

The aerospace district, the large companies are giving a hand to the small ones

Pubblicato: Lunedì 2 Dicembre 2013

✘ **Starting from far away, with an eye on the future;** this is the spirit of the initiative that the **Lombard Aerospace District** is dedicating to **small and medium-sized companies**. On Thursday, about ninety businessmen gathered to set up four new working groups covering four different topics: rotary wing, fixed wing, advanced electronic systems and space.

The idea is simple, but not obvious: **big business partners**, (AgustaWestland, Alenia Aermacchi, Compagnia Generale per lo Spazio – C.G.S., Thales Alenia Space and Selex Galileo), who have or are going to set up a programme, **are sharing the idea with the small partners**. “In this way, they immediately share information about what will be needed in the future to build a product. In other words, I’m telling you today, what I’m going to need, so that you can be competitive in the market at the time of the bidding. This does not mean that the small and medium-sized companies taking part in the working groups will also be taking part in the development programmes of the big companies, but sharing information and comparing the technological skills will certainly give them a considerable competitive advantage,” explained the **chairman, Carmelo Cosentino**.

The meeting of the large and the small took place in **Palazzo Lombardia, the headquarters of the Region Council**. Unlike other regional councils, for example, Puglia, the Council of Lombardy does not have shares in the district, which is only funded by the companies, according to their ability. “This signal from the Region is very important,” Cosentino explained, “but we need this support also when we operate abroad.” However, Cosentino did not hide how important economic support might also be.

Roberto Maroni, the Regional President, responded. “Constant dialogue with you is guaranteed,” he said, at the end of the day’s work. “Lombardy is competitive in terms of innovation, research and development, and it is in these areas that we can encourage investments.”

In economic terms, however, **the match is not a simple one**. “**The Region has a budget of €23 billion, a good part of which goes on health, and cannot be reduced,**” said Maroni. “The government has just cut our budget by €305 million. But I want to repeat the commitment we made in the regional development programme: by 2018, we want to increase the current investment in research and development, from 1.6% of Lombardy’s GDP, to 3%, so around €10 billion.”

This is not the only initiative that the district is putting forward for businesses in the area, although it may be the most practical and immediate. For some time now, working groups on specific topics have been organised, again with the large companies, to pass on to the small and medium-sized companies certain skills that are difficult to acquire alone.

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