

Building synergies between businesses and research – skills interview series

As part of Eurochambres' series of interviews showcasing the chamber network's efforts to contribute to large-scale upskilling and reskilling of the EU workforce, this week we present the platform [Matching Impresa Ricerca](#) (MIR). Recently launched by Unioncamere, this platform aims to assist companies in their technological transition and evolution by facilitating matching between businesses and the research community.

In this interview, Unioncamere Senior Policy Advisor, Diana Marcello and Dintec¹ Innovation Manager, Alessio Misuri, will explain the platform and how such a structure can be a blueprint for supporting businesses in a fast-changing technological environment.

1. 2023 is now officially the European Year of Skills. What are your expectations for this year?

Labour shortages in key sectors have doubled between 2015 and 2021. Helping SMEs address skills shortages and support young people and workers to get the right skills is essential for the green and digital transitions.

Digitalization is key to a successful digital and technological transition. One out of three workers lack basic digital skills and Unioncamere already supports SMEs through its PID's – a network of “one-stop shops” where staff from chambers help SMEs bridge their digital gap.

Unioncamere also wants to address the needs of SMEs that seek to innovate or whose specific skills sets require synergies with other stakeholders that chambers can facilitate. Collaborating to enhance partnerships will help us improve our game. The MIR project is all about this.

Overall, we hope that the momentum created by the “European Year of Skills” will be used to push for more ambitious and holistic skills development policies.

2. Can you share a few words about the MIR project, and how it can help bridge the gap in terms of skills development and skills shortages?

The MIR platform was officially launched on 31 May 2023. The overall objective is to bridge the technological gap faced by companies through matching businesses with researchers. In a fast-changing environment, with emerging and disruptive technologies, companies can face significant technological challenges.

Similarly, chambers too can be confronted with a lack of high-profile technical skills. Thanks to this brokerage activity, we can help SMEs who have specific transformational needs.

¹ Dintec is the consortium for technological innovation, is an in-house agency of Unioncamere, the Chambers of Commerce and ENEA. The offer of services and the continuous updating of internal professionalism are the drivers that guide the company to make the best use of the resources it has.

Within the MIR platform, companies can contact chambers directly through the PIDs. The chamber staff working at the PIDs are digital experts, responsible for training and providing services to SMEs. Over 600 staff members trained specifically in digital skills, and 200 were specifically trained for this project.

SMEs seeking more innovation or faced with specific challenges that can't be addressed directly by PID's staff - are assessed and profiled towards a more targeted help, activated via the platform. MIR will then help get in touch with one of the experts from two research entities, partners of the project, the Italian National Agency for New Technologies, Energy and Sustainable Economic Development) and the National Research Council (CNR). These two entities have numerous labs and centres spread all over the country, with a total of 3000 researchers active in a wide array of scientific fields.

Essentially, the MIR Platform service is tailored to the companies' needs, who then meet their research counterparts. The Platform is accessible only by chambers and by the researchers from ENEA and the CNR. MIR therefore enables to reach innovative micro-companies and SME's that usually employ highly-skilled people but can face challenges in areas for which they have little experience or competence. And, due to the size factor; they also face significant limitations in terms of investment possibilities. The structure established with the MIR Platform allows such companies to autonomously continue their activity after having outsourced the solution to their problem.

More generally, it also helps us, as chambers, to engage with emerging companies, and explore synergies with other relevant stakeholders for mutually beneficial projects. It can help bring research to the market and bridge complementary needs. It is mutually beneficial also because cross-contamination of ideas often generates new business projects.



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