



Building resilient regions: Practices and lessons for policy making

ON THE WINGS OF L'AQUILA: ABRUZZO 2030

The OECD is assisting the government of Italy in designing a long-run strategy to re-launch the local economy of Abruzzo region, after the 2009 earthquake that struck a wide area with the city of L'Aquila (the Regional Capital) as its epicentre. This project aims at offering proposals to counter the effects of the earthquake shock, to secure the sustainability of the local economy, which has been questioned by the natural disaster, and to provide strategy options for the region Abruzzo to recover from its backwardness.

Assessing policies to build resilient regions that have been affected by large natural disasters requires place-based policy responses, essentially for two reasons:

- Short-term reconstruction decisions will impact the options available for long-term sustainable development. Reconstruction, hence, must become the occasion to re-think and implement a development strategy based on local potentials. Reconstruction efforts need to be integrated in a coherent strategy of economic and social development focused on the economic potential and job creation of the hit areas.
- The implementation of the development strategy needs an effective governance framework and tools to guarantee the coordination among public and private actors and national-local partnership.

This project will allow sharing experiences and peer reviewing policy options among different regions in the OECD area where natural disasters have caused the rethinking of the development model. It can also provide other regions with valuable lessons on the conditions for a sound implementation of long-term strategies. Resilience – i.e. strengthening local comparative advantages and improving opportunities - is particularly critical for regions that were struggling prior to the disaster.

KEY POLICY ISSUES

Three priorities have emerged for the design and implementation of a long-term development strategy in the Abruzzo region:

- Redevelopment and valorisation of the role of the University of L'Aquila and promotion of innovation and links with business. Besides killing 300 people and destroying the built environment and infrastructure networks, the earthquake impacted on the capacity of L'Aquila of being a large university pole, which hosted more than 30 000 students, who greatly contributed to the local economy.
- Renewal of the city's attractiveness by strategic choices on restoration and promotion of key innovative services, together with an improved use of the region's natural environmental tourism possibilities.
- Institutional and multilevel governance issues for redevelopment. Identify the conditions for implementing a selected strategy and their implications in terms of coordination among public and private stakeholders, institutional instruments, human capital needed and governance changes. Engage citizenry and new coalitions to embrace change and convey a shared vision of the future of the area. Use timely, accessible and relevant data to motivate citizens and policy action.





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NEXT STEPS: CREATING A NETWORK OF POST-DISASTER REGIONS

Delegates of the Territorial Development Policy Committee discussed in June to what extent sharing experiences among regions affected by natural disasters in different countries can help identify the policy and governance options to rebuild a stronger and more prosperous region for the long term. Delegates supported the creation of a network of regions that have been affected by large natural disasters (e.g. in Japan, Italy, US, France, Chile, New Zealand, Turkey, Australia etc.).

Creating a network of regions affected by or at risk of natural disasters can help to restore confidence by sharing experiences, avoid costly mistakes, and set priorities. Regions with recent experience, albeit at very different scales, could include among others: Tohoku (Japan), Christchurch (New Zealand); Maule and Biobío regions (Chile); Louisiana/Gulf of Mexico (United States); Van Province (Turkey), the region Provence-Alpes-Côte d'Azur (France), New South Wales and Queensland (Australia) affected by river floods; etc. Given the natural and environmental spillovers of disasters, collaboration with regions in immediate neighbouring countries could also facilitate the elaboration of cross-border policy responses.

An open workshop to discuss common issues and policy models among different regions will be held in L'Aquila on 17 March 2012, addressing the various dimensions of designing development strategies based on local potentials of hit areas, included ways to improve the delivery of such strategies.

Interested countries can:

- Suggest ways to mobilise possible interested regions in their countries.
- Collaborate with the Secretariat to share experiences and practices of rethinking regional development after a shock.
- Bring their experience at the 17 March 2012 workshop in L'Aquila.

