

The role of Italy in the Implementation of Environmental Liability and cooperation with Slovenia

One important act for Italy's enforcement of the European Environmental Liability Directive is the legislation on Environmental Liability adopted in 2015. Law n. 68/2015 new Law has brought some important changes, particularly by strengthening the "polluter pays" principle, so avoiding significant costs for public finances, as well as by implementing strict liability for environmental damage reinforcing repair standards to restore damaged in the natural resources, particularly for the biodiversity.

The new law has turned some criminal offences against the environment from simple contraventions to crimes, so inserted in the Italian Penal Code. The prescription period doubled with severe sentences (up to 20 years in prison). There has been made a change in the definition of "Certain tragic events" that must be considered "environmental disasters" if they cause the irreversible alteration of the equilibrium of an ecosystem and the offense to public safety due to harmful effects or to the number of people injured or exposed to the danger. The Law introduced new crimes as official offences: environmental pollution, environmental disaster, impeding controls, the failure to decontaminate and radioactive material traffic. In accordance to the EC Report on environmental liability, between April 2007 and April 2013, the EU Member States reported about 1.245 confirmed cases of environmental damage with considerable differences among Member States: two states account for over 86% of all reported cases of damage and further six have reported the majority of the residual cases: Italy appears in this list with 17 cases, preceded by Germany (60) and Greece (40), and followed by Latvia, Spain and the UK.

In order to avoid or at least to reduce such environmental threats is approaching forward to the Green and Circular Economy. This theme is closely linked to the National Business Plan 4.0. In fact, many of the enabling technologies referred to in the Plan respond to the needs of companies to reduce energy and/or environmental impacts or to make processes more efficient (for example by reducing waste and reusing materials). The green theme is also an added value of innovative start-ups registered in the special section of the Business Register (pursuant to Decree-Law 179/2012), the 15% of which, out of about 8000, are high tech in the energy field.

The Green Economy is indeed becoming a flagship of the Made in Italy and a pillar of our production system. Italy is not only the leader in Europe in green economy but has also a relevant position worldwide. According to the Green Italy Report 2017, more than a quarter (27,1% or 354.580 units) of Italian manufacture and service companies have invested in green technologies (with greater energy savings and lower environmental impact) in the period 2011-2016. The Green Economy is an important leverage for development: the medium enterprises that have invested in green technologies in the last three years (2014-2016) expect an increase in their turnover in 2017 (in 57% of the cases). Not only Italy is characterised by eco-sustainable production, but also by low levels of waste production and high level of recycling.

Italy and Slovenia have an excellent economic cooperation. Italy is Slovenian second trade partner with 7,57 billion EUR of bilateral trade in 2017, and fourth investor with over 1,1 billion EUR at the end of 2016. In this framework an important role is played by companies engaged in green economy. One recent example is the grant awarded from Bio-Based Industries Joint Undertaking (BBI JU) to the consortium led by AquafilSLO for the implementation of the project EFFECTIVE, aiming at developing economically viable ways to produce sustainable fibres and plastic films.

As shown also in the Circular Change Conference in Maribor this year and the previous one there is indeed ample space to increase further the already existing cooperation through common environmental friendly projects between Italy and Slovenia and other European partners.