

The scenario

In a global economic scenario where the American economy has taken back the leadership showing positive signs of growth (+7,2% GDP in the third quarter).

The last forecast of the EITO (European Information Technology Observatory) shows that for the year 2003 the estimated growth for the whole European ICT Market is limited to 1,0% (this is the result of -0,7% for the IT sector and +2,6% for Telecommunications).

Among all the factors that have determined a negative impact of the ICT demand, the EITO quotes the difficulties with the start of the UMTS, the postponed expenses in the computer sector, the intense competition of the voice services within the mobile telephony, the slow process of SMEs' investments in ICT, the expenses dedicated to security which growth is not significant as expected.

The forecast for the year 2004 are more optimistic +2,2 in the IT sector, +3,8 in the Telecommunication sector.

The Italian ICT Market

Concerning the telecommunications :

According to the forecast of the IDC, in the telecommunication sector, the value of the Italian market (services, equipments, networks and systems) will reach 40,55 billion Euros by the end of the year 2003. This figure represents an increase of 1,8% compared to 2002.

This is the result of various growths of the different segments within the sector.

The trend of the services shows positive signs for potential growth up to 32,93 billion euros (+3,1%).

With the launching of third generation services, this trend will be reinforced and the IDC forecast shows that at the end of 2004 there will be over 3 million UMTS users.

The equipment sector is still suffering (-3,6% at the end of 2003), especially concerning the fix network (-7,5%) meanwhile the mobile network is improving (-1%).

A real recovering is linked to the solving of two conditions which have affected the market in the past two years : pressure to pull the prices down and a caution attitude from the networks operators concerning the investments.

The future is more optimistic.

Those dynamics increase the interdependencies between the IT and the Telecommunication world.

The networks, the systems, the applications and the solutions are converging in a way which change the traditional barriers of those markets. Furthermore, the enhanced convergence that will come in the near future from the terrestrial digital TV will open new perspectives for the ICT market.

Concerning the IT market :

According the IDC forecasts the IT market, will globally keep the same trend as 2003 with the following combining dynamics :

Concerning the hardware +1,6% in 2003

The software area is slowly recovering +2,9%

The IT services which are suffering from the evolutions of the software and hardware markets will approximately grow by 1,1%.

2004 is expected to be better.

The role of Technological Innovations

In this scenario, the technological innovations (especially the digital one) is a structural priority in order to generate development and competition.

The New Technologies are not only enriching the quality of the national patrimony but are also creating an increased value in the productive process.

Each highly technological employment creates four others which gives more employment opportunities. 2003 is a year of transition.

The Digital Innovation Plan developed by Federcomin, in collaboration with Confindustria and the ANIE Federation and presented by the Italian government in July aims at boosting both employment and economic growth.

Concerning the content, the Digital Innovation Plan is focused on SMEs, families and public administrations. But 90% of the total investments should come from the private sector.

The role of the government is to encourage those investments through incentives (300 million euros per year in the next four years).

Another need a framing law concerning the digital innovation that should clear up the numerous

existing laws, simplify the procedures and fix the annual programming instruments. This should be achieved in furtherance of the federal reform of the Italian state.

In conclusion, the industrial policy and the digital policy share common objectives.

The innovation is a structural factor of the economy that should generate development, employment and modernity.

The Federation of the ICT organisations is optimistic regarding those objectives, i.e., considering 2004 as the “year of Innovation”.