

Excellence in Italy's Northeast : when research and companies build new value chains

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The meeting organized by the Professional Association of Accountants of Trento and Rovereto highlighted that productivity and growth stem from research, innovation, and new local supply chains. With more than 30% of projects combining local companies and international partners, FBK remains a key player in the development of the Trentino system.

What levers are needed today to help a region grow? What conditions make Trentino an advanced testing ground where research, business, and public administration work toward shared goals? These were the central questions of the public meeting held ahead of the annual assembly of Chartered Accountants and Accounting Experts of Trento and Rovereto, which took place on December 2 at the ITAS Forum. The [event](#) focused on excellence in the Northeast and on companies' ability to innovate, boost productivity, and generate widespread well-being.

Opening the meeting, **Achille Spinelli, Vice President of the Province of Trento**, noted that the challenge of innovation can no longer be postponed. He emphasized the central role of accountants in advising companies and selecting the most appropriate tools, especially in light of new regulations. Spinelli said Trentino is among Italy's most innovative regions, thanks to the University of Trento and a strong network of research centers, but added that technology transfer needs to move faster.

A clear picture emerged from **OECD data**. **Carlo Menon, head of the Trento Regional Productivity Laboratory**, explained that productivity is *"the factor that more than any other determines the economic well-being of a region over the medium to long term."* More productive businesses mean higher wages, stronger profits, and greater tax revenues. After years of strong demographic growth, Trentino is entering a new phase: the workforce is expected to shrink, and without a significant productivity boost, living standards risk stagnating.

How can companies and research centers be brought closer together in a context where public research is strong but private investment in research and development is more limited? The data presented offered a clear answer: networking is essential.

More than 30% of the projects coordinated by FBK involve local companies working with international partners, positioning the Foundation as a key hub for this type of collaboration and demonstrating the effectiveness of its operating model.

FBK Secretary General Andrea Simoni reported that roughly €65 million of the Foundation's €100 million budget comes from a mix of European funds, corporate partnerships, and public-sector contracts. This approach has produced internationally recognized examples of excellence, from the first [Qubit](#) developed at FBK—now replicable and already on the market—to machine vision solutions awarded in global competitions. Alongside cutting-edge research, long-term collaborations are thriving, including partnerships with OPTO-I and the joint laboratory with Dedagroup. More than 80 projects are currently active, 75% with national and international companies and 25% with local firms.

The tools for coordinated action already exist, both at the European and local level, as highlighted during the roundtable discussion involving the Autonomous Province of Trento, represented by **Laura Pedron, Director General of the Department of Economic Development, Research, and Labor; Confindustria**, represented by Vice President **Alfredo Maglione**; and FBK, with Vice President **Maurizio Gianordoli**. The discussion was moderated by **Raffaella Ferrai**, President of the Association of Chartered Accountants of Trento and Rovereto.

The debate was both practical and forward-looking, showing how dialogue among institutions, companies, and research is already a key driver of regional development, while also underscoring how much remains to be done to turn Trentino into a true innovation ecosystem. Despite the presence of solid tools, high-level skills, and well-established international networks, there is a clear need to strengthen the role of companies, increase investment in research, and speed up technology transfer.

The challenge facing the Northeast—and Trentino in particular—is to build new production chains capable of creating widespread value, attracting talent, and supporting long-term competitiveness. Along this path, research centers such as FBK and professionals including the network of Chartered Accountants and Accounting Experts will continue to play a strategic role as facilitators, interpreters of change, and bridges between innovation and the economy.

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