

Preface

Over the past two years, Italy has made a tremendous effort to speed up long overdue structural reforms to put public finances on a sounder track, to revive and modernise its economy, and to restore growth and competitiveness.

This Environmental Performance Review of Italy, the third prepared by the OECD, provides analysis and policy recommendations on how to integrate environmental considerations in Italy's broader reform agenda and strengthen the country's environmental performance. Among other measures, the Review suggests that shifting the tax burden from labour and capital to pollution and resource use could make the tax system more efficient and provide better incentives for environmental protection.

The report also argues that further development of renewable energy sources in conjunction with smart grids, as well as expanding successful energy efficiency initiatives, could help create the new green markets and related employment opportunities that are needed for a transition to a low-carbon, resource-efficient economy. These initiatives should be embedded in a long-term energy strategy in order to provide a stable framework for investment.

In recent years, Italy has taken many positive environmental initiatives, particularly in some regions and business sectors. These have led to impressive achievements, including a reduction of air emissions and water pollution, an improvement in waste management, and enhanced protection of biodiversity. However, these achievements are often partial and exhibit significant regional variations, a feature of the Italian system that is reinforced by a major devolution of legislative and administrative responsibilities to the subnational governments. A concerted effort is now needed to make the environmental management system more coherent and effective, and to scale up positive environmental achievements.

The Environmental Performance Review of Italy places a special focus on climate change, water management and green growth promotion. Among its specific recommendations, the following ones can be underlined:

- prepare a green growth strategy that provides a clear, coherent and sufficiently long-term policy framework to spur investment in the green economy;
- strengthen the links between the disbursement of regional development funds and the achievement of targets for the provision of environmental services;
- continue to simplify environmental requirements for small and medium-sized enterprises to reduce administrative costs and barriers while reinforcing efforts to combat environmental crime, especially related to waste and land use;
- apply economic instruments more systematically and streamline institutional arrangements for managing water resources at the level of river basins;
- restructure the taxation of energy products to explicitly include a carbon tax component with a view to providing a consistent price for carbon across the economy;

- extend the use of price-based mechanisms, such as pollution and congestion charges, to reduce emissions from vehicle use in urban areas, and restructure vehicle taxation to include components reflecting CO₂ emissions and other environmental externalities.

This Review is the result of a co-operative policy dialogue between Italy and other members and observers of the OECD Working Party on Environmental Performance. We are confident that this collaborative effort will be useful to advance the policy debate on how to tackle the shared environmental challenges faced by OECD members and their partners.



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