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Interview: Cultural industry, human resources make Italy's soft power: head of national statistics institute

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by Marzia De Giuli

ROME, Feb. 21 (Xinhua) -- Culture promotion, the expansion of made-in-Italy brands and the internationalization of Italian talents are the mainstay of its soft power policy, the president of national statistics institute [Istat](#), [Giorgio Alleva](#), told Xinhua in a recent interview.

Soft power is "the other face of power, something different from the military, economic or demographic strength ... it is the power of persuading, convincing, attracting through intangible resources such as culture, values and institutions," Alleva said.

For this reason, soft power has different characteristics in different countries as it marks the traditional sense of identity of a country. "In Italy, this sense of identity is cultural heritage, one of the richest in the world," he said.

Italy has the largest number of sites on the UNESCO World Heritage List, 51, and is one of the most important touristic destinations in the world, the fifth after [France](#), the [United States](#), [Spain](#) and [China](#) according to the [United Nations](#) World Tourism Organization (UNWTO), with more than 50 million foreign visitors every year, the [Istat](#) head noted.

It has also emerged from various surveys that tourists love to come back and stay in Italy. All of this is bound to Italy's cultural heritage, Alleva said. "This identity heritage should be built, maintained and valued also through a cultural industry in the present," he added.

According to Alleva, "there is not a measurement of soft power, but there are a variety of elements which create this type of power, such as cultural industry, or the capacity to attract foreign tourists, for example."

In his view, presently Italy is a good exporter of creativity-driven goods. "Our cultural industry, which includes a number of fields from fashion and design to cinema and music, has exceeded the pre-crisis levels," he said.

Even in the years of crisis, the Italian productive system has been excellent in creating and exporting new goods and services, he said. "Italy ranks second in the world after [Germany](#) for registered industrial design products and fourth for registered trademarks, while it is first for agro-food quality certification marks."

In fact many Italian talents going abroad is certainly a consequence of globalization but also of Italy's capacity to export professionals, Alleva noted. Besides talents in the art field, many Italians also hold important posts in European institutions and international organizations, "an actual network of Italians with key roles abroad," an element that further reinforces the country's soft power, he said.

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Alleva also said that Italy could do much more to cultivate its soft power. "Italy should definitely invest more in culture and especially in research and innovation in order to continue to produce culture in the future," he stressed.

"Education, research and innovation are fundamental for building the Italian soft power, but unfortunately Italy is below the European average in terms of investments in research and education, and our productive system is considered as moderately innovative by international studies," he noted.

In his view, the country is trapped in some old problems such as some tax-related restrictions that limit the possibility of research and innovation especially in difficult economic times. "In the past years, the economic crisis and fiscal obstacles have hampered innovation and research, which have been proved instead to be the only investments able to reinforce the productive system. Only those enterprises which had invested and innovated survived the crisis," he said.

Another weak point is that "Italy exports talents abroad but is not able to attract them back. There are many Italians who have made international experiences and would like to come back to Italy but have no opportunities here, we could do better to make them return. As the OECD has also stated, productivity increase also derives from quality growth of human resources."

Editor: Mu Xuequan



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