

PRESS RELEASE

**Banks: ABI, 12.2 million online bank accounts; over one third of bank clients “surf” the web**

*The Internet confirms itself as the “most popular” banking channel, with 39% of current accounts having online access. Phone and mobile banking accounts are also on the rise. The fifth report of the ABI e-Committee paints a picture of the existing banking channels as an alternative to customer counters.*

An increasing number of Italian families use the Internet, the telephone, or mobile phone for performing daily bank transactions: from money orders to the payment of taxes and bills, from recharging mobile phones to purchasing securities, or even just to check one’s bank balance. Over 13.4 million bank accounts – which means an increase of 16% in 2007 compared with the previous year – now have access to one of the existing online banking channels as opposed to traditional customer counters, in other words the Internet, phone banking, and mobile banking. More than one bank account out of every three (43%) has access to at least one of these alternative channels, and 70% of these, almost twice as many compared with 2006 (9.4 million against 6.7 million, + 40%), are active accounts that are used more than once a week. These are the results of the fifth report “Multichannelling of banks” conducted by the ABI e-Committee Observatory.

What is the “favourite” channel for Italian families, and what are the most frequent transactions performed online or by telephone? What follows, in short, is the picture that emerges from the e-Committee survey, which was carried out on a sample of 273 banks.

**Internet banking: twice as many money orders and over four times as many online payments**

The Internet confirms itself as the “favourite” channel for clients of Italian banks, with approximately 12.2 million current accounts with online access (39% of the total number of current accounts held by families), and an increase of 17% compared with 2006. This year, a total of over one billion online inquiries were made to banks regarding balances, debit and credit transactions, and current account conditions, against 462 million in the previous year, and once again the most “clicked” transactions were bank balance inquiries, with an average of twice per week. Money orders were confirmed in second place: in 2007, 42 million online money orders were made, which equal 35% of the total number, for a total value of over 82 billion euros (against 19 million, which equal one-fourth of the total number, for a total value of over 30 billion euros in 2006).

With respect to payments, on the other hand, online payments increased by over four times compared with 2006, with over 22 million transactions, which equal 12% of the total number against 5 million transactions, which equal to 2% of the total number in the previous year. In particular, among the most frequent online transactions were, once again, the payment of taxes with F24 tax return forms (over 14 million against 1.6 million in 2006); cash orders for paying

bills (over 6 million against 721 thousand); and the purchase of mobile phone recharge cards (over 14 million against nearly 11 million).

**Phone banking: 9.7 million families exchange information and perform trading transactions by phone**

Current accounts with phone banking access reached 9.7 million, which equals 31% of the total number of current accounts held by families, and with an increase of 6% compared with 2006. In most cases, clients use the telephone to ask for information about their current accounts (over 17 million inquiries) or on their trading activity (nearly 4 million inquiries). On the whole, Italian consumers use phone-banking services 17 times per year, averaging approximately once a month. In 2007, they performed nearly one million stock exchange transactions, 727 thousand of which on the Italian stock market alone, for a total value of nearly 6 billion euros, in line with 2006.

**Mobile banking: purchase of recharge cards and money orders are the transactions most frequently performed by mobile phone**

The number of families who use mobile phones to send money orders or check their bank balance remains constant. In 2007, active accounts in this regard numbered 1.1 million, in line with 2006, while accounts with access to mobile banking numbered 5.1 million, which equals 17% of the total number of current accounts held by families. Mobile phones are most frequently used for information inquiry services (approximately 15 million, of which nearly 250 thousand related to trading transactions) and for so-called “alert” services (over 9 million). Transactions most often performed by mobile phone are the purchase of recharge cards (1.2 million) and money orders (120 thousand).

Rome, Palazzo Altieri, 7 January 2009