Italian research, MIUR’s initiative to promote it in the world

Creativity, commitment and excellence are some of the characteristic features of Made-in-Italy research; a heritage to be promoted abroad, which is the aim of the Italian Research Day in the World.

The first edition of this initiative, launched by Minister of Education, University and Research Valeria Fedeli, includes a rich programme of 81 events which will be organized by over 50 different diplomatic and consular offices abroad, thanks to the strong involvement of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and International Cooperation-MAECI. The objective is to highlight the value of Italian research and its main players, the researchers, by promoting the quality of the Italian educational system and the technological knowledge available in our country.

The meaning and details of the initiative were presented at the Farnesina during an event which gathered – in the presence of journalists – political and administrative leaders, representatives of institutions and diplomacy and Italian research. The meeting was chaired by the Director-General for the Promotion of the Italian Economic System, Vincenzo de Luca.

In conjunction with the event, the organizers presented the exhibition Italia: la bellezza della Conoscenza, promoted by MAECI and set up by CNR with the contribution of Fondazione Idis-Città della Scienza in Naples, Museo Galileo in Florence, “Leonardo da Vinci” National
Museum of Science and Technology in Milan and MUSE Museum of Science in Trento.

The date of 15 April, selected to celebrate Italian research in the World, is the day of birth of a great representative of the Italian genius: Leonardo Da Vinci. MIUR programme Leonardo Da Vinci launched by Minister Fedeli during the event is dedicated to this talent of the arts and sciences: a triple action built around two calls and one medal, aimed at encouraging teachers’ and researchers’ mobility in the global setting.

Vice-Minister of Foreign Affairs and International Cooperation, Mario Giro, pointed out that Leonardo spent the last years of his life in France, a case of brain drain well before the term was invented. And on the theme of brain drain, adapted to the context of today’s Italy, several speakers focused during the Farnesina event, and many of them highlighted that the problem is closely related to the issue of brain mobility and circularity, i.e. Italy’s capacity of attracting Italian and foreign researchers from abroad. In particular, Gaetano Manfredi, President of the Conference of the Italian Universities Rectors focused on this point.

While we need to improve the attractiveness of our research system, we should not forget that MIUR has already implemented several initiatives to address this issue, said Valeria Fedeli, who mentioned some of the instruments specifically focused on the "return of brains", including the call and the Rita Levi Montalcini award. Then, MIUR Chief of Higher Education and Research Department, Marco Mancini, pointed out that, over the last eight years, Italy has welcomed for the first time or welcomed the return of almost 1000 researchers from abroad thanks to several instruments, including the direct call, which alone allowed to create about 400 new positions.

But which are the sectors where Italian science expresses its full potential?

They range from research on climate to cultural heritage, from quantum technology to bioeconomy, said Massimo Inguscio, President of the Council of Presidents of public research bodies, from space, as pointed out in a video message by Roberto Vittori – astronaut and science attaché in the United States – to pharmaceuticals, as presented by Daniele Finocchiaro, President of Confindustria R&D Technical Team, to finish with fundamental physics, biomedical engineering and diagnostics. These sectors were described in the final session by “testimonials” Luciano Maiani, Professor Emeritus from Sapienza University of Rome, Maria Chiara Carrozza, Professor of Biorobotics at Scuola Superiore Sant’Anna in Pisa and Fulvio Uggeri, Director of Technical Operations at Bracco Imaging.

It will be possible to see some surprising fruits of this source of knowledge called Italy at the exhibition on the beauty of knowledge curated by Riccardo Pietrabissa from CNR. In the meantime, the themes and project areas for Italy’s participation in the next edition of the...
Universal Expo have already been outlined, as anticipated by Italian Commissioner for Expo Dubai 2020 Paolo Glisenti.

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