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## **“The problems faced when building cable car installations in Italy”**

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Building cable car installations in Italy is currently more difficult than in any other country in Europe. The difficulties usually involve bureaucracy, delays or loopholes in the law that frequently litter the road to approval for projects with trials and tribulations. This situation has steadily got worse over the years, and now poses the risk of dealing a severe blow to Italian companies in this sector. These repercussions inevitably affect our clients, the cableway companies, which are forced to deal with delays and additional costs that their counterparts in the rest of Europe and beyond would find quite unfamiliar.

So in my role as chairman of ACIF, the association which unites all builders of Italian cable car installations, I decided to use this observation as a starting point from which to draw up a memorandum summarising the problems that our companies face on a daily basis as they attempt to go about their business. I had to send this document to four ministers of the Italian Republic because the subject matter allegedly falls within their competence as they are all, incredibly, responsible for issues relating to our industry in various ways. Most of these problems have been going on for years and have now been joined in recent months, due to the establishment of a new government, by the problem relating to the dreaded subdivision of the responsibility for cable car installations between two ministerial departments.

### **DIVISION OF RESPONSIBILITIES BETWEEN TWO MINISTERIAL DEPARTMENTS**

In recent months these problems have worsened following the debate which emerged, apparently definitively, about the planned reassignment of responsibilities (the so-called reassignment of ministerial portfolios) between the Ministry for Transport and the Ministry for Infrastructures, which have shared out the duties and responsibilities with regard to cable car installations. This is what we feared, a worsening of our ongoing difficulties leading to longer approval times for projects. We have just received news that all responsibility for cable car installations and systems will remain with the Ministry for Transport, this decision is just waiting for the final seal of approval. On one hand, this news might have us almost breathing a sigh of relief but on the other, the problems which have always been a part of our work and

relations with the state administration remain unchanged. The inordinately lengthy periods (8-10 months) which are required for the inspection of a project and then for the subsequent approval are often dictated by an understaffed structure, just imagine; the central headquarters of the TIF6 (the designated body in Rome) only has two engineers and doesn't even have its own secretarial staff. We have requested that part of the central office be improved. This would be achieved by giving it the exclusive task of issuing technical authorisations for innovative/special installations which would make it more efficient. It would also simultaneously give more purpose to the regional offices (U.S.T.I.F.) which, thanks to their proximity to the ski lifts etc. and to their organisational structure, can operate better as they will be called upon to issue technical authorisations for all standard installations.

Even though the cable car industry is smaller than other sectors governed by the Ministry for Transport, it still requires more attention from Rome, or even the government, due to its particular nature. We just want to be able to go about our daily business unhindered, as occurs in other countries in Europe.

## **FAILURE TO IMPLEMENT EUROPEAN REGULATIONS**

The second problem that I would like to bring to your attention concerns Italy's implementation of the European regulations for the approval of an installation's conformity, which are already applied in the rest of Europe. Decree Law 210 states that the safety components of the installations should be certified by an authorised notifying body. However the overall condition of the installation is approved in Italy by U.S.T.I.F. or by the Ministry for Transport. But in this instance, Italian regulations do not correspond with the European ones; therefore worrying difficulties arise due to the fact that the installations are designed with the European regulations in mind. This particular problem has already been resolved in other countries in Europe.

## **HEALTH AND SAFETY AT WORK: A DUAL SYSTEM OF AUTHORITY**

A third problem concerns health and safety at work inspections in the cableway industry, following legal proceedings initiated by the public prosecutor's office in Turin due to an inspection report issued to several cableway construction companies by the accident prevention department of ASL for the Piedmont Region. Curiously, all this took place just a couple of months before the Olympic Games in Turin. One of the facilities in question had already been properly inspected and not received any warnings from the competent bodies from the Ministry for Transport (3 U.S.T.I.F. officials) or the Piedmont Region (transport

official). Months later ASL carried out a surprise inspection, for the Ministry for Health. This procedure was triggered by the interpretative ambiguity of a circular from the Ministry for Transport, dated 1993, which does not exclude a dual system between the Ministry for Transport and the Ministry for Health for checking regulations regarding accident prevention at work in the cableway industry. According to this circular, Ministry for Transport officials are actually responsible for checking and inspecting an installation in use, whilst ASL inspectors are in charge of checking the facility in all other phases. And here I must use the conditional. This is an obvious, illogical and unexplainable dual system for governing and checking and it requires legislative input to clear up the question of which regulation should be applied and which body should be in charge of inspections. The risk of paralysing the industry is looming fast. If we were actually forced to stop a facility each time a trained operator set foot in the engine room (in the stations at the top and bottom of the mountains), even just to have a quick look, then you can just imagine the inconvenience this would cause to the hundreds of people stuck out in the cold on the chairlifts.

## **RELOCATING SECOND-HAND INSTALLATIONS IN EUROPE**

To conclude, I would like to refer to a curious anomaly. This concerns the relocation of used installations to different parts of Europe. According to current regulations, used installations can be actually reinstalled in another location; these relocated installations are not subject to the same provisions that apply to new installations. In other words, second-hand installations can be easily relocated without being subjected to certification procedures for the safety components or to the rigid trail of bureaucratic red tape that apply to new installations. This difference in approach conjures up some serious questions. At the end of the day, both the new and the old facilities are providing the same service once they open to the public – they both transport people.