

PRESS RELEASE

**Common Announcement”: Faissola, from last December, an additional
€7 billion of liquidity for SMEs**

The response of small and medium sized enterprises to the suspension of debts highlights the effectiveness of the tool. As at 31 December 2009, 117 thousand applications had been received, compared to 84 thousand at the end of November. 90% of applications have been admitted. Only just over 1% have not been approved. The latest figures show that the most popular sectors are industry, retail/hotel and other services. 581 banks have joined the scheme, over 98% of branches.

A simple procedure that is now fully up and running and an effective way for small and medium enterprises to face a potential time of difficulty. This is the picture that emerges from the most recent data on the use of the suspension. Since December 2009, SMEs have been able to count on an extra € 7 billion's worth of liquidity. This is € 2 billion more than November 2009, when the figure was € 5 billion. This is the outcome of the latest update on the survey, which reflects the use of the “Common Announcement”, the agreement signed on 3 August before the Minister of the Economy, Giulio Tremonti, by ABI and other representatives of the standing Observatory on bank-corporate relations.

The official figures of the survey show that as at 31 December 2009, 117,000 applications had been received from companies, corresponding to a total value of active loans of € 37.3 billion. In the second survey, in November 2009, around 84,000 applications had been received, corresponding to a total value of loans of € 27.5 billion. The banking system has examined 109,000 applications (€ 35.3 billion) with the following results: 80% of applications have been approved (82,800 corresponding to € 27.2 billion), 19,300 are still being examined (€ 6.5 billion), while just over 1% have not been approved (2,200 corresponding to € 500 million).

ABI Chairman, Corrado Faissola, emphasised that “since December, the banks have provided enterprises with over € 5 billion in funds relating to suspended payments of loan principals”.

As regards applications referring to individual business sectors, the most popular were industry, retail/hotel and other services. An analysis regarding the geographic distribution of the applications approved, by registered office of the applicant, shows that 55.4% of applications refer to enterprises based in Northern Italy. The remaining share regards the central South.

As reported in previous months, the adhesion of banks to the Common Announcement, and therefore the will to further sustain the business system at this difficult time, has been impressive: as at 22 January, 581 banks and financial institutions has joined the scheme, corresponding to 33,553 branches (98.3% of the total number of branches in Italy).

Roma, Palazzo Altieri, 28 January 2010