

PRESS RELEASE

BolognaFiere and SIG (The Italian Tunnelling Society) sign a strategic agreement for the development of the IUC – Italian Underground Congress, scheduled to take place in Bologna and Bari from 2026 to 2030.

Bologna, April 2026. BolognaFiere, one of Europe's leading exhibition organizers, and **SIG (The Italian Tunnelling Society)**, the leading association in the field of tunnelling and underground engineering works, have signed an agreement for the organization of an annual event dedicated to one of the strategic sectors of Italy's infrastructure system.

The agreement provides for the joint organization of a series of technical, scientific, educational and exhibition events through 2030. The first events will be held at the Fiera del Levante exhibition center in Bari on **26–27 November 2026** (Italian Underground Conference) and at the Bologna exhibition district from **1–3 December 2027** (Italian Underground Congress).

The global tunnelling market, and underground construction more generally, is experiencing strong growth driven by urbanization, the need for sustainable transport infrastructure and emerging challenges related to climate change.

The **global tunnel construction** market is valued at approximately USD 174.58 billion in 2024 and is expected to reach USD 330.28 billion **by 2031. More than 60%** of demand comes from infrastructure projects, including railways, highways and metro systems. The **Asia-Pacific region** dominates the market with a **42.1%** share in 2025, led by major investments in China and India.

Europe accounts for approximately **25% of the global market** share, with strong demand in Italy, Spain and France due to the widespread presence of hilly and mountainous terrain.

Italy is currently one of the most dynamic **tunnelling** markets in the world thanks to a combination of geographical features and substantial investments linked to the **PNRR** and the European TEN-T corridors crossing the country.

The Italian major infrastructure market, including a significant share of tunnelling works, represents approximately **€108 billion** in PNRR-related investments alone. An additional €450 million has been allocated for the technological monitoring and inspection of existing bridges, viaducts and tunnels.

Italy holds world records for the length and complexity of underground works currently under construction, including the **Brenner Base Tunnel (BBT)**, which will become the world's longest railway

tunnel (64 km); the **Moncenisio Base Tunnel (Turin–Lyon)**, with a total length of **57.5 km**; the **Genoa Subportual Tunnel**, a project costing around 1 billion euros for a 3.4 km urban tunnel that will pass beneath the harbour basin; and the **High-Speed**

(AV/AC) on key sections such as **Naples–Bari**, Salerno–Reggio Calabria and Palermo–Messina–Catania, the **Terzo Valico** (Genoa–Milan) and the **Brescia–Verona–Padua** line, which include numerous natural and man-made tunnels.

According to **Enrico Pizzarotti, President of SIG**:

“SIG brings together all the organizations operating in the tunnelling sector in Italy and serves as a reference point for the industry in promoting dialogue, knowledge sharing and professional training. The agreement with BolognaFiere marks a significant step forward in our ability to connect Italian tunnelling excellence with the market. Collaboration with an international exhibition organizer allows us to expand the reach of our projects and offer companies a structured, reliable and business-oriented ecosystem of opportunities.”

Antonio Bruzzone, CEO of BolognaFiere, stated:

“With this initiative BolognaFiere expands its presence in infrastructure-related exhibitions by adding I.U.C. – Italian Underground Conference to its established events SAIE and Asphaltica, further strengthening its role as a platform supporting the growth of Italian companies. Italy is one of the countries with the highest number and total length of tunnels, supported by a centuries-old tradition of design and construction that keeps Italian companies at the forefront of technological innovation. This agreement and the resulting events will create new connections between Italian companies and international operators, fostering pragmatic, targeted and long-term business relationships.”

The first event, I.U.C. – Italian Underground Conference, will take place on 26–27 November 2026 at the Fiera del Levante exhibition center in Bari.

Enrico Pizzarotti added:

“This first edition of I.U.C. – Italian Underground Congress represents a high-level opportunity to discuss innovation and sustainability in underground works, bringing together experiences, expertise and visions. Bari was chosen deliberately because of its growing strategic importance for Southern Italy and the infrastructure sector.”

Antonio Bruzzone concluded:

“With I.U.C. – Italian Underground Congress, collaboration with Nuova Fiera del Levante is further strengthened, enhancing an exhibition venue with great tradition and strategic potential. Together we

are building a model of exhibition cooperation aimed at supporting the national and international development of the infrastructure sector.”

The Italian Tunnelling Society (SIG) is an association that has promoted know-how in the field of tunnels and underground works for over 40 years.

Founded in 1974, SIG is an open cultural association dedicated to promoting, coordinating and disseminating studies and research in the field of tunnel construction and underground engineering. Its activities include organizing conferences, congresses, training courses, technical visits to major underground construction sites, publishing technical and scientific materials, and coordinating members’ participation in international conferences. Today SIG has more than 800 members representing public authorities, clients, universities, professional firms, engineering companies, general and specialist contractors, and industrial operators in the sector.

BolognaFiere S.p.A. is one of the leading international exhibition operators.

The Group covers the entire exhibition value chain, from event organization and venue management to stand construction. It operates in more than 15 countries across Europe, Asia and the Americas and organizes more than 100 trade fairs each year, including SAIE and Asphaltica for the construction and infrastructure sectors.