Regional Development Agencies in Italy

INTRODUCTION

Institutional context

According to its constitution, the Italian Republic is made up of the state, regions (‘regioni’), provinces (‘province’), municipalities (‘comuni’) and metropolitan cities (‘città metropolitane’). At regional level, the country is subdivided into 20 regions: fifteen with ordinary status (‘regioni a statuto ordinario’) and five with special autonomous status (‘regioni autonome a statuto speciale’), taking into account relevant geographic and/or cultural features¹.

Italy can be considered a 'regionalised' country. Since a 2001 constitutional reform, the regions have enjoyed significant legislative and administrative powers, assuring exclusive legislative powers with respect to any matter not expressly reserved for the state. The regions are responsible for a number of matters, including healthcare, transport, social services and housing, economic development, environmental protection, culture, agriculture, and education. However, some responsibilities are shared with the state, resulting in significant overlap (concurrent legislation)².

In this context, the growth of Regional Development Agencies (RDAs) in Italy can be traced back to the establishment of local development agencies from the mid-1970s to the end of the 1980s mainly in the form of business service centres, which are primarily technical sectoral structures helping Small-to-Medium-sized Enterprises (SMEs) to innovate and to improve the quality of their goods and services³. Over the years, these RDAs’ missions and activities have expanded, reflecting the needs of respective local territories.

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**Legal status and competences**

In Italy, RDAs are for the most part public actors, often with the role of a in-house organisation of the respective regional or provincial government. They are established by regional law which define their strategic and operational functions, as well as the available economic resources\(^4\). We can summarise three types of models\(^5\):

- **Financial model.** Established in the ‘70s and more in the ‘80s to channel resources for development; their mission and activities are strictly related to traditional financial intermediaries.

- **Industrial development model.** This model raises together with the configuration of industrial development consortia (Italian districts), aiming to promote and to develop new or declining industrial areas.

- **Local development model.** This includes all the early experiences of territorial strategic development and marketing.

Regional law confers to the RDA a relevant institutional role to guarantee efficient coordination and direction of the local territorial governance system. For this reason, their organisation can rely on a high degree of autonomy, usually guaranteed through the constitution of a public limited company. The natural owner of an Italian RDA is the region, which sometimes remains the only shareholder; more often, it is the majority shareholder of an assembly of public and/or private members. The main examples of other potential public shareholders of RDAs are local chambers of commerce and universities (even if the latter case is rare); sometimes the shareholders are private, for instance financial institutions, banks, or local industrial associations\(^6\).

The main activities of Italian RDAs reflect the mission for which they were established. At least one of the following macro-activities are carried out by Italian RDAs:

**Support for territorial planning.** For instance, the promotion and implementation of programmes and actions of territorial and environmental regeneration, aiming


to stimulate economic development and attract new productive investments; the technical and operational support to the regional administration and other public organisations, both directly and through its subsidiaries, for the definition of policies and specific interventions to support the regional economy.

- **Accompaniment of business initiatives (both individual firms and the business community).** Providing information and guidance on business opportunities, incentives, facilities, etc.; credit support (microcredit); accompanying business start-up through the provision of mentoring services (e.g. for the preparation of business plans) and/or advanced services (such as spaces equipped and logistics services); strengthening international cooperation; and networking.

- **Promotion and support for research and education.** Collaborating with the region and other local authorities in the design and implementation of intervention policies on research and innovation, such as through projects on social innovation and skills development.

- **Technical assistance.** Providing services to the region to speed up the spending of EU and national funds, for instance the implementation of the Operational Programmes co-financed by the European Regional Development Fund (ERDF).

Italian RDAs work primarily by connecting and building a network of relationships between different companies, institutions and skills (including organisations located in other areas) and integrating research, training, and support services\(^7\).

### National coordination

A relevant national actor working together with Italian RDAs is ‘Invitalia - Agenzia nazionale per l’attrazione degli investimenti e lo sviluppo d’impresa’\(^8\). Invitalia is the national agency for inward investment and economic development, owned by the Italian Ministry of Economy and Finance. It boosts the country’s economic growth, focusing on strategic sectors for development and employment; it is committed to reviving crisis areas and operates mainly in the South of Italy. It manages all national incentives that encourage the creation of new companies and innovative startups. It finances projects both large and small, targeting entrepreneurs with concrete development plans, especially in innovative and high-added-value sectors. It provides services to the Public Administration to speed up the spending of EU and national

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\(^7\) Canzanelli, G., 2011, Models of Territorial Development Agencies in Europe and in the World, ILS LEDA paper n. 13.

funds, as well as to promote cultural heritage. Finally, Invitalia is the Purchasing Body and Contracting Authority for the execution of strategic actions at local level.

ITALIAN REGIONAL DEVELOPMENT AGENCIES

Abruzzo Sviluppo SpA

Abruzzo Sviluppo provides technical assistance for the design and management of initiatives for local development and for improving the qualifications of Abruzzo’s businesses and the region’s industrial system.

Abruzzo Sviluppo’s mission is to analyse and coordinate the needs of all actors in the area by optimising time and resources for implementation of strategic development actions in the production sector. It also promotes relations between companies and public authorities, as well as foreign partnerships, alongside the regional structures and other institutions active in the territory aimed at increasing the competitiveness and attractiveness of Abruzzo, both at national and international level.

The various areas of activity highlight the scope of Abruzzo Sviluppo and define its role in supporting regional policy, placing it in a strategic location for the promotion and development of research and innovation, internationalisation, territorial marketing, facilitated finance, employment, and networking. Abruzzo Sviluppo supports companies and local governments by:

- providing incentives for regional and/or European resources;
- providing management and implementation of regional calls;
- providing information and guidance on business opportunities, incentives, facilities, etc.;
- providing credit support (Microcredit);
- accompanying business start-up (Measure 7.A. Young Guarantee)
- supporting internationalisation;
- providing management and implementation of regional calls;
- promoting business networks, network contracts and regional innovation poles;
- providing support for territorial planning (Regional Action Plan for Extractive Activities).
ART-ER Attrattività Ricerca Territorio

ART-ER Attractiveness Research Territory is the Emilia-Romagna Joint Stock Consortium that was born from the merger of ASTER and ERVET, with the purpose of fostering the region’s sustainable growth by heightening the innovation, knowledge, attractiveness, and internationalisation of the region. The activities of ART-ER include:

- Coordination and development of the regional ecosystem for innovation and knowledge, support for startups, and boosting business;
- Sustainable territorial development, internationalisation, making the community attractive, and promotion of investments in Emilia-Romagna;
- Promotion of the region’s productive systems and cities through projects on infrastructure, social innovation, skills development and environmental sustainability
- Supporting shareholders in planning their activities in the following fields: designing, management, monitoring and assessment of strategic programmes and projects; participation in and development of national, European and international networks; research and studies on the region’s social and economic assets; design, construction, and management of infrastructure for the region’s development.

ART-ER has been a member of EURADA since its establishment, with an active role in the Board of Directors.

FILSE, an in-house organisation of Liguria Region, is the technical body that supports and assists the Regional Administration and other local authorities in designing, developing and implementing policies and actions in support of the regional economy.

FILSE, with its subsidiaries, operates as an "integrated system" for the management of funds (EU, national, regional and municipal), for access to credit (loans and equity), for internationalisation, marketing, and the recovery and regeneration of industrial areas, as well as for supporting the social economy, the development of new infrastructure, and the definition of energy policies. The activities of FILSE include:
• The promotion and implementation of programmes and actions for territorial and environmental regeneration with the goal of economic development and attraction of new productive investments;

• Technical and operational support to the Regional Administration and other public organisations, both directly and through its subsidiaries, for the definition of policies and specific interventions to support the regional economy;

• The management and programming of public financial instruments to support regional SMEs in different sectors (manufacturing, handicrafts, trade, and tourism);

• The regulation and management of the regional strategy for research and innovation, with particular reference to the Regional Revolving Fund which supports industrial research, pre-competitive development, and business innovation;

• The development of projects and services to address social issues.

**Fincalabra SpA**

Fincalabra SpA, an in-house company of the Calabria region, is a financial intermediary specialised in business services and the management of advanced financing instruments. It contributes to the development of the regional socio-economic system through the implementation of policy initiatives also related to public utilities and infrastructures. Over the years the company has oriented its institutional activity towards the management and implementation of regional and/or EU funds aimed at promoting and supporting the creation of entrepreneurial initiatives on the regional territory.

**Finlombarda SpA**

Finlombarda SpA - Finanziaria per lo Sviluppo della Lombardia S.p.A. - is a financial company, entirely controlled by the Lombardy Region, whose institutional task is to support regional policies for the economic and social development of Lombardy and its enterprises, governmental authority, and citizens, through financial and management tools and initiatives. Finlombarda S.p.A. manages dedicated regional and European funds in order to promote the competitiveness, growth, innovation, co-operation and internationalisation of Lombardy’s entrepreneurial environment.

Through the structuring and activation of advanced financing instruments, it offers the Regional Actions Guidelines a technical contribution of high qualification, as a
financial intermediary specialised in the fundamental development areas of the Lombard economic and social system.

Its special role as “territorial financial operator” can be well represented by both its organisation of financial initiatives for SMEs and its carrying out of projects concerning infrastructure and specialised services to optimise the efficacy and efficiency of the regional financial system.

The company is the subject manager of many financial instruments for business facilitation. It conducts activities such as the preliminary investigation, management, and administration of financial interventions.

Finlombarda provides advisory services and technical assistance to the government for the definition and implementation of new policies, for industrial development programs, and for Research and Development (R&D) incentives.

**Finpiemonte SpA**

Finpiemonte SpA is a public holding company which has been operating for more than thirty years to support regional development and competitiveness. Finpiemonte is an in-house company of the Piedmont Region; several local authorities and chambers of commerce hold minority stakes. The main activities of Finpiemonte include:

- Managing facilities for the economic and social development of the region;
- Supporting the regional structures in the identification and operational definition of the most suitable policy instruments for promoting development based on research and innovation;
- Contributing to the implementation of policies through consultation and participatory tools such as technology districts and platforms, or even representing shareholders in special projects at local and national level;
- Promoting the technological, social, cultural, and economic development of the territory;
- Managing tenders for the allocation of public funds from different sources.

**Friulia SpA**

FRIULIA is a financial company of the Region Friuli-Venezia-Giulia. As an investor, Friulia supported the financial capacity of controlled companies, fostering their
growth. Friulia action has always been comparable to the work of a consultant who operates to identify the best opportunities. For this reason, Friulia offers to collaborate with local enterprises, to assess industrial plans and development models or to be a financial partner sensitive to market and business needs. FRIULIA supports investments in different stages of a company’s life cycle: start-up activities, equity for development, projects to support generational change, support to internationalisation projects, and projects for the aggregation of more companies.

**IDM Südtirol**

IDM Südtirol was founded in 2016 and is South Tyrol’s business services provider. IDM stands for Innovation, Development and Marketing. IDM acts on behalf of the Province of South Tyrol (60% ownership) and the Bozen-Bolzano Chamber of Commerce (40% ownership) to ensure the entrepreneurial success of local companies. Their goals are South Tyrol’s sustainable development as a business location and supporting the companies to achieve lasting growth as well. Their main activities and services include customer consulting, export, innovation, business incubation, attracting business, and linkages with the Enterprise Europe Network.

**IRFIS - FinSicilia SpA**

IRFIS - FinSicilia SpA is a financial intermediary specialised in business services and the management of advanced financing instruments. Its capital is entirely owned by the Sicilian Region since 2012. IRFIS - FinSicilia objectives are primarily pursued by means of assistance to the creation, development, modernization, economic consolidation of firms. The main activities carried out are:

- Support for enterprise creation and development;
- Support for smart specialisation, technological and social innovation, and internationalisation processes for global competitiveness;
- Creating a favourable environment for attracting foreign direct investment and qualified human capital;
- Grant funding in any form.

**LazioInnova**

LazioInnova performs functions of specialised technical assistance to the Lazio Region, with specific reference to the implementation of European programs.
LazioInnova is an intermediary body acting under the responsibility of the Managing Authority (Regione Lazio) and interacting directly with final beneficiaries in the implementation of the Operational Programmes co-financed by the European Regional Development Fund (ERDF). The company operates for the benefit of local enterprises and public administrations by providing:

- Incentives based on regional, national, and/or European financial resources;
- Information and guidance on funding opportunities and European projects;
- Credit support;
- Venture capital activities;
- Services for internationalisation;
- Promotion of business networks and regional excellence;
- Services for the creation and the development of enterprises;
- Micro finance and measures for social inclusion.

LazioInnova is also responsible for the implementation of specific development projects and internationalisation on behalf of the Region, such as the participation of Lazio in Expo 2015.

**PugliaSviluppo**

PugliaSviluppo is an intermediary body that provides support to the regional administration in the implementation of the plans and programs for the economic and social development of the territory through the realisation of activities of general interest in support of the Puglia Region. It is a limited public company controlled by the regional government, which has 98% ownership. The agency is organised into three main areas: spin-off promotion and valorisation of incubators; start-up and self-employment; and regional development and planning.

PugliaSviluppo is an intermediary agency in the implementation of several ROP-ERDF 2007-2013 and ROP-ERDF 2014-2020 measures in the area of:

- Support to SME consortia and medium-sized enterprises;
- Programmes for investment in large enterprises;
- Support for start-up investments in micro-enterprises and small enterprises;
- Support for start-up investments in micro enterprises promoted by disadvantaged people;
• Support for investments in SMEs promoting energy saving and use of renewable energy;
• Support for the tourism industry; and
• Support for the regional broadcasting industry.

Puglia Sviluppo also manages and promotes the activities of several regional business incubators.

**SFIRS – Società Finanziaria Regione Sardegna**

This company has the sole purpose of competing in the implementation of plans, programmes and policy for the economic and social development of the Region. For these purposes, the Company may perform all acts permitted to financial intermediaries under Articles 106 and 107 of Law No 385/1993. SFIRS performs the following activities in support of public or private entity operation in Sardinia:

• Granting funding and incentives relying on special funds entrusted management;
• Promoting and supporting public and private entrepreneurial initiatives aimed at achieving the goals of economic and/or social development;
• Providing consulting and corporate finance support in the strategic choices of financing and restructuring;
• Carrying out activities aimed at managing real estate assets and securities;
• Providing advice and assistance in dealing with market and regulatory authorities and the banking system;
• Providing advice and assistance in corporate finance transactions;
• Providing advice and assistance in acquisitions, divestitures and valuations of firms;
• Promoting and supporting project financing operations;
• Attracting private capital for investments with high interest in the region;
• Acquiring (with the previous consent of the Sardinia Region) shares in companies already established or to be established, registered and operating in Sardinia, that work to implement economic development initiatives of general interest.

**SVDA Struttura Valle d’Aosta**

SVDA Struttura Valle d’Aosta is one of the main companies of the Aosta Valley Regional Public Administration. The “core business” of SVDA is to manage and valorise the industrial and agricultural buildings owned by the Region (more than 90 buildings).
They also deal with projects concerning innovation and development having a potential regional impact and promote several regional projects with the goal of supporting SME development. In this field, the company also manages the two regional start-up incubators (Pépinières d’Entreprises) located in the two main industrial parks of the Region: Espace Aosta Area & Ilss Viola Area. SVDA Struttura Valle d’Aosta is a member of EURADA.

Sviluppo Basilicata SpA

Sviluppo Basilicata is a Shareholding Company in the Basilicata Region with a single shareholder. It operates as a regional financial company to support the development, research and competitiveness of the Basilicata region. To achieve these goals the company provides support in the following areas:

- Implementation of regional and local programs of economic, social, and territorial development in the economic and territorial planning of the Basilicata Region;
- Instrumental activities for the functions of the Basilicata Region which have financial and service character, within the framework of programming policy.

To achieve its mission, the organisation operates in two main areas: business support and growing the competitiveness of the territory.

Enterprise support:

- Design and management tools for creating regional financial and business development under the guidance and objectives defined by the Basilicata Region;
- Provision of grant funding, incentives, benefits, contributions, or any other type of benefit for enterprise development;
- Management of guarantee funds for enterprises;
- Fund management of venture capital for financial aid in the form of acquisition of equity participation, equity loans and debt including convertible debt for small and medium enterprises or newly created in the form of capital companies;
- Management of "incubators" in which entrepreneurs can find services and facilities for their activities;
- Implementation of promotional activities and entertainment area in the creation and entrepreneurial development;
- Design and management, in collaboration with the Region of Basilicata and sub-regional institutions responsible for vocational training, guidance and training measures aimed at the promotion and enterprise development.
Developing territorial competitiveness:

- Advice, assistance and services to the Region of Basilicata and government premises, directly or indirectly contribute to economic development initiatives within the region;
- Collaboration with the Region of Basilicata and other authorities concerned in the design and implementation of intervention policies on research, innovation, and support for the competitiveness of local business;
- Support for investment projects and regional development;
- Promotion and support, in cooperation with local authorities, of initiatives and activities affecting the attainment of local economic and social development;
- Implementation of national programs of regional interest.

Sviluppo Campania SpA

The priority objectives of Sviluppo Campania S.p.A. are to contribute to the implementation of plans, programs, projects and tools aimed at promoting and strengthening the competitiveness and development of the regional territorial systems.

Sviluppo Campania S.p.A. is focused on the following activities:

- Incubation: Incubators are spaces designed to accommodate local small business start-ups, small and medium-sized. Their 3 incubators are located in Marcianise, Pozzuoli, and Salerno, offering several services for start-ups.
- Regional Development policies: Sviluppo Campania is set up as an operational structure to provide consulting and support in regional projects and policies regarding economic and social development.
- Financial instrument management: Sviluppo Campania manages financial instruments in collaboration with Invitalia to promote and support the use of self-employment and, on behalf of the Campania Region, the Microcredits ESF Fund, Program Contracts, Tax Credit, SME ERDF, Pico ESF, Fund PAC III Plan "Campania SiCura" and the Fund for the Internationalisation of Campania Companies.

Sviluppo Italia Molise SpA

"Sviluppo Italia Molise S.p.A." is the regional development agency which supports territorial development, business creation and development, and provides technical assistance to the public administration. Sviluppo Italia Molise provides assistance to the Region Molise as a technical body to improve the effectiveness of regional
development policies. The focus is on coordination of actions to promote sustainable development and environment with Public Instruments for the reinforcement of regional development services aiming to safeguard employment and infrastructure. The main activities carried out by Sviluppo Italia Molise include:

- Support and technical assistance to the regional administration in managing EU funded programmes;
- Services for supporting the creation and growth of innovative enterprises, including through a business incubator;
- IPR services;
- Networking services;
- Attraction of investment and internationalisation;
- Analysis and statistical services for policy support.

**Sviluppo Marche Srl**

Sviluppo Marche contributes to the development of the economy of the Marche region, supporting the public administration’s activities, in close collaboration with the economic forces at work in it through the development of local, European, and international perspectives of support for youth employment and promoting generational change, in compliance with the regional planning guidelines. Their main activities are:

- Development and implementation of territorial development projects;
- Design and, where necessary, implementation of measures to support businesses that tend to favour the birth, expansion, modernisation, technological and financial innovation, commercialisation, retraining or restructuring of production, and internationalisation;
- Support for investment projects and regional development promoted by the Region;
- Activation of all forms of innovative finance for business development.

**Sviluppo Toscana SpA**

Sviluppo Toscana S.p.A. is the in-house regional development company of the Tuscany Region. Sviluppo Toscana supports the regional administration and local government bodies in designing and implementing EU co-financed programs and projects. Its mission is to promote regional economic development, mainly through direct support to help enterprises innovate and attract investment.
operates solely in support of the Tuscany Region and its agencies and performs the following activities:

- Design and implementation of programs and projects of regional interest;
- Advice and assistance for the programming of businesses incentives, monitoring and evaluation, management and control of funds;
- Collaboration in the design and implementation of intervention policies on research, innovation and support to the competitiveness of the Tuscan business system;
- Technical operational support to investment projects, to land development, and to initiatives and activities aiming to achieve the goals of economic and social development.

_Sviluppumbria SpA_

Sviluppumbria is a wholly publicly owned company. The major shareholder is the local region with around 97%. The agency works to promote economic development and competitiveness in line with the policies and acts of regional programming. Sviluppumbria S.p.A. fulfils its mission through: design and supply of a wide range of financial and technical services to public and private entities supporting economic development and employment growth; and fostering the integration and coordination of local institutions, associations, universities, research centres, and other public and private local actors to promote local competitiveness. The main activities carried out are:

- Support for enterprise creation and development;
- Support for smart specialisation, technological and social innovation, internationalisation processes for global competitiveness;
- Creating a favourable environment for attracting foreign direct investment and qualified human capital;
- Supporting integrated tourist promotion strategies;
- Strengthening international cooperation and networking;
- Promotion and enhancement of regionally owned property, including infrastructure.

_Trentino Sviluppo_

Trentino Sviluppo is the agency established by the Autonomous Province of Trento to foster the sustainable growth of the “Trentino system” by developing actions and
services for supporting the creation of new entrepreneurial and innovation-enhancing projects. The shareholders of Trentino Sviluppo are the Autonomous Province of Trento (98.57%) and the University of Trento (1.3%).

To promote the development of the provincial economy, Trentino Sviluppo operates along two lines: 1) promoting the diffusion of innovation and entrepreneurship; 2) directly supporting provincial companies by means of specific actions and instruments. Specifically, Trentino Sviluppo performs the following activities:

- Implementing initiatives for the promotion of managerial skills, innovation, and internationalisation to support the growth of local businesses;
- Promoting training initiatives, with special attention to young entrepreneurs on various issues related to innovation and competitiveness;
- Supporting start-ups through the provision of mentoring services (e.g. for the preparation of business plans) and advanced services (such as spaces equipped and logistics services, support for ICT, funds for the purchase of high-tech facilities);
- Promoting the establishment of networks between businesses and other research organisations so as to contribute to the creation of clusters;
- Carrying out business support activities, offering assistance, and giving information on research and technology as well as on funding opportunities;
- Promoting technology transfer services in order to support companies in identifying potential partners for their research and innovation activities;
- Implementing interventions for the acquisition and redevelopment of industrial areas, facilitating the establishment of new local businesses.

**Veneto Sviluppo SpA**

Veneto Sviluppo is a regional development agency owned by the Veneto Region (51%) and by eleven national and regional banking groups. Its mission is to support local business development through the activation and management of specific financial instruments for SMEs. Veneto Sviluppo is specialised in loans, investments, and equity initiatives tailor made to small business.

Veneto Sviluppo, in coordination with the Region of Veneto, is involved in the activation and management of specific financial instruments, particularly revolving funds made available to SMEs in almost all sectors, from agriculture to crafts, industry, trade, tourism. This activity is carried out in close cooperation with the
banking system. Furthermore, Veneto Sviluppo is active in the venture capital market. It develops new financial instruments designed by the company with the aim of attracting private capital and fostering new forms of partnership.
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