

**Ufficio Stampa della Provincia autonoma di Trento**

Piazza Dante 15, 38122 Trento

Tel. 0461 494614 - Fax 0461 494615

uff.stampa@provincia.tn.it

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# **How to push economic growth through local level policies**

**Italy is experimenting an increasing gap between North and South, and it is not only a matter of geographical distance but also of dissimilar level in per capita GDP as well as of different approach in affording and overtaking the crisis. In a moment in which local bodies are demanding more self-government and autonomy for their local policies supporting economic recovery, Italian government is pursuing a diametrically opposite goal, trying to taking competences and policies back to central level. Governors Roberto Maroni (Lombardia), Debora Serracchiani (Friuli-Venezia-Giulia), and guesting Ugo Rossi (Trentino, main partner of the Festival), discussed how to push economic growth through local level policies.**

A meeting of three territories of northern Italy, two of them with self-government rule (Trentino and Friuli-Venezia-Giulia) and Lombardia, Italian largest and richest region, with no particular self-government but that would like to be autonomous.

**Ugo Rossi** outlined that Trentino after the 2<sup>nd</sup> World War was one of the poorest territories in Italy, with level of per capita GDP comparable to the Calabria one. Thanks to Alcide De Gasperi, Trentino-native, the just-born Italian Republic knew how to give value to such a mountain and frontier territories' oddity. The tool was the self-government charter of 1948 that during last decades was continuously adapted (some 150 update) in order to encounter local needs in the management of competences entrusted to local bodies. And the process is not yet completed, since next couple of weeks Trentino will receive from central government competences in administrative management of Justice too. "We would like a quality growth, not only expressed in terms of GDP – explains Rossi – and at this purpose we are studying the introduction of some indicators as enterprise and people satisfaction, quality in education, social cohesion, poverty control policies and so on". All that avoiding separatist tendencies, on the contrary in full and responsible cooperation with the central government, showing to Rome that Trentino is efficient in using public resources. "Anyway, pay attention. Resources in Trentino – says Rossi – are employed to cover all public services (education, healthcare, welfare and public transportation) that in no self-government regions are in charge of national budget".

**Debora Serracchiani** brought the experience of a border Region as Friuli-Venezia-Giulia. "We started from infrastructure – pointed out Serracchiani - in particular from the Trieste harbour and results arrived. Today, with some 57 million tonnes traded, the Trieste harbour is the largest in Italy and the third in Germany. Yes in Germany, because as a Region we were the first to sign an international treaty with Bavaria in order to share the Trieste terminal together. Yet, this partnership with the Bavarian Chamber of Commerce allowed us to enter easily overseas market as the Chinese one". Next challenge is to reorganise industrial policy "even if – pointed out Serracchiani – such a policy stands upon the central government" and at the same time attracting foreign investments, through the newly created Regional Agency for Investments ("copied" by the closest Carinthia region). "Anyway self-government works – closes Serracchiani – if right skilled persons are called to manage it and if it is an everyday practice".

**Roberto Maroni** begins with a joke: "I envy my colleagues Serracchiani and Rossi". The reason of such an envy lies in local budget differences between Lombardia and self-governing region or province. "Considering that Lombardia has some 10 million inhabitants and a budget of just 23 billion Euro - states

Maroni - if we were autonomous as Trentino or Fruli-Venezia-Giulia we would count on a budget four times higher, some 90 billion Euro. Nevertheless, we are the only region in Italy at zero balance deficit”. Maroni anyway disagrees with abrogation of self-governed region or province, on the contrary he wishes that autonomy will be extended to territories who deserve it (as Lombardia, for instance). “To extend self-government to Lombardia – concludes Maroni – it does not mean to cut resources to Trentino”.

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