



Associazione Esposizioni e Fiere Italiane
Italian Exhibition & Trade Fair Association

Press

Press Release

GLOBAL EXHIBITIONS DAY, DANESE (AEFI): GROWING ALLIANCES BETWEEN LEADING EXHIBITIONS TO DEFEND THE MADE IN ITALY BRAND

"The time has come to show the world that Italian exhibitions are united and all working in the same direction. I accept the proposal of Carlo Bonomi, President of Fiera Milano, that we work to generate a critical mass between our leading exhibitions. We must be able to support the supply chains of the Made in Italy brands we represent in achieving a fast, decisive recovery; we must create alliances – both corporate and strategic - to defend our assets from our foreign competitors. A change of pace which I believe to be of fundamental importance." These were the words of the President of **AEFI** - Italian Exhibition and Trade Fair Association, **Maurizio Danese**, on opening the Association's webinar on Global Exhibitions Day. "It is no small thing," continued Danese, "to be talking about Global Exhibitions Day and reopening, when the difficulties we face are evident to us all. Cerved's most recent report on SMEs clearly demonstrates that our sector is not only the one to have been hardest hit in Italy by the crisis, but is also the most exposed to the risk of closures. In the pre-COVID-19 era, only 9.6% of the system's companies were at risk of defaulting; now, after the COVID-19 crisis, their number has grown to almost 70%. Our objective," he continued, "must be to give these figures the lie, because if this were to occur it would be a blow not only to Italian exhibition districts, but also to the leading Made-in-Italy brands. I'm talking about those 200,000 exhibitors for whom participation in our exhibitions is a fundamental part of their business cycle, and who generate business worth 60 billion euro a year at our events."

The CEO of **Ufi**, **Kai Hattendorf**, had this to say: "Exhibitions are a fast lane to re-opening the economy. The last 15 months have taught us that the key to growing business and developing relationships is - and always will be - meeting face-to-face, physical participation at exhibitions and events. It is clear to us," continued the CEO of the Global Association of the Exhibition Industry, "that what we do is important, especially for SMEs, which account for 80%-85% of our exhibitors, and for whom exhibition districts are their main channel for sales and marketing. Global Exhibitions Day is a sign of our shared commitment to resuming our work: Asia is starting up again with even bigger exhibitions than before the pandemic, in the United States a large event will be opening its doors at Las Vegas in just a few days, with 80%-90% of exhibitor slots already signed up, and even in Europe things are moving, with Spain, Italy and, we hope, Germany all scheduling events for the coming months."

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The President of **CFI – Comitato fiere e industria**, **Massimo Goldoni**, also spoke: "Never before has it been so clear how necessary it is that we work together as a system. Exhibition districts and the events they host are the hardware and software needed by the country to relaunch our industrial and manufacturing supply chains, and it is essential that we put extra effort into promoting our calendar of exhibitions to ensure the greatest possible opportunities for business, without conflict between events."

Carlo Romeo, head of department for events and the promotion of the economy, and general director for the promotion of the National System for the **Foreign Ministry**: "Starting with the reforms enacted in 2019 to internationalise our economic system, the Foreign Ministry has engaged in constant, wide-ranging dialogue with the Italian exhibition industry, in recognition of its fundamental importance to Italian exports and the national economy as a whole. In response to the pandemic, we rolled out major promotional and support measures as part of the Pact for Export framework, of which exhibitions are one of the 6 supporting columns. Together with ICE, SIMEST and our vast network of embassies and consulates worldwide, we continue to support the internationalisation of our exhibitions, especially in view of the imminent resumption of the calendar of events with physical participation."

Maurizio Forte, Director of the Coordination Office for the Promotion of Made in Italy, **ICE-Agenzia**: "The commitment of ICE-Agenzia in supporting the Italian exhibition system is as strong as ever. In agreement with MAECI, our investment in promotion will continue through the coming years, focussing ever more on quality and the amount of incoming, but also on communicating the excellence of our exhibitions in foreign markets. Our collaboration with AEFI is key to these initiatives."

Mauro Alfonso, Managing Director of **Simest SpA**, stated: "Around 50% of Italian exports are generated at trade fairs, and this means that the work and activities of the Italian exhibition industry is a priority for us. This year we have done our best to support the industry both directly and indirectly. First of all, we have made possible the financing of companies in the context of the Fondo 394 programme, including for international exhibitions held in Italy, cancelling the accessory guarantees normally required for 2020 and 2021, and introducing non-repayable grants to cover 50% of the cost of participating in events. Furthermore, on the Foreign Ministry's behalf, we were able to use capitalisation to offer facilitated access to the Fondo 394 programme directly to 52 exhibition districts and organisers for a total of around 130 million euro – 25 of which



is non-repayable. This gave the industry a bit of oxygen, in combination with the so-called "Ristori" (CCFF - Covid Corporate Financing Facility), non-repayable grants of up to 10 million euro to finance costs not covered by revenue. This is a new measure that we are starting to roll out in expectation of the EU's green light for the Temporary Framework."

Global Exhibitions Day involved over 110 countries, with on- and off-line events, and an overall audience of more than 700 million contacts. Worldwide, exhibition districts hold 32,000 events a year, with more than 300 million visitors and 5 million exhibitors in more than 180 countries. The AEFI webinar also featured "suggestions for re-opening" from the industry's principle partners, including **Pietro Piccinetti**, sole administrator and general manager of **Fiera Roma** and **Lorenzo Becattini**, president of **Firenze Fiera**. The issues of safety and data protection protocols were discussed by the experts and coordinators of the AEFI Technical and Legal Committee: **Nazario Pedini**, **Italian Exhibition Group** director of operations, **Giovanni Giuliani**, **BolognaFiere** director of operations, **Alessandro Pavesi**, Venue director for **Fiera Milano**, **Giovanni Barbato**, chief internal auditor for **Veronafiere**, and **Sergio Fumagalli**, data protection expert and member of the Clusit Scientific Committee. The issue of joint promotion in international markets, social initiatives and calendar coordination were discussed by **Renzo Piraccini**, coordinator of the AEFI Internationalisation Committee and President of **Cesena Fiera**, **Renato Pujatti**, coordinator of the Association's Exhibitions in Network Commission and President of **Pordenone Fiere**, **Massimo De Bellis**, general manager of **Cremona Fiere**, **Domenico Lunghi**, business unit director for **BolognaFiere** and **Emanuele Vietina**, general manager of **Lucca Crea**.

In his closing remarks, **Luca Palermo**, vice-president of AEFI, and CEO and general manager of **Fiera Milano**, highlighted "the need to act together as a system, because Italian industry needs exhibitions and exhibition districts are ready to get back to work in supporting and promoting the Made-in-Italy brand. AEFI must continue in its efforts to obtain non-repayable loans: we cannot permit our main European competitor, Germany, to obtain an asymmetrical advantage over us in this regard."