

# Italy



## **Country Overview:**

**Location:** Southern Europe, a peninsula extending into the central Mediterranean Sea, northeast of Tunisia

**Size:** 301,340 sq km

**Population:** 61,482,297 (July 2013 est.)

**Capital:** Rome

**Export-commodities:** engineering products, textiles and clothing, production machinery, motor vehicles, transport equipment, chemicals; food, beverages and tobacco; minerals and nonferrous metals

**Import-commodities:** engineering products, chemicals, transport equipment, energy products, minerals and nonferrous metals, textiles and clothing; food, beverages, and tobacco

**Currency:** Euros (EUR)

**Ethnic groups:** Italian (includes small clusters of German-, French-, and Slovene-Italians in the north and Albanian-Italians and Greek-Italians in the south)

**Religion:** Christian 80% (overwhelming Roman Catholic with very small groups of Jehovah Witnesses and Protestants), Muslims NEGL (about 700,000 but growing), Atheists and Agnostics 20%

**Government type:** republic

**Chief of State:** President Giorgio NAPOLITANO (since May 2006)

**Head of Government:** Prime Minister Enrico LETTA (since 17 April 2013); **NOTE-** the prime minister is referred to as the President of the Council of Ministers

**Language:** Italian (official), German, French, Slovene

## **Italian Republic/Repubblica Italiana**

### **Meetings and**

#### **Negotiations**

- Be **punctual**, although your Italian business partner may not be.

- When addressing your Italian business partner, use the formal "Signore" ['Mr.'] or "Signora" ['Mrs.'] with their **surname** following.

- When **greeting**; shake hands and grasp the arm with your other hand. Be sure to greet everyone individually on arrival and departure.

- Carry multiple **business cards** that include your full title and position with any achievements or degrees.

- Italian business culture has a definite **hierarchical order**, with little visible association between the ranks. Special attention should be paid to the most senior person, typically the eldest.

- Building a good personal

relationship is greatly valued.

- Arrive at the meeting **well-informed** and organized. Your materials should be aesthetically pleasing.

#### **Business Attire**

- Fashion and fashion design are a trademark of Italy, therefore **quality** of dress signifies one's **success**. Quality accessories, nice footwear and leather goods will make a good impression.

- Men: colored or pin-striped shirts, high quality suit

- Women: simple, sophisticated, and elegant

#### **Behavior**

- When dealing with Italians use **patience** and be cautious not to hurt their personal pride.

- Italians personal space is much smaller than that of other Europeans or Northern Americans.

- Chewing gum while talking to someone is considered **rude**.

Also, **avoid** leaning and slouching.

- Placing the hand on the stomach signifies **dislike**, usually for another person.

#### **Gift Giving**

- Business gifts are not standard practice, but will be greatly appreciated.

- Gifts will be opened when received.

- **Avoid** wrapping your gift in purple or black paper.

#### **Appropriate Gifts:**

- a prestigious brand item (small and not obviously expensive), fine pens, framed picture, chocolates, pastries, flowers (must be an even number except 12 and 6), wine (of excellent vintage)

#### **Gifts to Avoid:**

- gifts in the quantity of 17, chrysanthemums, red roses, sharp objects, handkerchiefs, gifts showcasing your company's logo.

## **Business Tips continued**

### **Conversation**

- Most Italians who work for international companies speak very good English, but this is not always the case.

- Direct eye contact is expected and important.

- Italians love to **chat**, rarely allowing a moment of silence during conversation.

- The Italians tend to be creative and flowing with ideas.

- If you are interrupted during conversation do not take offense; this shows their **interest** on the topic.

- You will be expected to **share** your opinion, so don't wait to be asked.

- Italian communication styles tend to be eloquent, wordy,

demonstrative, and **emotional**.

#### **Topics to Discuss:**

- Italian culture, art, food, wines, sports (soccer), family, and Italian cinema

#### **Topics to Avoid:**

- religion, politics, WWII, taxes, the Mafia, any negative comments on Italian culture or stereotypes, comparing Northern, Central or Southern Italians to each other

