

The Role of Business Associations in Promoting Networking. The Italian Case of the “Network Contracts”⁸¹

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Abstract

This paper investigates the role of business associations (BAs) in promoting inter-firm collaboration, in particular through the use of the network contract (NC) – a particular type of formal collaboration recently introduced in Italy.

The analysis reveals that BAs can favour and promote inter-firm collaboration in two ways: directly, being formally involved in a NC and indirectly, through a number of initiatives (eg. matching meetings, workshops and so on), acting as facilitators of forms of inter-firm collaboration and, specifically, of NCs.

Moreover, analysis shows that the presence of a BA can influence the network contract's effects and improve local entrepreneurs' attitude towards collaboration and networking.

Keywords: institutions, business associations, inter-firm collaboration, network contract, small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs)

⁸¹ This paper is the product of a joint research project, however, M. Del Baldo has written sections 1 and 2, S. Aureli has written sections 3 and 4.2., F. Cesaroni has written section 4.1. and M. Ciambotti has written section 5.