Ministry of Economic Development

ITALIAN TRADE AGENCY

"INDUSTRIA 4.0" ITALY'S NATIONAL PLAN FOR INDUSTRY

FOREWORD

Italy is a great industrial country.

Our manufacturing companies represent the engine that drives the country's economic growth and development thanks to their ability to produce wealth and employment, make associated industries and services flourish, and contribute to the country's financial, economic and social stability. It is therefore in Italy's interest to create an environment that is favourable to business.

Industrial policy is back on top of the Government's agenda and the tools that we have introduced are tailored to the trademark entrepreneurial spirit within the Italian economy, and are well suited to the new phase of globalisation and major technological change we have already embarked upon.

The "Industria 4.0" National Plan represents a major opportunity for all companies that are ready to take advantage of the unprecedented incentives offered by the Fourth Industrial Revolution. The Plan provides for a wide array of consistent and complementary measures promoting investment in innovation and competitiveness - all measures that have proved their effectiveness in the past have been strengthened under a "4.0" logic, and new measures have been introduced to meet new needs.

The Government and the business community as a whole must make the most of this opportunity. This is why we have embraced a new paradigm of policy-making: we have planned measures that every company can put in place automatically – thus avoiding any evaluation procedures and the associated red tape - and, above all, without any restrictions in terms of its size, sector or location. As demonstrated by the considerable financial resources that have been committed to the Plan in the coming years, this Government is offering enterprises that want to grow and innovate a new deal.

The "Industria 4.0" National Plan will affect every step of the life cycle of companies that want to improve their competitiveness by supporting investments, the digitalisation of industrial processes, improvement in workers' productivity, as well as the development of new skills, new products and new processes.

The success of the "Industria 4.0" National Plan depends on the extent to which entrepreneurs take advantage of the measures that have been put in place.

Carlo Calenda

Italian Minister of Economic Development

CONTENTS

HYPER AND SUPERDEPRECIATION

INVESTING in GROWTH

WHAT IT IS FOR

- Supporting and offering incentives to companies that invest in new capital goods, tangible assets and intangible assets (software and IT systems) for the technological and digital transformation of their production processes.

BENEFITS

- Hyper-depreciation: for depreciation purposes, investments in new tangible assets, devices and technologies enabling companies' transformation to "Industria 4.0" standards will be valued at 250% of the investment value. Applies for outright purchases and lease purchase agreements.
- Super-depreciation: for depreciation purposes, investments will be valued at 140% of the investment value. Applies for outright purchases and lease purchase agreements. Those benefiting from hyper-depreciation may in the future also apply the benefits to investments in intangible assets such as software and IT systems.

These benefits may be combined with:

- "Nuova Sabatini".
- Tax credit for Research and Development.
- Patent Box.
- Incentives for capitalisation of enterprises (ACE).
- Incentives for investment in innovative startups and SMEs.
- Central Guarantee Fund.

WHO IT IS FOR

- Everyone with business income, including sole proprietorships subject to enterprise income tax (IRI), which are based in Italy for tax purposes, including permanent establishments of companies based abroad, regardless of their legal form, size and business sector.

HOW IT IS ACCESSED

- It is automatically accessible when preparing financial statements and through self-certification.
- Eligibility for tax benefits is satisfied when an order is placed and an advance payment of at least 20% is made by December 31, 2017, provided the goods are delivered by June 30, 2018.
- For hyper-depreciation purposes, investments with a value of more than €500,000 per asset, must be supported by a sworn technical report prepared by an expert or engineer that is registered in the appropriate professional registers. The report must

certify that the asset has the required technical characteristics for inclusion in the lists contained in Annex A or Annex B to the 2017 Finance Act.

SUPER-DEPRECIATION: 250%

HYPER-DEPRECIATION: 140%

QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS

- *If an "Industria 4.0" asset is purchased for a lump sum which includes the software that is needed to operate it, is the whole payment eligible to benefit from the 150% increase, or do the tangible and intangible components of the purchase need to be separated?*

If the software is embedded, and therefore purchased with the asset, it is considered eligible for hyper-depreciation. This interpretation is consistent with the list in Annex B, which also includes stand-alone software that is not necessary for operating assets.

- *Investments in new tangible assets included in Annex A to Law no.232 of 2016 made after January 1, 2017 are eligible for 150% hyper-depreciation. Does this mean that an asset of this kind that is delivered in 2016 will benefit only from the 40% increase?*

Article 1, paragraph 8 of Law no.232 of 2016 (2017 Stability Law) extends until December 31, 2017 - or, under certain conditions, until June 30, 2018 - the regulations applying to the 40% "super-depreciation" of investments in new tangible capital goods (the extension does not apply to certain types of motor vehicles).

Paragraph 9 introduces a new benefit, referred to as "hyper-depreciation", which consists in the possibility to increase by 150% the purchase cost of certain new high-tech tangible assets (listed in Annex A to the 2017 Finance Act) - exclusively for the purposes of calculating depreciation charges or leasing fees.

Hyper-depreciation applies to investments made between January 1, 2017, the date on which the Finance Act goes into effect, and December 31, 2017 (or June 30, 2018 under certain conditions).

For the purposes of determining whether an investment is eligible for the 150% increase, we are of the opinion that, as with the super-depreciation, the allocation of the investment to the period in which the special terms remain in effect must follow the general rules pertaining to accrual that are stated in section 109, paragraphs 1 and 2 of the Consolidated Law on Income Tax (TUIR).

A new tangible asset of one of the types listed in Annex A delivered in 2016 is therefore not eligible for the 150% increase as the investment was made outside of the period of applicability; it can only benefit from the 40% increase.

- *What benefit eligibility applies to an asset of the type listed in Annex A to the Finance Act that is purchased in 2016 but which becomes operational and interconnected in 2017?*

As stated above, an investment made in 2016 can only benefit from super-depreciation (not hyper-depreciation). The 40% increase may be used in 2017, the fiscal year in which the asset begins operation. Interconnection is irrelevant for the purposes of super-depreciation under Law no.208 of 2015.

- *Is the hyper-depreciation option (entailing a 150% increase in the value of the investment for depreciation purposes) applicable to persons practising arts and professions?*

The literal wording of the provision contained in paragraph 11 ("For the use of the benefits identified in paragraphs 9 and 10, the enterprise must produce a declaration…"), the content of Annex A to the 2017 Finance Act (list of "Assets serving the technological and digital transformation of enterprises on the basis of the '"Industria 4.0"' model") and the types of asset eligible for the benefit suggest that only persons receiving a business income are eligible for the 150% increase.

- *Can a 40% super-depreciation be applied to an intangible asset listed in Table B, annexed to the Finance Act, if the asset is purchased in 2017, and in the same year applied to an asset which theoretically appears in Table A, but is not eligible because it was purchased years ago by the business?*

Article 1, paragraph 10 of the 2017 Finance Act applies a 40% increase to the purchase price of intangible assets listed in Annex B. This benefit is granted to "parties" benefiting from a 150% increase. Therefore, the legislation associates the intangible asset with the "party" benefiting from the hyper-depreciation as opposed to associating with a specific tangible asset (the "object" of the benefit). This is also confirmed by the content of the report accompanying the Finance Act.

Software of the type identified in Annex B can therefore benefit from the 40% increase on the condition that the business makes use of 150% hyper-depreciation, irrespectively of whether the intangible asset is specifically related to the tangible asset in question.

- *What features must an asset have in order to be defined as "interconnected"?*

For an asset to be defined as "interconnected" and benefit from 150% hyper-depreciation under article 1, paragraph 11 of the 2017 Finance Act, it is necessary and sufficient that it:

1. exchange information with internal systems (such as a management system, planning system, product design and development system, local or remote monitoring and control system, other machines in the plant, etc.) and/or external systems (such as customers, suppliers , collaborative design and development partners, other production facilities, the supply chain, etc.) through a connection based on documented specifications which are publicly available and internationally recognised (such as: TCP-IP, HTTP, MQTT, etc.);
2. is unequivocally identified, for the purposes of recognising the source of the information, through the use of internationally recognised address standards (such as an IP address).

- *We would like to know whether the sworn expert's opinion - that must be presented for assets worth more than €500,000 - must be prepared for each individual asset, or whether it can include all capital goods that are purchased in a single year.*

An expert's opinion must be submitted for each asset that is purchased.

“NUOVA SABATINI”

More CREDIT to INNOVATION

WHAT IT IS FOR

- Supporting businesses requesting bank loans to invest in new capital goods, machinery, plant, factory equipment for use in production and digital technologies (hardware and software).

BENEFITS

- Contribution partially covering interest paid by business on bank loans of between 20,000 and 2,000,000 euros, granted by banks approved by the Ministry of Economic Development, drawing either on a specific credit line of the Savings and Loans Fund (Cassa Depositi e Prestiti) or on ordinary reserves.
  The contribution is calculated on the basis of a conventional 5-year depreciation plan with an annual interest rate of 2.75% and is increased by 30% in the case of investment in “Industria 4.0” technologies.
- Priority access to the Central Guarantee Fund, for a maximum of up to 80%.

These benefits may be combined with:

- Hyper-depreciation and super-depreciation
- Tax credit for Research and Development.
- Patent Box.
- Incentives for capitalisation of enterprises (ACE).
- Incentives for investment in innovative startups and SMEs.

WHO IT IS FOR

- All micro, small and medium enterprises in Italy in all sectors.

HOW IT IS ACCESSED

- Businesses that are interested must present, by December 31, 2018, a bank or financial intermediary with a request for a loan and an application to access the grant, according to the model set forth in the ministerial memorandum.
- The bank or financial intermediary will check the request, determine if the loan is to be approved, and send the Ministry a request to book the respective grant.
- Within 5 business days from receiving the request, the Ministry will notify the bank or financial intermediary of the partial or total availability of funds. Requests for grants shall be processed on a first come first served basis as long as funds are available.

CONTRIBUTON FOR PAYMENT OF INTERESTS: FROM 2.75% TO 3.57%

TAX CREDIT FOR RESEARCH AND DEVELOPMENT

REWARDING those who INVEST in the FUTURE

WHAT IT IS FOR

- Encouraging private investment in Research and Development for product and process innovation to ensure the competitiveness of enterprises in the future.

BENEFITS

- 50% tax credit on increases in Research and Development costs up to an annual ceiling of €20 million a year per beneficiary, calculated on the basis of the average expenditure on Research and Development in the years 2012-2014.
- The tax credit can be used to cover a wide range of different taxes and contributions, even if companies report losses.
- Applies to all expenditure on basic research, industrial research and experimental development: hiring of highly qualified and technically specialised employees, research agreements with universities, research institutes, enterprises, innovative startups and SMEs, depreciation on laboratory equipment and instrumentation, technical know-how and industrial property rights.
- This measure is applicable to Research and Development expenditure borne in 2017-2020.

These benefits may be combined with:

- Hyper-depreciation and Super-depreciation.
- “Nuova Sabatini”.
- Patent Box.
- Incentives for capitalisation of enterprises (ACE).
- Incentives for investment in innovative startups and SMEs.
- Central Guarantee Fund.

WHO IT IS FOR

- All parties with a business income (enterprises, non-commercial institutions, consortia and networks of enterprises), irrespectively of their legal form, size or business sector.
- Enterprises based in Italy and enterprises based abroad with a permanent establishment in Italy which perform their own Research and Development or commission Research and Development work.
- Enterprises based in Italy and enterprises based abroad with a permanent establishment in Italy which perform Research and Development work on commission for companies based abroad.

HOW IT IS ACCESSED

- Automatically when preparing financial statements and specifying expenditure in income tax returns (in section RU of the Unico tax return form).

- There is an obligation to provide certified accounting documents.

TAX CREDIT FOR INCREASED RESEARCH AND DEVELOPMENT COSTS: 50%

PATENT BOX
MORE VALUE to INTANGIBLE ASSETS

WHAT IT IS FOR

- Making the Italian market more attractive to long-term domestic and international investors by offering a special rate of taxation for incomes deriving from the use of intellectual property rights.
- Offering an incentive for bringing back to Italy intangible assets currently held abroad by Italian or foreign companies, while at the same time offering an incentive for keeping intangible assets in Italy rather than relocating them abroad.
- Favouring investment in Research and Development.

BENEFITS

- An optional special taxation system applicable to income from use of intangible assets: industrial patent rights, registered trademarks, industrial designs and models, copyrighted know-how and software.
- The special condition consists in a reduction of 50% in the corporate income tax (IRES) and regional production tax (IRAP) rates starting in 2017, on business income connected with direct or indirect use (or use on licence) of intangible assets in relation to third-party counterparts or related counterparts (infragroup companies). The benefit is conditional to the taxpayer conducting Research and Development work connected with the development and maintenance of intangible assets.
- For the purposes of calculating the benefit, it is therefore necessary to:
  • determine the “economic contribution” or income deriving from use of intangible assets, after deducting the corresponding costs;
  • determine the ratio (*nexus* ratio) between qualified R&D costs that were borne borne for the development of the intangible asset and overall R&D costs – qualified and and not qualified - (borne to produce the intangible asset);
  • calculate the portion of “income eligible for benefit” by applying the nexus ratio to the “economic contribution” deriving from use of the intangible asset;
  • finally, apply the tax exemption rate to this amount.

These benefits may be combined with all the other measures contained in the Plan.

WHO IT IS FOR

- To be eligible for this benefit, a party with a business income must be able to demonstrate that their income derives from use of intangible assets, irrespectively of whether they are capital goods companies or partnerships, individual companies, commercial or non-commercial organisations, or parties with a permanent establishment in Italy that are resident for tax purposes in countries with which treaties have been stipulated for the appropriate exchange of information.

HOW IT IS ACCESSED

- The option must be exercised in the tax return for the first fiscal year in which the party intends to opt to use of the benefit, and remains valid for five years starting on the year in which the revenue office (Agenzia delle Entrate) is notified. The benefit may be renewed for the same number of years, and is irrevocable.
- In case of direct use of the intangible asset, it is obligatory to set up a prior agreement (a ruling agreement) with the revenue office to determine the methods to be applied to determe eligible income. The benefit becomes effective when the ruling agreement is completed.
- The ruling agreement is optional in the case of indirect use of the intangible asset, and the benefit becomes effective when the option is exercised.

REDUCTION OF CORPORATE INCOME TAX (IRES) AND REGIONAL PRODUCTION TAX (IRAP) RATES FOR INCOME FROM INTANGIBLE ASSETS: UP TO 50%

INNOVATIVE STARTUPS AND SMES
ACCELERATING INNOVATION

WHAT IT IS FOR

- Supporting innovative enterprises at all stages of their life cycle.
- Sustaining the development of Italy’s startup ecosystem.
- Spreading a new business culture based on teamwork, innovation and openness towards international markets.

BENEFITS

- A new online, free incorporation procedure.
- Exemption from regulations on dummy companies and companies reporting systematic losses.
- Possibility for limited liability companies to issue tax-free stock options or work-for-equity schemes.
- Incentives to investment in risk capital: a 30% break on personal income tax for investments up to 1 million euros, or a 30% deduction from corporate income tax basis, up to 1.8 million euros
- Free, simplified, fast-track access to the Guarantee Fund for SMEs.
- Equity crowdfunding for raising new risk capital.
- Italia Startup Visa: a priority visa for innovative entrepreneurs from all over the world.
- Possibility of transferring losses reported by startups to listed companies holding at least 20% of their shares.
- In case of failure/bankruptcy: exemption from regular bankruptcy regulations.
- In case of success: scale-ups can easily shift to the “innovative SME” status, keeping the key benefits of the startup regime.

These benefits can be combined with:

- Hyper- and Super-depreciation.
- “Nuova Sabatini”.
- Tax credit for Research and Development.
- Patent Box.
- Allowance for corporate equity (ACE).

WHO IT IS FOR

Innovative startups: newly-established unlisted limited companies with an annual value of production below 5 million euros, whose company purpose is clearly related to innovation. To prove the latter requirement, they must meet at least one of the following criteria:

- 15% of annual expenditure is attributable to R&D activities;
- 2/3 of the team is made up of university graduates, or, alternatively, 1/3 PhD holders, PhD students or researchers;
- ownership of a patent or a software.

Innovative SMEs: small and medium-sized enterprises established as limited companies in possess of certified financial statements. In addition, they must meet at least two of the following requirements:

- 3% of annual expenditure is attributable to R&D activities;
- 1/3 of the team is made up of university graduates, or, alternatively 1/5 PhD holders, PhD students or researchers;
- ownership of a patent or a software.

HOW IT IS ACCESSED

- By registering in the dedicated section of the Business Register, through an online self-certification in which applicants confirm that they fulfil the above-mentioned legal requirements. The innovative startup regime lasts no longer than 5 years from the date of incorporation.

TAX BREAK FOR INVESTMENT IN STARTUPS: UP TO 30%

GUARANTEE FUND FOR SMEs

EXPANDING CREDIT OPPORTUNITIES

WHAT IT IS FOR

- Supporting businesses and professionals who have difficulty accessing bank loans because they do not have sufficient guarantees.

BENEFITS

- Granting of a public guarantee, covering up to a maximum of 80% of the loan, for short and medium- to long-term loans both as a source of cash and for investment purposes. The Fund guarantees that each business or professional will be provided a maximum of 2.5 million euros for use in one or more operations up to the established ceiling, with no limit on the number of operations that may be performed. The limit refers to the amount guaranteed, while there is no ceiling on the total loan.

These benefits may be combined with:

- Hyper-depreciation and Super-depreciation.
- “Nuova Sabatini”.
- Tax credit for Research and Development.
- Patent Box.
- Incentives for capitalisation of enterprises (ACE).
- Incentives for investment in innovative startups and SMEs.

WHO IT IS FOR

- Micro-enterprises and SMEs, including startups.
- Professionals registered in professional orders or with membership of professional associations registered in the list kept by the Ministry of Economic Development.
- Beneficiaries operating in all business sectors are admitted, except for the finance sector, provided they are considered economically and financially sound.

HOW IT IS ACCESSED

- In the case of the direct guarantee, interested parties must present a bank or financial intermediary with a request for a loan and, at the same, time, request support in the form of a public guarantee. The bank or financial intermediary will forward the request to Banca del Mezzogiorno - Mediocredito Centrale SPA, which is managing the system. The procedures are quick and streamlined, so that access requirements may be checked and a decision made promptly. In the event of the party that obtains the loan defaulting, the bank or financial intermediary who made the loan may claim compensation from the Guarantee Fund.

PUBLICLY GUARANTEED LOAN: 80%

ACE (ALLOWANCE FOR CORPORATE EQUITY)
BOOSTING BUSINESS CAPITALISATION

WHAT IT IS FOR

- Offering an incentive for strengthening the equity structure of Italian enterprises through financing with own capital, in order to achieve a better balance between sources and uses of expenditure and risk capital and debt, that will make them more competitive.

BENEFITS

- Deduction from the enterprise's total income of an amount corresponding to a notional yield on the new equity capital (cash contributions and profits allocated to reserves), calculated on the basis of capital increases over the amount in existence in the financial year that ended on December 31, 2010, thus creating fiscal neutrality between resort to risk capital and financing by borrowing. The notional yield of the new equity capital is 2.3% in 2017 and 2.7% as of 2018.

WHO IT IS FOR

- All parties with a business income, including sole proprietorships subject to enterprise income tax (IRI), based in Italy for tax purposes, including permanent establishments set up in Italy by companies based abroad, whatever their legal form, size and business sector.

HOW IT IS ACCESSED

- Automatically when preparing financial statements.

NOTIONAL YIELD OF NEW EQUITY CAPITAL: 2017 2.3%. STARTING IN 2018 2.7%

IRES (CORPORATE INCOME TAX), IRI AND CASH ACCOUNTING

FREEING UP NEW FINANCIAL RESOURCES

WHAT IT IS FOR

- Reducing fiscal pressure for companies that invest in the future by keeping profits in the company.

BENEFITS

- Corporate income tax (IRES) cut from 27.5% to 24%, which is similar to the average rate in the EU.
- Possibility for individual entrepreneurs and partnerships to opt for a single rate of 24% (IRI) instead of the current personal income tax (IRPEF) rates of up to 43%. 24% is applied to the portion of income tax that is kept in the company, while sums used for personal use will continue to be subject to income tax. The goal of a 24% rate for enterprise income tax is intended to promote capitalisation of enterprises by taxing profits that are not taken out of the company at a lower rate, by offering an equivalent rate of taxation to joint-stock companies (corporate income tax or IRES at a rate of 24%). The option applies for a 5-year period and may be renewed.
- This measure not only provides SMEs with an incentive to increase their equity levels, but offers the benefit of making choices over company forms neutral in terms of taxation (sole proprietorship, partnership, joint-stock company) and distinguishing the company from the individual who is the business owner or partner.

WHO IT IS FOR

- Corporate income tax (IRES): joint-stock companies, non-commercial organisations, cooperatives.
- Enterprise income tax (IRI): individual entrepreneurs and partnerships using the ordinary accounting system. It may also be used by cooperatives and limited liability companies with revenues of no more than 5 million euros and a narrow ownership structure.
- Cash accounting: parties with simplified accounting procedures.

HOW IT IS ACCESSED

- Automatically when preparing financial statements.

REDUCTION OF CORPORATE AND ENTERPRISE INCOME TAX (IRES AND IRI): UP TO 24%

PRODUCTIVITY WAGES

INCREASING WAGES to RELAUNCH PRODUCTIVITY

WHAT IT IS FOR

- Promoting greater productivity by shifting negotiations to the company level and introducing a positive correlation between increases in efficiency and increases in workers' salaries.
- Promoting integration of company welfare with forms of public welfare (supplementary pension schemes, additional medical insurance, etc.).
- Promoting workers' participation in organisation.

BENEFITS

- A beneficial flat tax rate of 10% on bonuses that are awarded for productivity increases. The ceiling on bonuses that are eligible for the lower tax rate is 3,000 euros, or 4,000 euros if workers are jointly involved in the organisation of work. The bonus may be replaced, entirely or in part, with socially useful goods and services.
- Use of supplementary pension schemes, additional medical insurance, insurance coverage of loss of self-sufficiency, educational services and share purchases by employees are also facilitated.

WHO IT IS FOR

- Private sector employees who had an income from employment of no more than 80,000 euros in the previous year.
- Companies achieving increases in productivity, profitability, efficiency, quality and innovation.

HOW IT IS ACCESSED

- Through contracts with companies.

SPECIAL TAX RATE FOR SALARY BONUSES: 10%