
From Bertinoro to Belgrade: a new bridge over the Adriatic

On the 24 of March, the University Centre of Bertinoro hosted the "Forum sulla Cooperazione Istituzionale ed Economica tra Italia e Serbia" (Forum on the Institutional and Economic Cooperation Between Italy and Serbia). The event was designed to be a meeting point between **Serbian institutions** and small and middle enterprises of the region Emilia Romagna that had an interest in investing part of their capital in this former Yugoslav republic. In addition to a high level of public participation in the event, 15 **Italian companies** of different sectors, ranging from agriculture to transport, had the chance to interact with the Serbian delegation, discussing and developing possible business plans.

The first part of the event that took place in the morning was organized by members of the Serbian delegation; they took this time to present a general picture of Serbian economic conditions and of the Serbian policy toward foreign direct investments. The Italian managers were given information on the kind of support that would be given by the Serbian government and the principal reasons that will guarantee to the investors a **profitable business investment**. Some Italian representatives of the chamber of commerce helped their Serbian colleagues in this discussion that was relevant and interesting for all the scholars following the debate also.

Following a wonderful lunch, the second part was perhaps the most interesting for all the participating firms. Unfortunately, the opening speech of Ms Sanda Raskovic, Serbian ambassador to Italy, was cancelled due to unexpected commitments. However, she sent a message to be read on her behalf, which was appreciated by all. This was followed by a presentation given by Mr **Rade Berbakov**, First Councillor of the Serbian embassy in Rome. Mr Berbakov showed how the Republic of Serbia is developing new technologies that would be useful to foreign investors. One such example is the research into new age ecological energy systems. Next, the turn was given to scholars from the University of Bologna; they gave a presentation to show how **relocating production to Serbia** would cut the production cost of many enterprises.

The last phase of the forum consisted of a series of **private meetings** between Italians enterprise managers and the Serbian institutions. The aim of these meetings was to evaluate, case by case, the potential of the Serbian, which advantages there are to dislocate the production to the other side of the Adriatic, and finally the eventual business plan to program. More than 10 meetings took place and the balance of this day can be considered absolutely positive. It demonstrated in a very simple way, how South Eastern Europe can still play a significant role in the economy of Western developed countries and also how Serbia firmly intends to make of Italy an important business partner, welcoming Italian enterprises of every sector on its national territory.

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