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# Italy and Saudi Arabia agree to boost trade ties.

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On 15 February Alessandro Decio, SACE chief executive, and Ahmed Al-Rajhi, chairman of the Council of Saudi Chambers of Commerce and Industry (CSCCI), signed, in the presence of Italian Ambassador Luca Ferrari, a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) on trade and investment cooperation. Over the next twelve to eighteen months, SACE, Italy's export credit agency, will back 1,6 billion dollars in loans to Saudi Arabia.
According to Mr. Decio, the MoU "is a significant opportunity for the Italian export credit agency to boost bilateral trade between Saudi Arabia and Italy". SACE's backing will help Italian industries and companies to invest in new infrastructural projects as expected by the ambitious Saudi strategy "Vision 2030", a plan to reduce oil dependency, to diversify Saudi economy and to develop public sectors such as health education infrastructure and tourism. Riyadh has been tapping into this export credit agency-backed debt financing as oil prices dropped and local banks offered less credit to the economy. Aramco, Saudi's national oil giant, has also been interested in the wake of its future stock market listing.
Given how bilateral trade grew in 2017, compared to the year prior, the increased commitment of the Italian government in promoting investments in Saudi Arabia is understandable. After a four-year period of constant decline, the exchange between the countries started growing again, on a yearly basis, in 2017. This growth is mostly due to an increased Italian import share from Saudi Arabia, offsetting a slight dip in Italian export to the Kingdom: nonetheless, the trade balance is still in Italy's favour.
SACE is very active in the Gulf region: aside from Saudi Arabia (where its current portfolio amounts to 640 million dollars), in the United Arab Emirates the Italian agency is also planning to offer more the one billion dollars to support projects awarded to Italian companies. Projects such as the construction of Dubai's Al Maktoum International Airport and the Expo Dubai 2020 site. In SACE's view, Saudi Arabia is still an unexplored market when compared to other Gulf economies.
Given Saudi's ambition of modernizing the country economy via the "Vision 2030" plan, thus opening to private enterprise, a stronger Italian involvement will pave the way for Saudi investments in Italy: SACE is not just helping Italian firms that intend to invest in the Kingdom but also helping Saudi companies which want to do the same in Italy. In the words of Mr. Decio: "It's a two-way win-win situation for both the Saudi and the Italian governments".
Investorvisa.it is working parallel to Rome initiatives to attract foreign investments by offering opportunities to invest in Italian companies and thus obtain, with highly qualified help during the necessary procedure a visa reserved for non-Schengen investors.

Source: Arab News