

10 Autoplastica

- 1 In groups, discuss how mobile people are in your country – is it difficult to move people to a new site several hundred kilometres away? Why / Why not?
- 2 Read the background information about Autoplastica. Why is Research and Development (R&D) so important? Why is Autoplastica’s current R&D organisation unsatisfactory?

Autoplastica was founded in 1952 in a garage in Biella, a small town in the hills of northern Italy. Today, the company has sixteen plants and 3,000 employees in nine countries and produces plastic parts for car manufacturers all over the world. Because the automobile sector is fast-moving, highly competitive and very technical, Autoplastica spends seven and a half per cent of its revenue on Research and Development.

Autoplastica has a difficult decision to make. Currently its 400 Research and Development staff are divided between three teams on three different sites:

- Rome, the administrative headquarters
- Bari, the largest production site
- Biella, the oldest site, between Turin and Milan

There are many advantages in centralising R&D – but where? There are also significant disadvantages to consider.



- 3 **T 1.19** Listen to a conversation between two Autoplastica engineers, and complete the notes in the table. (The gaps are labelled in the order they occur in the conversation.)

Solution	Advantages	Disadvantages
1 do nothing	<p>f nobody will _____</p> <p>l spend the money on _____</p> <p>_____</p>	<p>b difficult to _____</p> <p>_____</p> <p>c spend a fortune _____</p> <p>_____</p> <p>h no space to _____</p>
2 centralise R&D in Rome, Bari or Biella	<p>d save a lot of _____</p> <p>m concentrate _____</p> <p>_____ in one existing centre</p> <p>n quicker and easier than _____</p> <p>_____</p>	<p>a to upgrade and expand the labs is _____</p> <p>_____</p> <p>e a lot of people will _____</p> <p>_____</p>
3 build new R&D centre	<p>g build _____ like a crash test lab, a paint shop, a pre-production line</p> <p>i and a new _____ !</p> <p>o good international _____</p> <p>p give us a lot _____ with our customers</p>	<p>some R&D staff will refuse to move</p> <p>j will cost _____</p> <p>k will take _____ to build</p> <p>q just think about the _____ and all the _____</p>