

(INSIDE) SUSTAINABILITY



Business taking flight

C.H. GUENTHER & SON:
Leading food manufacturer

**GRANTLEY ADAMS
INTERNATIONAL AIRPORT:**
Caribbean aviation hub

GROCOTT & MURFIT:
Values-driven
construction business

Growth and sustainability fly together

Italian-based Atitech is the largest independent MRO operator in Europe, the Middle East and Africa. However, its desire to grow further in a highly competitive sector remains strong. In a discussion with Andy Probert, President Gianni Lettieri outlined the company's plans and the desire for sustainability to take a leading role.

From the ashes of a crisis, a phoenix always arises. At least, that is the case with Atitech. The market-leading Italian MRO has effectively come full circle. Born in 1989, in the context of one of the first Alitalia crises, it returned as an independent operator in 2022 to take over the maintenance activities of the airline in extraordinary administration.

At the heart of this Italian renaissance has been Gianni Lettieri, an extraordinary

and tenacious entrepreneur whose smart vision and thinking gave Atitech the uplift it desperately needed in the 2010s. His foresight first saw the dawn of Meridie, the investment company he founded in 2009 that acquired a 75% capital share of Atitech, and then it swooped to take Alitalia's maintenance assets.

Now on firmer footing, Atitech has 1,500 employees spread over two main bases: Naples Capodichino International Airport and Rome's Fiumicino Leonardo

da Vinci intercontinental Airport. The original industrial complex in Naples extended over 9,000sqm of hangars and 4,000sqm of workshops. Today the two bases (Naples and Fiumicino) added together – including workshops, offices and parking areas – cover an area of approximately 650,000sqm.

Atitech's activities extend beyond base maintenance. It has a main workshop that

has an autoclave for composite materials, carries out non-destructive tests (identifying a defect in a structure without affecting the material being inspected) and interventions on avionic components and cabin interior parts.

Additionally, it has line maintenance operations at 32 airports: 21 in Italy and 11 overseas, including Buenos Aires, Osaka, Tel Aviv and Paris.

Entrepreneurial vision

The career of Mr Lettieri is not, as many would think, steeped in aviation. After graduating as a surveyor, he set up a new

production plant for the processing of fabrics, dyeing and finishing in Milan and Naples. It was his first entrepreneurial experience. Over the years, he established himself in the textile and clothing sector.

In 1989, he created the first European company specialised in the production of denim-ring fabric. The product's potential, effectively exploited thanks to an in-depth and farsighted knowledge of the market, soon led him to widen his reputation in the USA. He also launched a joint venture in India with the Raymond group, setting up Raymond Calitri India, the first denim fabric production company in India.



All the while, he continued to be a visionary industrialist and consummate community-minded individual in Italy. In 2006, he launched a company geared to the development of renewable energy and oversaw significant growth prospects. The following year, he established Meridie, the first investment company in Southern Italy listed on the Italian Stock Exchange in Milan.

He also founded MedSolar, a startup in the renewable energy sector, before leading the acquisition of Atitech, and its subsequent expansion.

Major goals

Now the largest independent MRO in the Europe, Middle East and Africa (EMEA) market, Mr Lettieri harbours bigger ambitions: "Within a year, we have effectively doubled our capacity, going from five to nine hangars and from 18 to 29 bays following our 2022 acquisition.

"In the future, we want to regain the heritage of professionalism that was lost

due to the events of the former Alitalia and go back to working on engines and landing gears, for example. The ultimate goal is to create a large European maintenance centre in central-southern Italy, with a consolidated infrastructure in the civil and military aeronautical sector for our country."

Atitech's customers are airlines, lessors, cargo operators service companies and government bodies, such as the Guardia di Finanza and the Italian Air Force. In its latest contractual win, Ireland-based leasing company Aergo Capital signed an agreement for Atitech to undertake 12-year checks on five Airbus A330-300 aircraft. The work will take place in Naples and also includes modifications services.

"We are also among the few MROs that convert aircraft from passenger to cargo," Mr Lettieri said. In recent months, Atitech's Naples base has been engaged on a Boeing 737/800 conversion from a passenger to a freighter (PTF) aircraft for a client.

Atitech is also developing innovative projects with two important universities





of Naples, Federico II and Parthenope. "Interaction with university centres is typical of the cluster in which we operate: soon around 100 recent graduates will start working with us," Mr Lettieri said. "As I often say, our customers are not just customers, but partners: and this also applies to our suppliers. It's sharing a vision that goes beyond a simple commercial relationship."

"Recently, at our headquarters at Capodichino, we allocated an entire wing of one of our buildings to the representatives of our clients. There are meeting rooms equipped for video-conferencing, co-working spaces and a crew lounge. Soon we will also have a guest house with 16 rooms for company representatives."

Growing responsibilities

When Atitech published its first sustainability report last year, certified by Deloitte, it used the phrase: 'There is no

growth without responsibility' to accompany it. "It is my deep conviction, and that of the people who work with me," Mr Lettieri added. "Doing business at levels of excellence does not mean forgetting that everything we do has its impact. Every choice we make must be made in harmony with the environment and with the protection of people and resources. It's not rhetoric; it's awareness. We can work well in the present only if our gaze is projected towards tomorrow."

In 2022, the company started the process for the ISO 14001 environmental certification and launched an investment plan regarding a new 1,200kWp photovoltaic system and replacing company vehicles from diesel to electric.

During the peak of Covid, Atitech made an entire Capodichino hangar available and transformed it into a vaccination hub. In 2020, it launched the charity canteen initiative by distributing over 200 hot

meals daily to needy families in some neighbourhoods of Naples.

"This initiative is now in its third edition," Mr Lettieri said. "I believe that in times of crisis, it is a duty to offer solidarity to people in need who live in the same area where the companies do business. We have also allocated a fund of 500,000 Euros to support the studies of employees' children."

In partnership with Atitech, Deagle, a Naples-based startup operating in the aerospace and renewable energy fields, has been a Meditech tender: a multi-regional centre of expertise in Puglia and Campania, for orientation and training on industry 4.0 topics. Horus is a research project aimed at finding new inspection solutions for

aircraft fuselages through AI algorithms and drones.

"The sector in which we operate is challenging, given the history of recent years," Mr Lettieri said. "Additionally, Atitech competes with companies that operate in territories with low labour costs. But we are better, more competent and more efficient and must continue to be so in the future."

"Luckily, Atitech has a well-established reputation, and earned the respect and trust of customers and stakeholders in the field," he concluded. "It has long-term job prospects and ambitious projects." ■



Atitech President, Gianni Lettieri

