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NEW SPACE INITIATIVES IN PIEDMONT REGION SUPPORTING INNOVATION AND
INTERNATIONALIZATION OF SME'S: RECENT EXPERIENCES AND PERSPECTIVES

Abstract

The Space global scenario sees new actors entering in the market in addition to the traditional Space Agencies. In the private sector new Economy enterprises and venture capitalists are increasing their presence in new contexts of Space Exploration. The space sector SME's, in order to face new opportunities emerging from this evolving situation, have to invest in innovation and internationalization. At institutional level in Europe, in addition to National and European Governments and Space Agencies, also some Regions have decided to support their SME's in these new Space market challenges: it is the case of Piedmont Region in Italy. The Aerospace sector in Piedmont is a strategic axis of the regional policy, it accounts about 15000 employees and 4 BEuro of turnover. The presence of 5 big players, more than 300 SME's, 3 Universities and several Research centers confirms the Piedmont as one of the most important Aerospace districts in Europe. To support the local SME's in the Internationalization growth, the Piedmont Region is acting through its Agency called Centro Estero per l'Internazionalizzazione del Piemonte (CEIP) that is involved in these activities since more than 20 years by means of dedicated Integrated Project teams using specifically allocated budgets and methodologies oriented to promote among other objectives the aggregation of the companies. A recent initiative started with a dedicated Space Workshop, as a result of CEIP investigation activities, 4 regional space key players were able to propose 8 innovative product ideas having possible application in market commercial projects by next 3 or 4 years. Following a well consolidated CEIP approach 8 technical boards have been originated including the companies proposing the idea and those partners which were interested in the development of the new product on the basis of relevant competencies. The product technical and programmatic feasibility is being investigated in order to issue a proposal to some supporting Organizations (e.g. Piedmont Region, ESA, ASI, EC, Private entities) willing to co-finance the Product development non-recurring activities. In line with CEIP well consolidated practice, some SME's teams are investigating the possibility to originate a cluster that is essential to improve their critical mass in front of the global competition. Such clusters are conceived with proper governance scheme that ensures win-win approach for the partners and flexible low cost organization. The paper after an introduction on the Space market and regional background, will detail above experiences and will anticipate possible perspectives.