

Foreword

Piedmont, Italy, is often considered the birthplace of Italian industry, beginning with textiles in the 19th century, moving to the automotive and aerospace industries in the 20th century, and, more recently, shifting towards IT and services. Piedmont is still one of Italy's leading innovation regions and has a strong manufacturing base. Yet it faces several economic challenges, including the loss of manufacturing jobs, which declined by 16% between 2004 and 2018. Diversifying the regional economy beyond its traditional strengths in core industrial activities will be important, not least given the large share of small- and medium-enterprises and entrepreneurs operating in low-value added activities, and the relatively few high-innovation firms.

The COVID-19 pandemic, with its differentiated impact on regional and local economies, has heightened the need for inclusive, sustainable and resilient economies. It has also accelerated the need for an innovative industrial transition in Piedmont – one that can tackle short and long term challenges presented by the transition, especially relating to employment, but also leverage on opportunities.

To deepen the understanding of how the region of Piedmont can best use innovation policy as a lever to advance its industrial transition, help boost productivity, and drive competitiveness, the OECD Centre for Entrepreneurship, SMEs, Regions and Cities (CFE) worked with the Piedmont Regional Government in re-evaluating its approach to innovation, including its innovation policy design, implementation and governance. As part of this process, the regional government and regional innovation stakeholders, together with the OECD, identified past and present innovation challenges, as well as present and future opportunities to reinforce innovation and innovation diffusion in the region. This report reflects the insights gained during the OECD's work with the Piedmont Regional Government and a wide array of regional innovation stakeholders.

This report highlights the importance of a broad approach to innovation in Piedmont. Such an approach includes: promoting technology and non-technology driven innovation; building innovation competences of SMEs; better connecting regional innovation actors and stronger engagement with regional innovation cluster organisations; to create a stronger regional innovation ecosystem; and linking innovation with large-scale, regional development goals. It also means supporting innovative entrepreneurship to generate economic and industrial diversification and, through this, diversify innovation potential. In addition, an effective regional smart specialisation strategy and a resilient innovation ecosystem are central to Piedmont's industrial transition process.

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