



Provincia  
di Milano

Strategic Programme  
for the development and support  
of innovation and the growth  
of production activities  
in the province of Milan

**2002/2004**



The Award of Excellence  
for Innovative Regions  
by the European Commission



**Provincia  
di Milano**

**STRATEGIC PROGRAMME  
FOR THE DEVELOPMENT AND SUPPORT OF  
INNOVATION AND THE GROWTH  
OF PRODUCTION ACTIVITIES  
IN THE PROVINCE OF MILAN  
2002-2004**



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## Foreword

Over recent years, the Province of Milan has been a promoter and protagonist of a large number of actions and programmes aimed at strengthening the supply of expertise and technological services for Small and Medium Enterprises (SME).

In order to attain this goal, the Province of Milan, together with the European Union, promoted and designed a strategic framework of innovation policies and transfer technology. The framework was realised with the RITTS project (Regional Innovation and Technology Transfer Strategies and Infrastructures), which was co-financed by the DG Enterprise of the European Commission.

The most significant result stemming from activation of the RITTS programme in the Province of Milan was the construction of the **“Strategic Programme for the Development and Support of Innovation in the province of Milan 1999-2001”**.

The overall programme of scheduled and implemented actions was aimed at achieving the following results: eliminate barriers between various innovation support structures, make expertise portfolios visible, create a system of targeted services to meet the needs of SMEs, give clearer territorial dimension to innovation strategies and develop a more solid “network culture” among different subjects operating in the area of Milan.

Furthermore, in order to achieve the previously mentioned results, actions were taken to support activities of public incubators and territorial development agencies where the Province of Milan is present as a promoter.

The Strategic Programme, also, played a very important role in building new networks of relations between economic, social and institutional actors in the training and research sector. Because of this, implementation of the **“Innovation Forum”** - a place for discussion, strategic formulation and comparison among public and private actors - took on enormous significance.

Starting with the 1999-2001 Strategic Programme, the most important actions directly incubated are the following:

- ▶ strengthening of the technological and technology transfer check-up activities through specific projects developed in partnership with various institutions (universities, business innovation centres, agencies, entrepreneurial associations);
- ▶ establishment of new facilities and territorial agencies;
- ▶ interventions in the field of finance for innovation and informal finance.

On the basis of suggestions made by the Strategic Programme and the Innovation Forum, the Province of Milan also promoted the following:

- ▶ a “Call for the Support of Innovation, Quality and Certification Processes of SMEs in the Milan Province Area”. Overall, approximately Euro 13 million have been made available to Milan SMEs for the following:
  - ✓ the access to telecommunication and information technologies;
  - ✓ support for SMEs in their development of commercial and/or organisational projects by means of new IT tools and of their active presence on the Internet (e-business, e-commerce, e-procurement);

- ✓ the Support of small companies during the certification of their systems, processes and products in order to meet international regulations acknowledged within the European Union.

In addition, and in an effort to promote the growth of new enterprises, the Presidency of the Province of Milan promoted the "Woman Creates Enterprise" public tender - a public tender made of up of approximately 3 million Euro to finance and facilitate long-term cost investments of newly formed or already established women-owned businesses.

Lastly, the participation in numerous European projects has allowed the Province of Milan to develop a vast action of networking between various European partners. This action became consolidated thanks to the official participation in a series of active systems and thematic networks in the field of technological innovation, such as: PANEL-PAXIS, IRE, Metropolis, and RINNO.

## The mission of the 2002-2004 Strategic Programme

Based on previous experience, the 2002-2004 Strategic Programme of the Province of Milan proposes to continue in the creation of a shared intervention strategy for the development and support of technological innovation through the promotion of planning interventions aimed at supporting business growth in the area of Milan.

The general mission of the 2002-2004 Programme can be summed up in three words: Quality, Innovation and Territory.

- ▶ **Quality:** it is necessary to avoid cost competitiveness on production factors by shifting the reference market segment of Milanese companies upwards and by creating conditions for continuous qualification of human resources and for product and manufacturing system reliability in the framework of international competition;
- ▶ **Innovation:** a dynamic, competitive and continuously evolving environment requires great capability in redesigning ideas through creativity and the ability to perceive and anticipate new needs. Although innovation is a merit that, up until today, Milanese entrepreneurs do not lack, it can be strengthened by building more direct and effective ties with universities and the world of applied research;
- ▶ **Territory:** the strong consistency of intervention policies with the specific needs of the actors operating in the various local contexts that make up the overall Milanese economic reality has proven to be one of the most evident factors of success of the previous Strategic Programme.

The **general goals of the 2002-2004 programme** are the following:

- ▶ **Stimulate** technological and organisational innovation in company and intercompany processes, products and systems. Stimulate improvement in the quality of products and manufacturing processes.
- ▶ **Back** the establishment of new companies, especially in innovative sectors linked to high technology industries and to universities, and in self-employment having high professional value.
- ▶ **Foster** financial consolidation of companies and the proliferation of innovative financial tools for business development.
- ▶ **Encourage** the internationalisation of companies in all forms and manners.
- ▶ **Support** initiatives for the competitiveness of local manufacturing systems that make up the Milanese territory.
- ▶ **Improve** the relationship between businesses and Public Authorities and the networking of structures serving companies through use of information technologies (e-government); simplify the companies' access to financing and

service opportunities by cutting time and reducing the complexity of relations between the businesses and public entities.

- ▶ **Promote** shared strategies to attract investments and to build co-operation between public and private parties operating in the area of Milan, also with regard to the implementation of the subsidiarity principle.

The previously mentioned goals, which are outlined in the “2002-2004 Strategic Programme”, are listed under **“Operating Axes”** that group together each goal according to its relevance and similarity. Moreover, each axis contains a summary of **“Measures and Actions”** that point out intervention proposals **to be carried out over the three-year period**.

The Axes and Measures of the Strategic Programme are summarised in the following **diagram**:

**Strategic Programme  
for the development and support  
of innovation and the growth of production activities  
in the province of Milan 2002-2004**

Axes	Measures
<p><b>Axis 1</b> Support the companies' R&amp;D initiatives and technology transfer</p>	<p><b>Measure 1.1</b> Support to the Milanese SMEs' patenting activities in Europe</p> <p><b>Measure 1.2</b> Exploratory award on feasibility studies for research projects carried out by SMEs</p> <p><b>Measure 1.3</b> Continue and extend the experience of the project "Stages of Excellence"</p>
<p><b>Axis 2</b> Generate new entrepreneurship and new employment</p>	<p><b>Measure 2.1</b> Strengthen the incubators</p> <p><b>Measure 2.2</b> Support to the start-up of new innovative companies: Milan Business Plan Competition</p> <p><b>Measure 2.3</b> Support to the technological adaptation of SMEs and new professions</p>
<p><b>Axis 3</b> Promote interventions for the territorial diffusion of innovation</p>	<p><b>Measure 3.1</b> Create a centre of excellence in the Vimercate area</p>

**Axis 4**  
Strengthen the dissemination of information to SMEs and the spread of the scientific and business culture

**Measure 4.1**  
Support activities for online dissemination of scientific and technological expertise of the Province of Milan

**Measure 4.2**  
Promote the scientific and business culture among new generations

**Axis 5**  
Support quality projects and SME internationalisation

**Measure 5.1**  
Set up a Territorial Marketing Agency for the Area of Milan

**Measure 5.2**  
Support to the internationalisation of the Milanese production system

**Measure 5.3**  
Develop Projects for the competitiveness of local production systems and manufacturing industries

**Axis 6**  
Simplify the relationship between companies and Public Administration

**Measure 6.1**  
Spread out the use of digital signature in relations with the Public Administration

**Axis 7**  
Strengthen local networks and European networking activity

**Measure 7.1**  
Strengthen the Innovation Forum

**Measure 7.2**  
Actions to enhance collaboration among institutions

**Measure 7.3**  
Strengthen the networking and benchmarking activities at the European level

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## **Axes and measures of the 2002-2004 Strategic Programme**

### **Axis 1**

#### **Support the companies' R&D initiatives and technology transfer**

International competition requires companies to make quick decisions regarding new business strategies and to adapt a series of behaviours that allow them to become a leader in their field. Nonetheless, the goal is not to simply stay on the market, but to nourish the competitive advantage that ensures the company will remain a leader.

This is possible if inside the companies there is the widespread ability to promote development of new and diversified technological expertise to meet the demands of a market that is rapidly changing.

For this reason, the need to spur companies to invest in research and development by building up both their internal structures and new opportunities for domestic and international collaboration between businesses and research centres takes on enormous importance.

This objective will be obtained through the implementation of specific measures, which, are promoted and financed by the Province of Milan, and, aimed at integrating and broadening the field of intervention of support tools for the promotion of technological innovation on the national and regional level (e.g. Italian law 140/97, Italian law 297/99 and regional public tenders, Regional Law 35). In particular, with this axis, we intend to support the following: the acquisition of technological knowledge; the activation of research projects developed in collaboration with university facilities and public and private research centres; SME patenting activity and technology transfer processes.

#### **Measure 1.1**

##### **Support to the Milanese SMEs' patenting activities in Europe**

The future of our industrial system will increasingly depend on its ability to develop innovation and to incorporate it into products and processes. Growth opportunities for companies are increasingly coupled with innovative ideas and with the management of knowledge.

The innovative idea must, however, be adequately protected and possess value. In other words, the idea must not be used illegitimately by the competition and, at the same time, the idea must provide means of advantages through economic exploitation.

Therefore, use of a patent as a "competitive factor" takes on an important role not only for large companies but also for the small and medium enterprises, both in defending their market and in acquiring new market shares.

Up until now, Italian companies have used patent possibilities to a lesser extent than their foreign competitors. It is well known that SMEs do not often opt for European patenting, even though they have come up with interesting process and product innovations. This is due to high costs and complex procedures in the process of obtaining a patent.

***The main goal of this measure is to increase the number of Milan SMEs that obtain European patents; this objective will be pursued through specific contributions the Province of Milan places at their disposal for sustaining a portion of the costs needed for preparing and filing the patent applications.***

### **Measure 1.2**

#### **Exploratory award on feasibility studies for research projects carried out by SMEs**

SMEs resorting to the innovation support structures is relatively scarce, but the potential demand - particularly for the stages upstream of innovation process management, meaning the information and the prior innovation process awareness campaign - depicts a widespread request by Milan SMEs.

The main feature of this measure, aimed at financing feasibility studies for potential research and innovation projects, is to stimulate the SMEs' participation in European, national and regional projects and programmes for the financing of research projects developed in collaboration with universities and research centres.

The newest SMEs are, in fact, often hindered in presenting financing applications due to the fact nothing covers the design stage meant as evaluation of the project's feasibility and writing of the application. This stages entails costs and risks that are too high for small firms.

***The measure consists in the Province of Milan allocating a contribution earmarked for covering part of the costs necessary for carrying out feasibility studies capable of assessing whether or not starting a research project is advisable. This study should include, for example, the analysis of the state of the art, the search for existing patents, the verification of the project's technological feasibility, etc.***

***This way, it is possible to motivate SMEs to present projects while preventing them from being exposed to the risk of investing in unfeasible projects.***

### **Measure 1.3**

#### **Continue and extend the experience of the project "Stages of Excellence"**

The professional resources and technical-scientific expertise of the academic world represent a fundamental element for companies' competitiveness.

The need for greater connection between the parties carrying out research (researchers and professors) and the system of companies has brought about the

activation of various support measures intended to implement technology transfer; measures that nonetheless have not always proven effective.

This consideration pushed the Province of Milan, in collaboration with the Politecnico di Milano, to experiment new intervention methods based on the theory that several specific "technology transfer" processes can take place through the "guided" internship of graduates/undergraduates at small and medium enterprises through the European Delcosi project "Stages of Excellence".

"Stages of Excellence" is a new internship model providing for the placement of an undergraduate or a post-graduate student in a company with the aim of developing an innovation project followed and coordinated by an academic tutor chosen according to his/her expertise.

Following the SMEs' innovation project proposal, the innovative content is evaluated, the research project to be carried out is defined, the academic tutor who has the job of evaluating the period training is chosen and the trainee is selected.

With this activity, the university has the chance to make the most of the research activities developed in its departments and to start/consolidate direct contact with the companies that could give rise to additional collaboration for customised research projects.

The success of this initiative spurred the Politecnico di Milano and the Province of Milan to continue this experience in a structured manner, with the financial support of the Banca del Monte di Lombardia Foundation.

***The measure is aimed at identifying financial manners and methods to further consolidate this initiative and above all to extend it to other Milan universities. To attain this objective, we will act using the FSE-Lombardy Region funds based on projects developed in partnership between the Province of Milan, Politecnico di Milano, Università Statale di Milano and Università Milano-Bicocca.***

## Axis 2

### Generate new entrepreneurship and new employment

The goal of the second axis is to consolidate expansion and dynamism of the entrepreneurial and manufacturing base of the Milan area by singling out specific measures intended to foster establishment of new high technology companies and to boost "second generation" self-employment.

This goal will be attained by consolidating several experiences already started in the Milan area with the Province of Milan's contribution, such as the incubators experience, and by activating new instruments and initiatives.

The measures proposed in this case are targeted at integrating support tools with the new entrepreneurship generation promoted nationwide and throughout the region.

#### Measure 2.1

##### Strengthen the incubators

One of the main operating modes with which we pursued the aim of supporting the start-up of new entrepreneurial business was the formation of incubators - places where companies in the start-up stage can be localized and where they can receive adequate support in terms of start-up services and advice.

Various initiatives of this type exist in the Milan area. They range from the realization of incubators promoted with the participation and support of public entities (Officina Multimedia Concordia in Sesto San Giovanni, Euroimpresa in Legnano, Acceleratore di Impresa Bovisa-Politecnico) to experiences promoted by a few private parties (Bottega di Leonardo, Biopolo Srl, Parco Scientifico San Raffaele).

During the 1990's, other private incubator experiences developed, for the most part established in connection with the activity of Venture Capital companies.

The overall opinion regarding these experiences on the one hand testifies to the liveliness of the Milan area compared to the rest of Italy, and on the other hand points out the need to consolidate this type of intervention. In particular, the following needs surfaced:

- ▶ make new facilities, increasing the new enterprise localization and settlement opportunities;
- ▶ increase the number of incubated companies, with special regard for the hi-tech companies;
- ▶ extend the experience of the university incubators to the various Milan universities.

***Attainment of such objectives during the three years period will be fulfilled through:***

- ***Completion of a new incubator now under construction by ASNM in the "Breda" area in Sesto San Giovanni;***
- ***the start of an incubator by the Università Statale di Milano with specific MIUR financing;***
- ***the start of new incubators promoted by the Municipality of Milan (accelerator in the biotechnologies sector and accelerator for social***

***firms, provided for with Italian Law 266/1997, art. 14 financing, "Interventions for Entrepreneurial Development in Urban Decay Areas").***

## **Measure 2.2**

### **Support to the start-up of new innovative companies: Milan Business Plan Competition**

On the European level, the "Business Plan Competitions" are instruments by now consolidated that permit:

- ▶ a meeting place between innovation demand and supply to be created;
- ▶ access to aspiring entrepreneurs and university students interested in the world of start-up and in the reality of Venture Capital to be given;
- ▶ contributing to the education of students around the process of creating and assessing new business opportunities;
- ▶ new businesses to be concretely encouraged, created and developed.

Based on experiences of other European regions, the Province of Milan plans to promote the organisation of a "Business Plan Competition" on a provincial level. In putting together the initiative, we will focus on involving universities in the area of Milan, entrepreneurial and trade associations with specific reference to the Venture Capital company associations, Development Agencies and Business Innovation Centres that the Province of Milan takes part in.

The measure sets out the goal of promoting the creation of new innovative enterprises (with particular reference to spin-offs from high technology industries or from public, private and university research centres), assuring improved conditions for access to innovative credit and the acquisition of adequate technical assistance for the start-up stage.

Those participating in the initiative are called upon to write a business plan based on an innovative and original entrepreneurial idea that has real possibilities of being carried out and that is economically sustainable.

A team of high-level experts made up of university teachers, entrepreneurs and venture capitalists will evaluate the best business plans.

Another selection among the best business plans will allow a number of aspiring entrepreneurs to be singled out. They will be offered further assistance in proceeding from the idea to the establishment of a company. This assistance will take shape both in the granting of a contribution set aside for the partial coverage of some of the company's start-up costs and in the supply of a series of professional services intended to support the company's start-up stages (tutoring activity).

***Therefore, the initiative concretely envisages the distribution of two types of contributions and the supply of several tutoring services. More specifically, the contributions to be disbursed concern:***

- ***a prize going to the best entrepreneurial projects (business plans);***
- ***a contribution to the start-up costs and start up of new companies selected among the best entrepreneurial projects.***

## **Measure 2.3**

## **Support to the technological adaptation of SMEs and new professions**

The public tender, "*We Finance Your Future*" promoted by the Province of Milan in 2000, granted contributions to SMEs for the purchase of computer equipment, software and consulting services with the aim of promoting organisational and managerial change in SMEs with reference to adaptation of corporate information technology systems, spread of electronic commerce, introduction of remote management techniques and extension of corporate quality certification.

The success of this initiative, both in terms of companies involved and financing allocated, points to the advisability of repeating several aspects of that initiative with particular reference to the contributions disbursed for the purchase of computer equipment and software.

In order to meet the goal of supporting not only the parties set up in legal form as enterprises but also the other forms of entrepreneurship, such as self-employment, we intend to broaden the audience of beneficiaries of these contributions.

There are basically two reasons at the heart of this expansion. In the first place, because self-employment - with particular reference to the so-called "second generation self-employment" - represents an essential and flexible source of expertise for the industrial system. Secondly, because these workers or professionals can generate new business trends with the possibility of developing and creating employment in new sectors.

***The measure could provide for the disbursement to the SMEs and self-employed in the Province contributions that are earmarked for partial coverage of the costs for purchasing computer equipment and software needed for carrying out their entrepreneurial or professional activities. The scope of possible beneficiaries prompts us to restrict the maximum amounts of disburseable contributions so as to meet the largest number of applications.***

## Axis 3

### Promote interventions for the territorial diffusion of innovation

Success of the technological innovation support policies does not depend solely on an adequate supply of facilities such as university laboratories, laboratories, research centres, agencies, etc., but also on the ability of these facilities to effectively relate with the demand expressed by the companies localized in the specific territorial contexts of reference.

This conviction has led deliberation, and particularly the recommendations developed on the European Community level, to insist on the necessity and advisability of promoting local policies supporting innovation through the identification of instruments and intervention methods adapted to the characteristics and specificities of the various production sites.

The experience accrued in the area of Milan was particularly interesting because it fostered several successful initiatives such as those of ASNM in Sesto San Giovanni and of Tecnocity in Legnano. Moreover, innovation promotion programmes made territorial specificity their distinctive trait.

There are several other territorial contexts in the area of Milan with distinct and specific productive vocations where it is possible to conjecture activating new interventions and structures for promoting technological innovation having these distinguishing traits.

#### Measure 3.1

##### Create a centre of excellence in the Vimercate area

The Vimercate area is distinguished by its industrial character and by the concentration of small, medium and large enterprises operating in clearly defined sectors as the ITC one.

In particular, several of the most prominent companies, such as ST Microelectronics, Alcatel, Cisco System, Celestina, IBM, Sun, Sap and Siemens, are world leaders in their technological sectors. They conduct a great deal of research and development activity, they make use of the universities' support, and they have a demand for and absorb highly professionalised personnel.

Despite the fact they conduct a lower amount of research activity, the smaller companies are involved in important innovative processes and constantly require highly professionalised personnel.

In order to fully seize the development opportunities that characterise it, the Vimercate area should have at its disposal research facilities that can operate both with the large company and with the small and medium enterprise, and facilities able to make available highly qualified and permanent refresher training opportunities.

Talking with the various parties active in the area (institutions, world of labour, world of enterprises, academia) has pointed out the advisability to have in the area:

- ▶ university training courses (e.g. university degree course in electronics; masters degree in microelectronics; masters degree in networking mgmt organisation);

- ▶ senior secondary school training to supplement that already found in the area (e.g. post-diploma training in the field of networking technology; networking mgmt);
- ▶ a research centre managed by the universities (Politecnico di Milano) that consolidates the already strong relationship between the university and the large company, and that extends it to the world of first the medium enterprise and then the small enterprise;
- ▶ a point of reference for innovation where the results of research conducted by various Italian and foreign universities are actively made available;
- ▶ a company incubator for the settlement of new hi-tech companies.

We propose to start the initiatives described above by establishing a "Technological Park".

The parties that showed initial interest in actively participating in the initiative are:

- institutional parties: Province of Milan, Region of Lombardy, Municipality of Vimercate and nearby municipalities;
- Politecnico di Milano: Faculty of Electronics, Politecnico Innovazione, Cefriel;
- ST Corporate University;
- large companies in the area;
- other private parties;
- AGINTEC.

***The measure provides for the promotion of a programme agreement between the parties; in executing a feasibility project that can properly set out the obligations of each party; and in implementing the first steps for creating the Technological Park.***

## Axis 4

### **Strengthen the dissemination of information to SMEs and the spread of the scientific and business culture**

One of the problems that small and medium enterprises, which most often point out regards access to technological and scientific expertise in the area of Milan and access to the various forms of financing and innovation support, is the need for a greater spread and circulation of information.

On the other hand, the circulation of information together with networking experiences represent of the most effective instruments for inciting SMEs' inclination towards technological and organisational change.

On another front, the circulation of information and experience in the field of new technologies and innovation can be a useful instrument for spurring the younger generations towards paying more attention to the scientific and enterprise culture.

The goal of this axis is, therefore, to consolidate the initiatives in progress and to start up new initiatives targeted at:

- ▶ promoting the networking of operators of the Milan innovation system;
- ▶ involving users to a greater extent in the innovation process;
- ▶ promoting and carrying out analyses and studies to create incentives for exchanging experiences and good practices;
- ▶ promoting an innovation culture among the companies, particularly by demonstrating to the companies effective approaches to innovation and propagating better management and organisational models;
- ▶ promoting an innovation culture by working on the education and training of younger generations.

#### **Measure 4.1**

##### **Support activities for online dissemination of scientific and technological expertise of the Province of Milan**

The goal of this measure is to consolidate and expand on-line services that supply information about innovation (centres of expertise, technology transfer activities, information about protecting intellectual property, about accessing risk capital, about accessing financing, etc.).

Another fundamental goal of this measure is to develop actions in the field of economic and technological intelligence (analysis of technological evolutions, of applications and markets, handling and spread of information that may be useful for researchers, entrepreneurs, SMEs, and investors in making their decisions).

***The goal will be reached by continuing and completing several projects in progress that were started by the Province of Milan; by integrating and coordinating several projects that were created by territorial centres and agencies; and by developing new planning actions.***

***The following are particularly envisaged:***

- ***continuation of the "Bicocca for the Enterprises" experience;***

- **updating and putting on-line the index of public and private research centres, of technology transfer bodies, of laboratories and of certification agencies (CETRA);**
- **creation of a “Vertical Research and Technological Innovation Portal” aimed at fostering the birth of partnerships between companies, universities and research centres;**
- **integration of the new Cetra portal, made in collaboration with Politecnico Innovazione and with other initiatives prompted by local partners, with particular reference to initiatives for putting on-line information pertaining to technological research now being carried out by the Milan universities and other parties (Biopolo-Biotechnologies Index; Milan CNR, Istituto Breda);**
- **integration with the initiatives that the Region of Lombardy will start for this purpose within the scope of the “Innovative Actions” Programme co-financed by the European Union.**

#### **Measure 4.2**

##### **Promote the scientific and business culture among new generations**

The objective of this measure is to promote greater public awareness - with particular reference to the younger generations - regarding scientific research and technological development activities, especially as far as the activities carried out within the sphere of the European research programmes are concerned.

The purpose of this initiative is to allow European citizens to better understand the positive impact that science and new technologies have on their day-to-day lives and to raise the interest of young people in scientific careers.

The goal of encouraging younger generations to take up new entrepreneurial professional paths, with particular reference to students of scientific disciplines, is just as important.

***This goal will mainly be attained through participation in European Community projects specifically focused on these topics, organisation of events (such as scientific exhibits, videos and programmes), singling out new instruments for encouraging dialogue between science and society (e.g. citizens’ forums, etc.), and strengthening orientation and training tools in the field of entrepreneurial professions.***

***To this end, the Province of Milan has already filed an application for European Community financing to foster initiatives within the scope of the programme “Increase the Research Manpower and the Basis of Socio-Economic Knowledge - Increase of Public Awareness for Science and Technology” (Scifi Project, in collaboration with Assotec).***

***Other specific initiatives may be identified within the scope of the opportunities offered by the European Social Fund.***

## Axis 5

### Support quality projects and SME internationalisation

The Province of Milan plans to devote special attention to the process of internationalising companies. In fact, in order to adequately meet the new globalisation challenges, it is necessary that Milanese companies be able to boast quality processes/products that can compete worldwide.

Above all, it is a question of helping all the small and medium enterprises in the area of Milan so that they can:

- ▶ increase and diversify their volumes of sales;
- ▶ know the foreign markets better;
- ▶ transfer technologies and export products/service to world markets faster and at competitive prices;
- ▶ draw up international collaboration agreements targeted at obtaining a more stable presence on new markets and/or at obtaining useful contacts.

It is also necessary to improve visibility of the area of Milan with specific territorial marketing interventions aimed at fostering the establishment of exogenous companies in the area.

In order to achieve these goals, the Province of Milan intends to:

- ▶ work towards improving visibility of the area of Milan by establishing a Territorial Marketing Agency;
- ▶ take part to strengthen the supply of consulting, assistance and information services for SMEs that want to operate in the international markets;
- ▶ support and promote projects to develop networks of enterprises and groups of similar enterprises in the same sector or manufacturing system.

#### Measure 5.1

##### Set up a Territorial Marketing Agency for the Area of Milan

Today, further development of the area of Milan and maintenance of its level of competitiveness compared to more dynamic European areas undoubtedly stems from the attraction of new production and financial investments in our area.

Therefore, it is necessary to develop new instruments and initiatives to help investors, with the priority goal of assisting them in the administrative procedures during the settlement stage and later stages.

It is also necessary to promote the image of Milan and its territory as not only a business but also a tourist destination nationwide and abroad, giving visibility to the numerous factors of excellence in the area of Milan .

These activities can be developed by establishing a specific "Territorial Marketing Agency for the Area of Milan ". This agency should have the following aims:

- ▶ plan and execute communication and event initiatives targeted at making potential investors aware of the Milan area's factors of excellence, using both conventional and new media to attain this goal;
- ▶ provide information and services to potential and active investors, whether foreign or domestic, both in the settlement and post-settlement stages and in the relocation/expansion stages of existing businesses;

- ▶ prepare proposal packages aimed at specific target groups of potential investors;
- ▶ put into effect an efficient comparison between the demand of the territory's use and the supply of localized advantages by implementing a close net of correspondence suitable for tapping the potential demand directly inside the various countries;
- ▶ create incentives for Greenfield investments and accommodate the bureaucratic course through dialogue with the local and central governments.

The parties that have shown interest in actively participating in developing the initiative are:

- AEM S.p.A.;
- Assolombarda (Association of the Industrialists of Lombardy);
- Borsa Italiana (Italian Stock Exchange);
- Camera di Commercio, Industria, Artigianato e Agricoltura di Milano (Milan Chamber of Commerce for Industry, Handicraft and Agriculture);
- Municipality of Milan;
- Fiera Milano S.p.A.;
- Fondazione Scala;
- Province of Milan;
- SEA;
- Unione del Commercio, del Turismo e dei Servizi della Provincia di Milano (Province of Milan Trade, Tourism and Services Association).

***From an operative point of view, the measure provides for the promotion of a "memorandum of understanding" between the parties; in realising a feasibility project that can properly set out the obligations of each party; and in the implementation of the first steps for setting up the Agency.***

## **Measure 5.2**

### **Support to the internationalisation of the Milanese production system**

The Province of Milan supports to consolidation of the process of internationalising small and medium Lombard enterprises and the development of opportunities for commercial expansion, production partnerships (joint ventures, sub-contracting), technology transfer, and import-export by supporting specific projects promoted by metropolitan area organisations and institutions (e.g. the "Bridge to California" and "Technical Assistance to the Republic of Moldavia" promoted by the La Fucina Business Innovation Centre and the Euroimpresa Business Innovation Centre, respectively) and by signing official collaboration agreements between European regions (e.g. Collaboration Agreement with the Region of Lisbon and Valle de Tejo).

***From an operative point of view, the measure is seen as an instrument of financial support for the start-up of new specific projects for the internationalisation of SMEs and for the signing of new collaboration agreements with other European regions.***

## **Measure 5.3**

### **Develop Projects for the competitiveness of local production systems and manufacturing industries**

The Province of Milan plans to support entrepreneurial initiatives that will develop within the scope of the initiatives based on the new definition of the industrial districts and of the meta-districts that the Region of Lombardy has put into effect (DGR 3839 of 16<sup>th</sup> March 2001 and DGR of 5<sup>th</sup> October 2001) with specific measures. This will take place, as far as the meta-districts are concerned, through reference to several industries that the Province identifies as strategic for improving the competitiveness of the area of Milan: non-food biotechnologies, design and new materials.

In view of the willingness of the Region of Lombardy has displayed to identify methods for planning interventions in the various district areas by defining specific "programme agreements" or by using other negotiated planning instruments envisaged by regional regulations, the coordination and pressure to mobilize the actors potentially interested in each district and/or meta-district for defining programmes of common intervention becomes essential.

***The goal of this measure is to promote coordinated definition of interventions in the district areas in the province and in the meta-districts of non-food biotechnologies, design and new materials in line with the planning criteria and use of funds allocated by the Region of Lombardy for that purpose.***

## Axis 6

### **Simplify the relationship between companies and Public Administration**

The rapid and significant changes brought about by the development of information technologies and by the new dispositions linked to the spread of the Information Society call upon Public Administrations to play a new, more dynamic role that is also able to effectively interact with citizens and enterprises.

The information technology revolution of public administration is laying the foundations for passing from e-information to e-government. E-government basically identifies itself with the Public Administration's use of the Internet for creating services addressed to the citizens and companies and for standardising and automating a set of procedures while optimising management time and costs.

The Province of Milan, therefore, wishes to promote the creation and growth of an e-government plan that fosters the development of services:

- ▶ centred on the citizen and on companies so that they can access information and use these services quickly and efficiently;
- ▶ that are integrated, or rather services that permit a smooth exchange of data between the various offices that share access to the important information;
- ▶ open to partnerships so that collaboration agreements are set up with the private sector for developing on-line initiatives and systems meeting the needs of citizens and enterprises.

#### **Measure 6.1**

#### **Spread out the use of digital signature in relations with the Public Administration**

Article 15, sub-section two of Italian Law no. 59 of 15<sup>th</sup> March 1997 (also known as the "Bassanini 1" Law), introduced principles and criteria of extraordinary importance to the Italian legal system. First of all, this rule sets out the basic principle according to which "the acts, data and documents created by public administration and private parties with information technology and telecommunication tools, the contracts drawn up in the same forms and their filing transmitted with information tools and telecommunication tools are valid and significant for all legal purposes."

According to the definition given in this law, the digital signature is "the result of the information technology (validation) procedure based on a system of asymmetrical keys in a pair, one public and one private, which allows the signer, through the private key, and the recipient, through the public key, to make known and check the origin and wholeness of an IT document or IT documents as a group."

The advantages of using the digital signature are obvious:

- ▶ Management and improvement of institutional and public communication of the PA;
- ▶ Administrative transparency;
- ▶ Efficiency, fostering a climate of constant attention paid to the needs of the citizens and companies and preventing them from needlessly moving about;
- ▶ Simplification of relationships, with certainties of times and answers;
- ▶ Automated documentation management;

- ▶ Safe and confidential data transfer;
- ▶ Economic savings in terms of personnel and paper material;
- ▶ Passage from managing document procedures on paper support to automated electronic document management;
- ▶ Security: the digital signature ensures secrecy, authenticity and document authenticity.

The Province of Milan's Labour Policies division, in collaboration with Siemens Informatica SPA, created a Web system that allows companies to transmit their communications on-line as provided for by the law to the Province of Milan's Employment Centre (hirings, terminations, transformations, extensions, etc.).

Such initiative provides companies with the opportunity to adopt the digital signature as a general means of communication with the various public administration offices, and in more general terms, to fully take advantage of all the practical applications the digital signature permit (transmitting documents having legal validity, drawing up contracts, payments between the public and private sectors, checking the progress of administrative affairs, keeping accounting books and entries on optic or magnetic support, e-commerce, etc.).

***The goal of the measure is to appreciably increase the number of companies that have a digital signature by distributing, on a widespread basis, contributions to cover the costs borne to obtain the electronic signature at authorised Certification Boards and for buying the required computer kit (manuals, software and smart card reader).***

## **Axis 7**

### **Strengthen local networks and European networking activity**

The building and promotion of a local strategy for innovation means being able to count on the existence of an institutional device (in which an essential role is played by the bodies delegated to economic and territorial planning), which is able to define the main strategic guidelines, to generate approval for these guidelines and to give legitimacy to the actions deriving from them.

On the other hand, it is a question of arriving at the construction of models and organisational devices aimed at facilitating the networking of the various parties that are more concretely involved in the innovation processes. In other words, it has to do with coming up with forms of coordination and setting up permanent relationships between the operating actors (companies and the group of innovation support facilities) so as to encourage the realization of critical masses of proximity, the development of targeting collaboration and the accessibility of local companies to a complete range of services.

Important measures have been made in both directions in the area of Milan through the "Innovation Forum" experience, the first round table discussion in Italy directed at strategic processing and at a comparison between public and private actors.

Various operative actions and European projects that have given birth to stable relationships with different European partners derived from the observations and information coming out of the Innovation Forum.

It has now become essential to stabilise and expand these forms of partnership collaboration. In fact, the promotion of a network culture and the building of approval among the actors are unavoidable conditions for carrying out effective and coordinated actions in the metropolitan area.

#### **Measure 7.1**

##### **Strengthen the Innovation Forum**

The Innovation Forum was promoted by the Province of Milan following the positive experience of the RITTS Project in which different parties active in the innovation support field in the Province of Milan debated on existing policies and actions necessary in order to consolidate the competitiveness in the area of Milan.

The main goals of the Forum are:

- ▶ to encourage discussion on technological scenarios and local policies concerning innovation;
- ▶ the strategic orientation and orchestration of choices pertaining to innovation;
- ▶ coordination of the development and implementation of operative actions and programmes (for example, promoting common projects, taking part in European Community calls for bids, etc.);
- ▶ monitoring and evaluation of actions and policies started up in the Milan area concerning innovation;
- ▶ the exchange of information between operators;
- ▶ promotion and awareness campaigns addressed to companies and operators (conferences, seminars, etc.).

***The goal of strengthening the role and functions of the Forum will be attained by:***

- ***enlarging its make-up by extending it to active parties in the Milan area currently not represented within the Forum;***
- ***strengthening the secretariat in charge of the organisational management of the meetings, of communicating the initiatives started up by Forum members, of managing operative work groups, and of organising awareness-building seminars and conferences;***
- ***linking up with the activities of the “Regional Innovation Forum” currently being set up and provided for by the Region of Lombardy within the scope of the “innovative actions” programme co-financed by the European Union.***

## **Measure 7.2**

### **Actions to enhance collaboration among institutions**

There are a large number of institutions that govern the area of Milan and that, according to their own aims and institutional expertise, pursue goals of developing the local economy and that have singled out among their intervention priorities both the promotion of technological and organisational innovation in the processes, products, and the company and inter-company systems of SMEs, and the support to the establishment of new companies, especially in the innovative sectors linked to the high-technology industries and the universities.

Putting forward common actions, synergies and collaboration between the institutions is therefore a factor that may strategically contribute to putting forward interventions able to attain the necessary critical mass when working in such a complex field as that of innovation.

***This goal can be reached by means of:***

- ***Signing a “Memorandum of Understanding” between the Region of Lombardy and the Province of Milan for starting a joint programme of actions for backing the technological innovation of the SMEs and for backing development of new entrepreneurial initiatives in the Milan area;***
- ***Interventions that start implementation of the “Memorandum of Understanding” between the Province of Milan and the Chamber of Commerce for all that specifically pertains to the theme of technological innovation, territorial marketing actions and new economy support;***
- ***Using negotiated planning instruments in accordance with the current regional regulations (Programme Agreements) for developing initiatives of particular financial importance that involve several public and private operators.***

## **Measure 7.3**

**Strengthen the networking and benchmarking activities at the European level**

The Province of Milan participates in various thematic European networks active in the field of technological innovation.

The aims of these networks are mainly:

- ▶ to put relationships established within the sphere of the transnational projects on innovation developed with various European partners to good use;
- ▶ to exchange knowledge and good practices on the activities, projects, and initiatives started in every European region in order to boost and back innovation.

The following networks are currently active: PAXIS-PANEL, IRE, METROPOLIS, and RINNO.

***The goal of this measure is to continue participation in the existing networks; to involve parties and organisations operating in the Milan territory in the networks; and to develop new networks. In particular, new European Community financing for continuing and enlarging the Panel network is envisaged.***

## **Actions for 2002**

**The preliminary operative details of those measures of the Strategic Programme to be started in the year 2002 that entail the heaviest financial burden for the Province of Milan are described below.**

### **Measure 1.1**

#### **Support to the Milanese SMEs' patenting activities in Europe**

The main goal of this measure is to increase the number of Milan SMEs obtaining a European patent by contributing to bearing the costs necessary for preparing and filing the patent application.

ELIGIBLE PARTIES: SMEs in the Province of Milan.

PURPOSE OF THE MEASURE: to obtain a European patent.

CONTRIBUTION: unsecured fund contribution equivalent to 60% of the admissible costs for a maximum value equivalent to € 12,000 per company.

PROCEDURES: the company presents an application for financing to the Province of Milan, declaring its intention to register a European patent application. The financing is distributed when the statement of expenses is delivered, and after the documentation regarding obtainment of the patent issued by the EPO is received. Following verification of the application and of the formal requisites for acceptance, the contributions will be awarded to those entitled based on the chronological order of arrival of the applications within the limits of the financial resources made available by the Province of Milan on the whole for this measure.

ELIGIBLE COSTS: expenses borne for consulting activities, agency fees, translation costs, issue costs and filing/research costs. In addition to the documented expenses, a lump sum equivalent to 20% of the expenses admitted for the contribution is paid to cover internal costs the company bears for the patenting activity.

OUTPUT: issue of the European patent.

### **Measure 1.2**

#### **Exploratory award on feasibility studies for research projects carried out by SMEs**

The main feature of this measure aimed at financing feasibility studies for potential research and innovation projects is that it is addressed to SMEs that plan on taking part in European, national and regional projects. This way it is possible to motivate SMEs to present projects while however preventing them from being exposed to the risk of investing in unfeasible projects.

ELIGIBLE PARTIES: Industrial SMEs in the Province of Milan.

PURPOSE OF THE MEASURE: to carry out feasibility studies capable of assessing whether or not it is advisable to start a research project. This study will therefore comprise an analysis of the state of the art, a search for existing patents and verification of the project's technological feasibility.

CONTRIBUTION: unsecured fund contribution for a maximum value of € 5,000 per project.

PROCEDURES: the company presenting a financing application must have already selected the research centre for carrying out the feasibility study (centres recognised by Law 297/99 MIUR as per Law 46/82, plus other institutes that the Province of Milan may identify). The centre's quotation regarding its execution of the study must be attached to the financing application. In the event of the Province's affirmative reply, it must become a contract put into effect within one month from the date the application is approved. The study must be completed within six months from the date the application is approved.

ELIGIBLE COSTS: cost of the study carried out by the research centre, presented with the company's self-certification with reference to the invoice issued.

OUTPUT: document containing the results of the study and the actual research project, if any, to be presented.

## **Measure 2.2**

### **Support the start-up of new innovative companies: Milano Business Plan Competition**

The measure envisages the organisation of a "*Business Plan Competition*" on the provincial level.

The main goal of this measure is:

- ▶ to create a meeting place between innovation demand and supply;
- ▶ provide access to university students and aspiring entrepreneurs interested in the world of entrepreneurship to Venture Capital (financial firms typically involved in financing new initiatives);
- ▶ contribute to the students' education on the process of creating and evaluating new business opportunities;
- ▶ concretely encourage, create and develop new businesses.

The initiative foresees disbursement of two types of contributions and the supply of several tutoring services. More specifically, the contributions to be disbursed will regard:

- ▶ a prize to the best entrepreneurial projects (business plans);
- ▶ a contribution to the start-up and establishment costs of new companies selected among the best entrepreneurial projects.

ELIGIBLE PARTIES: aspiring entrepreneurs, university graduates and university students in the Province of Milan.

PURPOSE OF THE MEASURE: writing of innovative business plans, start-up of new European hi-tech companies.

#### CONTRIBUTION:

- ▶ prize of € 5,000 to the best 100-200 entrepreneurial projects;
- ▶ unsecured fund contribution equivalent to 100% of the admissible costs for a maximum value equivalent to € 50,000 for start-up and establishment costs of 20 new companies selected among the best entrepreneurial projects.

PROCEDURES: Those taking part in the initiative are called upon to come up with a Business Plan based on an innovative and original entrepreneurial idea that offers actual possibilities of being executed and that is economically sustainable.

The following points are to be developed in the Business Plan:

- ▶ qualitative-quantitative analysis of the demand the new company is addressing;
- ▶ analysis of the competition and/or of the substitute products/services;
- ▶ marketing strategies and operative marketing;
- ▶ economic and financial plan for the first three years of the company's lifetime.

A team of high-level experts made up of university teachers, entrepreneurs and venture capitalists evaluates the best 100-200 business plans. The chief criteria adopted by the team are:

- ▶ the innovativeness of the idea contained in the business plan;
- ▶ the actual viability and economic sustainability of the idea;
- ▶ the proper application of managerial methods and tools contained in the business plan.

Assistance for passing from the idea to the enterprise is offered to the top 20 business plans. This takes shape in the coverage of admissible costs for investments and for the purchase of several professional tutoring services intended to support a few of the company's start-up stages, such as:

- ▶ assistance and implementation of the business plan for the financial, legal and taxation aspects;
- ▶ support, assistance and development of contacts with public institutions and territorial organisations, and with customers/suppliers;
- ▶ search for industrial partners;
- ▶ search for managerial expertise;
- ▶ search for institutional financial backers, private investors and public supporters.

Professionals pointed out by the promoters and by the universities supply these services, and their cost is included in the contribution the Province of Milan distributes.

ELIGIBLE COSTS: consulting services for the activities envisaged in the business plan and supplied by the Business Plan Competition promoters; machinery, equipment and capital goods pertaining to execution of the entrepreneurial project; general plants and costs for restructuring the premises (restricted to 20% of the total investment); patenting costs and software.

OUTPUT: business plans and the start-up of new entrepreneurial activities.

....."After the previous positive experience, the Province of Milan has then decided to implement a new "Strategic Programme for the development and support of innovation and the growth of production activities in the province of Milan 2002-2004", continuing building up a strategy aimed to the development and the support of technological innovation. Extending its reference horizon also to the programming of interventions generally devoted to support the Milanese Area Productive Activities' growth.".....

**The President  
of the Province of Milan**  
On. Ombretta Colli

**The Councillor  
for Labour, Economic Activities**  
Cosma Gravina

Abstract of the Provincial Council's Resolution acts Prot. n. 120349/02 Fasc. n. 4038/01 of 17/10/2002.