

Small and medium-sized enterprises, productivity and cognitive automation

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Resta, FBK: "In times of rapid technology evolution, collaboration between SMEs and R&D centers is essential."

The evocative setting of the Buonconsiglio Castle, as part of the Trento Festival of Economics, hosted the panel, moderated by journalist **Pierangelo Soldavini**, "Small and Medium Enterprises, Productivity and Cognitive Automation," with key speakers **Ferruccio Resta**, President of Fondazione Bruno Kessler, **Giulia Baccarin**, CEO & Co-Founder MIPU Predictive Hub, **Antonio Calabrò**, President, Museimpresa and Assolombarda Foundation, **Giusella Finocchiaro**, University of Bologna, and **Marco Taisch**, Politecnico di Milano.

The discussion highlighted how, in a context of rapid technology evolution, innovation is crucial for business competitiveness. Therefore, collaboration with research and technology transfer centers, such as Fondazione Bruno Kessler (FBK), proves to be strategic to access specialized expertise and cutting-edge solutions, facilitating the adoption of disruptive technologies such as Artificial Intelligence, Internet of Things and Big Data. The organic integration of these tools into business processes is a key success factor, providing businesses with a competitive advantage and new opportunities for growth.

However, in an increasingly competitive international environment, where no player can win alone, the emergence of **collaborative ecosystems** that require close synergy between **public institutions, academia and business** becomes essential.

"To remain attractive in the market, they must be constantly engaged in a process of continuous improvement and innovation. In times of strong technology disruptions, such as the current one, collaboration with technology development and transfer centers becomes vital. Thanks to their specialized skills, these centers aim to preside over technologies and provide concrete solutions to companies," said **Ferruccio Resta, FBK President**. "At the international level, competition is increasingly high and cannot be won by a single player. For this reason, real attractive ecosystems are emerging that require close cooperation between public institutions, academia and businesses."

The panel opened by delving into the distinction between medium and small businesses, pointing out that the former are generally more ready for technology transfer, while the latter, often related to craftsmanship, require a different approach. Startups, on the other hand, while part of the innovation ecosystem, are excluded from this distinction because innovation is inherent in their DNA from inception, with needs focused primarily on funding.

Italian companies, with a long tradition of innovation, are aware of the importance of a continuous improvement process to remain competitive. However, in times of significant technology disruptions, such as those brought by digital technology, it is essential to foster a business culture open to change. In these contexts, connection with technology development and transfer centers becomes critical. These centers have a mission to monitor technologies and provide innovative solutions.

“This is why FBK has included enterprises as one of the key pillars in its strategic plan. This ledge is realized through multi-year strategic agreements, joint laboratories, and the promotion of innovation through the creation of new enterprises,” concluded **FBK President Resta**.

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AUTHORS

- Silvia Malesardi