Transforming Cohesion Policy into Territorial Attractiveness: The Abruzzo ERDF Programme

Abruzzo and Europe's Inner Areas

New Strategies for Territorial Attractiveness and Resilience

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Arturo Polese (DG REGIO)

European Commission

Right to stay as an European value

- Freedom to move and freedom to stay in the community of one's choice should be developed and ensured together (Letta report, President von der Leyen State of the Union speech 2026).
- For too many Europeans, especially in rural areas, border regions, islands, outermost regions, and former industrial territories, the right to stay is not yet fully guaranteed.
- Every European has the freedom to move. And every European has the right to live and thrive in the place they call home. They have a right to stay, and to move by choice, not by necessity. This should be possible in all countries and regions of our Union.
- This is why the Commission is preparing a Strategy for the Right to Stay. Because we need to support the attractiveness of all territories, to make them more appealing places for people and businesses.

Right to stay and inner areas in Italy

- Population decline, a shrinking workforce, and the migration of young people from rural to urban areas — as well as from the south to the north of Italy — combined with rising demand for healthcare and elderly care, are placing pressure on local economies and the funding of essential services.
- Inland and sparsely populated areas are the most vulnerable to these changes, facing depopulation more rapidly than urban centers. Unlike cities, where falling birth rates are often offset by net inward migration, these areas lack such compensatory population inflows.

What does cohesion policy do for inner areas?

- It helps inner areas tackle depopulation and territorial inequalities by supporting employment, services, and local development.
- Investments are targeted at the places most at risk of being left behind, helping smaller municipalities and communities remain attractive places to live, work, and raise families.
- Support focuses on improving essential services and connectivity, including transport, digital infrastructure, education, healthcare, and social infrastructure.
- It also fosters economic diversification and local innovation, helping inland areas build on their territorial strengths.
- Integrated territorial approaches make it possible to tailor investments to local needs and combine economic, social, and environmental goals.

Integrated territorial development of inner areas within Cohesion Policy in Italy

- Cohesion policy provides an important framework and source of investment, featuring concrete actions for the territorial development of inner areas.
- The goal is not merely to counter decline but to unlock the potential of inner areas as places of resilience, innovation, and social cohesion.
- By enhancing attractiveness, opportunities, and quality of life, cohesion policy supports more balanced territorial development.
- In Italy, during the 2021–2027 period, over €1 billion in cohesion policy funding (ERDF and ESF+) is allocated to investments supporting the integrated territorial development of rural, mountainous, and sparsely populated areas, including inland areas and small islands.

In Abruzzo….

- Abruzzo is classified as a transition region for the 2021–2027 programming period and is expected to remain in this category during the next programming period as well.
- There are two cohesion policy programmes for 2021–2027:
  - an ERDF programme worth €681 million (EU contribution: €272 million) and
  - an ESF+ programme worth €406.6 million (EU contribution: €162.6 million).

The ERDF programme in Abruzzo

Total | EU | National

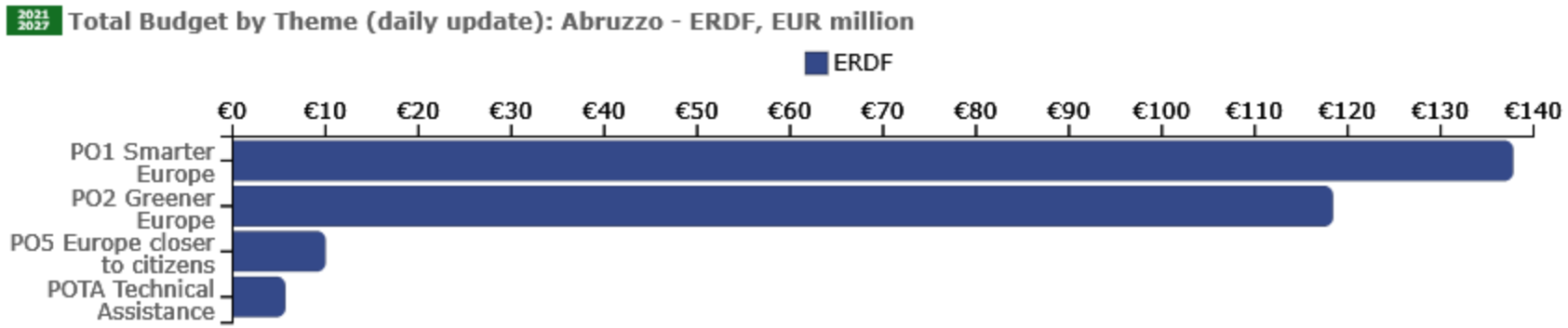
Budget adopted for the period:

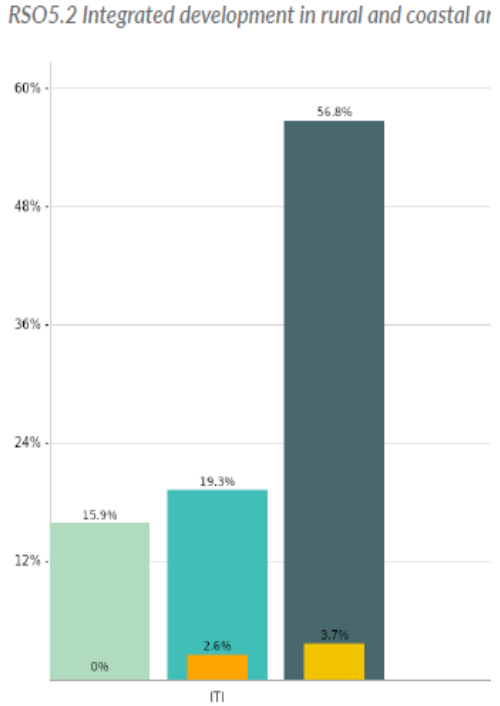
€681 053 590

Total | EU | National

Budget adopted for the period:

€272 421 436



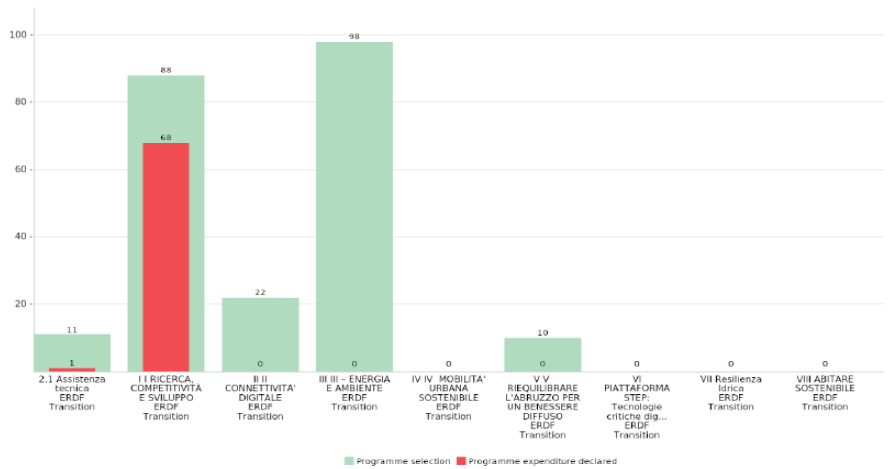


Abruzzo - ERDF (2021IT16RFPR004) Cut-off date 30/06/2026

1.1 Programme overview

TOTAL PLANNED AMOUNT	TOTAL ELIGIBLE COST of selected operations	TOTAL ELIGIBLE EXPENDITURE declared by beneficiaries to the managing authorities
EUR 681 million	EUR 228 million	EUR 70 million
18th planned financing size out of 30 programmes in IT	25th project selection rate out of 30 programmes in IT	24th expenditure rate out of 30 programmes in IT
2% of IT total	34% of programme total	10% of programme total

1.3 Project selection and expenditure declared by PA, fund and category of region (EUR million)



Support for inner areas in the Abruzzo programmes



AREA INTERNA	N° Comuni	Risorse assegnate FESR	Risorse assegnate FSE+
Basso Sangro-Trigno	37	5.775.099,35	4.179.348,21
Alto Aterno, Gran Sasso, Laga	18	7.260.317,90	5.254.177,43
Alto Sangro-Valle del Sagittario	13	4.547.973,32	3.291.296,48
Subequana	28	4.694.284,66	3.397.179,69
Valfino-Vestina	20	5.412.109,45	3.916.658,16
Valle del Giovenco-Valle Roveto	13	5.444.161,91	3.939.854,02
Piana del Cavaliere-Alto Liri	10	4.866.053,40	3.521.486,01
TOTALI	**139**	**38.000.000,00**	**27.500.000,00**

Thematic areas

ERDF

Protection, development, and promotion of public tourism assets and tourism services.

Protection, development, and promotion of cultural heritage and cultural services.

Protection, development, and promotion of natural heritage and ecotourism, excluding Natura 2000 sites.

Physical regeneration and safety of public spaces.

ESF+

Financial support for the creation and development of new businesses

Development and expansion of early childhood education and care services

Enhancement and integration of educational and support services in schools

State of play and challenges

- All strategies for the "Inner Areas" have been approved regarding the ESF+ component.
- For the ERDF component, the Region has requested revisions, to all strategies, to approach planning and programming from a territorial perspective rather than focusing on small-scale interventions within individual municipalities.
- The focus is shifting toward structural investments (whether for support or development) particularly within the tourism sector.
- It is important to achieve full implementation within the current programming period.

Thank you!



arturo.polese@ec.europa.eu