

Europe's environment 2025 - Country profile

Italy

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The Italy country profile provides a concise overview of key trends across three dimensions: environment and climate; socio-economic change; and system change (energy, mobility and food) in the country. It highlights the main developments and challenges in these areas, including measures to support progress towards sustainability in Italy. An assessment for each of the three dimensions was prepared by national experts from the European Environment Information and Observation Network (Eionet) in Italy, based on 20 established indicators from the EEA or Eurostat.

Italy is making significant strides towards sustainability but faces many challenges. Italy has excelled in organic farming. Protected areas cover 21.7% of the territory; however, Italy needs to increase this share to contribute to achieving the EU target of 30% by 2030. Greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions have decreased since 2005, but further reductions are needed to meet EU targets. Renewable energy is a key opportunity, with Italy surpassing its 2020 target and aiming for 38.7% renewable energy use by 2030. Although energy consumption has decreased, the reduction rate must be doubled to meet future targets. Climate-related economic losses are increasing, highlighting the need for robust adaptation strategies. Waste management and circular economy practices require improvement.

Italy faces socioeconomic challenges, including a widening generational economic gap, poor social mobility and significant energy poverty, affecting millions of households. Structural reforms and investments (e.g. Italy's national recovery and resilience plan) aim to address these issues through furthering sustainable prosperity and competitiveness, digitalisation and innovation. The interaction between social, environmental and economic challenges is addressed within the national sustainable development strategy, which incorporates the 2030 agenda and its sustainable development goals for Italy, while also aligning with the objectives of the national recovery and resilience plan. The national sustainable development strategy is the reference framework for maintaining coherent national sustainable development policies through the annual monitoring the 55 most representative indicators.

Key trends and assessments

Area under organic farming

- On track

Circular material use rate

- On track

Climate-related economic losses

- Wrong direction

Designated terrestrial protected areas

- Acceleration needed

Final energy consumption

- On track

Greenhouse gas emissions and removals in land and forests

- Not assessed

Health impacts of air pollution

- Not assessed

Share of renewable energy in final energy consumption

- Acceleration needed

Total greenhouse gas emissions (without LULUCF)

- Not assessed

Total waste generation

- Wrong direction

Summary assessment

The analysis of environmental and climate trends in Italy highlights significant progress in some areas, but also important challenges that must be addressed to meet the 2030 targets. In agriculture, the expansion of organic farming represents a positive trend towards sustainable practices, aligned with the national strategic plan for the common agricultural policy and the farm-to-fork strategy.

However, soil consumption continues to be a critical issue: since 2006, over 120 000 ha have been sealed, with 40% concentrated in northern regions, exerting significant pressure on ecosystems. From a climate perspective, GHG emissions have decreased by 20% over the last 30 years. However, projections for 2030 indicate that ESR sector emissions may decrease by only 41% compared with 2005 levels, falling short of the 43.7% target. At the same time, renewable energy, although growing, requires a significant acceleration in effort to double its share and reach 38.7% by 2030. Air quality remains a challenge: premature deaths attributable to PM2.5 have decreased by 32%, but the rate must decrease further to align with the EU zero-pollution plan.

Water resource management shows encouraging signs. Between 2016 and 2021, the number of water bodies in good chemical status increased, while the number of unclassified water bodies decreased compared with 2010–2015 levels. However, aquatic biodiversity continues to face threats from pollution and climate change.

Finally, economic losses from extreme climate events are rising, underlining the need for structural adaptation. Despite the progress made, Italy's ecological transition demands a stronger and more integrated approach to systematically addressing environmental and climate challenges.

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