

ESG roadshows on the rise in Italy despite pandemic slowdown – ESG Business Conference

- Conversation shifting from profit to value creation
 - More companies are adding ESG board committees
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ESG roadshows are on the rise amongst Italy's largest listed and unlisted entities despite the slowdown caused by the COVID-19 pandemic, according to panelists at the Italian-speaking *ESG Business Conference* which was held digitally earlier this week.

There is a growing interest to reach out to shareholders when it comes to ESG priorities and it is generally good practice for companies to organise ESG roadshows alongside classical financial roadshows, argued Alberto D'Aroma, senior account manager at proxy solicitor **Georgeson**.

Even during finance-oriented roadshows, ESG issues are increasingly featuring the board's involvement, said Giuseppe Zammarchi, head of group sustainability at **Unicredit** [BIT:UCG]. The dialogue between companies and stakeholders is clearly shifting from profit to value creation, he added.

However, despite the increase in engagement, companies are still struggling with elaborating key ESG themes, noted Giovanni Marsili, partner at law firm **Gianni & Origoni**. This persistent gap remains in part because companies have to balance short-term profits with long-term value, he added.

Knowing your shareholder and stakeholder base thoroughly is one way to overcome this challenge, speakers agreed.

Moreover, the exponential rise of ESG guidelines and regulations affecting companies and investors is pushing forward the need for a common interpretation of ESG terminology, said Marina Sabinina, senior sustainable finance specialist at oilfield services company **Saipem** [BIT:SPM]. Companies should aim to not only work with ESG consultants and investors but also rely on insurers, banks and credit agencies, Sabinina argued.

Some companies have started to set up ESG committees at the board level to better assess stakeholder expectations and identify known and unknown risks, which is a welcome addition, highlighted Zammarchi from Unicredit.

Especially environmental risk has been a key theme with companies facing 'say on climate' votes in other jurisdictions, said D'Aroma from Georgeson, noting that these climate votes are yet to be introduced in Italian AGMs.

by Claudia De Meulemeester in London