



PRESS RELEASE

Fondazione Pesenti: «Will economic recession drive more European integration?»

The “*embarras de la souveraineté*” discussed by some prominent academic and economic experts and observers and the Italian Minister for European Affairs

Bergamo, 19 January 2013 – Will the current serious economic recession drive European partners towards more effective community institutions? This was the theme of the annual conference of the Cav. Lav. Carlo Pesenti Foundation, held today in Bergamo.

The theme of the discussion was taken from **Jacques Delors**, former President of the European Commission, who already in 1988 described with his words on the “*embarrass de la souveraineté*” a political and institutional situation which fits very much the current situation, while Europe is still encountering problems in drafting and implementing the necessary tools and actions to strongly face the most serious economic recession after World War II.

*«“Europe’s objective is not playing up to unpopular measures” Delors warned more than twenty years ago in his extraordinary article, which our Foundation decided to honour through the title selected for this year’s conference – stated **Giampiero Pesenti** -. His warning stemmed from the awareness that the European “setup” also included the risk of becoming a scapegoat in moments of difficulty or when faced with the limitations and uncertainties of Nation States. Since we share this vision, this perception that the concept of Europe might become a mere synonym for austerity, sacrifice and EU aid, while we continue – always quoting Jacques Delors – “to think and act as if we were ignoring the opportunities offered by Europe”, we have decided to focus the annual conference of the Italcementi Foundation on a strategic theme such as the transfer of national sovereignty to the various European institutions, but especially on the necessary measures to have more effective tools and decisions».*

While uncertainty and lack of confidence prevent institutions from acting, and relegate investors but also many families in a permanent “waiting room”, the

difficulties to boost competitiveness and growth have vice-versa stimulated a renewed debate that –making EU aid conditional on reforms, including a “transfer of power” from national states to Europe - aims to define a possible roadmap towards political union. *«The Eurozone crisis is accelerating new and more effective forms of integration that will make it possible for us to overcome this difficult moment and this is fundamental to really abandon this current time of widespread concern – stated **Giovanni Giavazzi**, Chairman of the Pesenti Foundation - . Only a burst of cohesion, resolution and exhaustive actions, totally in line with current needs, must and can help us go beyond current complex prospects».*

The round table followed data and analysis trends presented by the President of Istat **Enrico Giovannini** and the President of Ipsos **Nando Pagnoncelli**, with contributions by some prominent academics, economists and politicians, including Italy's Minister for European Affairs **Enzo Moavero Milanesi**, leading economists **Luigi Zingales** (named by Foreign Policy magazine to its list of Top 100 Global Thinkers), **Hans-Werner Sinn** (among the ones who have written an open letter to Angela Merkel warning her that her decision to agree to allow Eurozone bail-out funds to support sinner states was "wrong") and **Ramon Marimon** (Professor at the European University Institute funded by 20 Member States and former Secretary of State of the Government of Spain), and businessman and former Deputy Chairman of Confindustria (Italian employers' federation) with responsibility for Europe **Andrea Moltrasio**. The debate was chaired by the Editor-in-chief of “La Stampa” **Mario Calabresi**.

Enrico Giovannini and Nando Pagnoncelli outlined, based on statistical data and opinion polls, the relationship between European institutions and citizens. *«The picture is complex and cannot be managed as we did in the past – said **Enrico Giovannini**. – Above all, it cannot be managed individually, not only in supranational terms (no European country alone can hope to solve these problems), but also in terms of individual persons, companies, institutions».* Defining long-term scenarios is not sufficient, short-term strategies must also be established: *«Even if the whole of Europe begins to “do the right things”, whatever they are, it will take some time before their effects can be felt. Solving problems is not enough, it is also necessary to say what can be done “in the meantime”, that*

is, between today and the moment when the various actions, which will become effective in the medium-term, might have unwanted effects».

*«People's attitude towards the EU has changed over time – **Nando Pagnoncelli** explained after presenting the IPSOS survey – in particular since the introduction of the single currency and following the recession we are still experiencing: austerity policies and the relevance assigned to finance have not always been understood and accepted; while there is no integration above and beyond the single currency, the sense of belonging to the UE appears to be more closely connected to economic cycles than to shared political, cultural and ideal beliefs».* While Europe is seen with detachment and distrust with respect to this economic challenge – as results from the survey presented by Pagnoncelli -, founding values such as democracy, peace, freedom of movement and welfare remain among the positives shared by all European citizens.

The analyses carried out by the three economists Zingales, Sinn and Marimon were followed by the contribution of a businessman who has represented Italian industry in Brussels: *«The nature of the crisis, that is excess debt – remarked **Andrea Moltrasio** during the panel discussion – has put the ECB, a European institution, in the limelight, since it has skillfully and vigorously promoted financial stability, protected the Euro and safeguarded banks. At the same time, policies to revitalize real economy and tax and welfare policies have heightened differences among EU member states, also because they had to face economic recession starting from very different situations. A comeback to national selfishness clashes with the need for unitary European action in the complexity of globalization. Very clear examples are the issues on climate change and business competitiveness. A “demos of the heart”, as Padoa Schioppa called it, must be built to reform European democratic institutions, pointing out identity values in addition to highlighting common interests».*

The institutional view was described by the Minister for European Affairs, Enzo Moavero Milanesi who, after his long experience in Brussels, is now a member of the Italian government, in a key moment for the future of Italy and of the European Union.