themes were addressed thanks to the contribution of Barbara FALCOMER (Director General of Valore D), Andrea MAGGIANI (Director General of Carbonsink), Fabio IRALDO (Professor at the Scuola Superiore Sant'Anna), and Francesco BICCIATO (Secretary General of the Forum for Sustainable Finance). Integrating these models into business is a source of competitiveness for the private sector: when the company is able to enhance diversity and be inclusive - especially in terms of gender - it has better business performances; developing adaptation and mitigation measures to tackle climate change and setting ambitious targets for reducing emissions makes the private sector more resilient and competitive, bringing it closer to the financial sector, which today is fairly green-oriented. The adoption of circular business models implies, on the one hand, making the use of resources more efficient and, on the other, redesigning the entire production process, increasing business opportunities at every stage of the product life cycle; finance oriented towards sustainability projects is an innovative investment tool and an ally for companies to implement concrete actions with impacts on the territory.

## Working Groups

Participants in the Forum discussed inclusion, resilience, circular economy and sustainable finance in Working groups in the morning of 15 October with the aim of developing proposals for action to be implemented in 2020 within the operational framework of Global Compact Network Italy.

The following issues were outlined as priority and transversal needs for companies: finding the right ways to involve the entire value chain, not only suppliers and sub-suppliers, but also citizens and customers, and creating awareness within but also outside the business context.

Seven proposals presented in plenary and voted by all the participants of the Forum emerged from the Working Tables. The side picture shows all the proposals and the voting outcomes. In particular, the first three proposals refer to: the organization of a workshop on Sustainable Finance; the creation of guidelines on circularity for the companies' purchasing offices; the promotion of a CEO roundtable on inclusion and management of diversity within companies. Regarding all these actions, GCNI was indicated as an ideal partner to support companies - in terms of training, insights and sharing of experiences - in their path towards sustainability.

## Main statements

*"In the eleven years between now and 2030, we must move in a collective spirit. Companies must engage not only their production chains, but also citizens and consumers: in line with the global nature of the 2030 Agenda, everyone is expected to contribute to the development of a more equal and inclusive society. We should not forget that, in the vision of the UN's Global Compact, there can be no sustainability without inclusion".*

**Marco FREY – Chariman, Global Compact Network Italy**

*"The commitment of companies is one of the essential factors for the success of the transition indicated by the United Nations; the territory of Trieste, in this sense, clearly shows what a correctly oriented company can do (for instance, think about the new purifier that "speaks with the sea" in Servola, an important example of smart and innovative technology at the service of the environment and the community). The private sector as a whole, in order to make a real difference, must place sustainability at the very heart of its raison d'être, giving itself a long-term vision that is supported not only internally by adequate planning and economic resources, but also externally by coherent legislative frameworks, which direct the wide-ranging investments and re-industrialization processes that will be required in the coming years".*

**Stefano VENIER – CEO, Hera Group**

*"In the insurance business of Generali, environmental, social and governance responsibility is integrated with its objectives. Generali embraces the most advanced international principles for sustainability and particularly promotes the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). This is demonstrated by initiatives such as, for example, investments for € 1 billion by 2021 in digital innovation and transformation, or the climate change strategy, approved in 2018, which provides for specific actions on investment and underwriting and identifies discussion and stakeholder involvement as a tool to facilitate the transition to a low-environmental-impact society".*

**Gabriele GALATERI DI GENOLA – Chairman, Assicurazioni Generali**

**ITALIAN BUSINESS & SDGs ANNUAL FORUM**  
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