



EUROPEAN UNION



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ADAPTATION TO CLIMATE CHANGE



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## Engaging with citizens through a Network of Environmental Education Centres

More than 40 Environmental Education Centres have been established in the Abruzzo region, Italy

*The centres function as key reference points for citizens, schools, local authorities, and enterprises, offering education and resources on sustainable development practices essential for adapting to the changing climate.*

### Key Learnings

- **Raising awareness:** Prioritising environmental education is fundamental in raising citizen awareness about environmental and social issues, fostering a culture of environmental protection. For instance, campaigns like "Save the Marsican Bear" have successfully involved local communities, reducing conflicts between wildlife and human activities while promoting awareness and protective measures for endangered species.
- **Innovation:** Implementing hands-on educational projects and residential programmes has proven effective in engaging students and fostering a deeper understanding of environmental conservation and biodiversity.
- **Funding:** Securing a combination of regional funds, European Union grants, and contributions from local authorities and private sponsors is essential for supporting educational programs, operational costs, and projects aimed at sustainable development and climate change adaptation.

## About the region

Diverse landscapes, ranging from mountainous to coastal areas characterize the Abruzzo region of Italy. The coast has a Mediterranean and the interior a Continental climate, with an average annual temperature between 8°C and 16°C. The altitude stretches from sea level to nearly 3,000 meters in the Apennine Mountains, covering an area of about 10,763 km<sup>2</sup>. Abruzzo is renowned for its rich biodiversity, with national parks protecting species like the Apennine wolf and Marsican brown bear and its pristine natural landscapes.

## Climate Hazards

Droughts, Extreme Temperatures, Flooding, Ice and Snow, Storms

## Sector

Agriculture, Tourism, Buildings, Biodiversity

## Key system

Ecosystem and Nature-Based Solutions, Water Management,  
Land-use and Food Systems



Figure 1: Map. Image Credit: © Vonvikken – Own work, Public Domain, From: commons.wikimedia.org.

## Climate Threats

Abruzzo faces significant climate threats, including floods, landslides, and extreme weather highlighting the need for resilient infrastructure. Heavy rainfall can cause flooding, while mountainous regions are prone to landslides, especially after storms. In winter, heavy snowfall and avalanches disrupt daily life. Summer heatwaves and droughts impact water supplies and agriculture. These hazards emphasise the need for robust disaster preparedness and sustainable land management to protect Abruzzo's population and environment.

## Environmental Education in the Abruzzo Region

The Abruzzo Region recognises environmental or sustainability education as a crucial [strategy](#) for raising citizen awareness and sensitivity towards environmental and social issues. The Environmental Education initiative aims to foster a culture of environmental protection and to raise awareness about climate change impacts through various educational and training processes.

In Abruzzo, the Environmental Education system comprises a network of public and private facilities collectively forming the regional network of Environmental Education Centres. This extensive network includes over 40 Environmental Education Centres distributed throughout the region. These centres serve

as an essential resource for environmental education and knowledge on sustainable development for citizens, schools, local authorities and enterprises.

*“[By] introducing Environmental Education Centres [...] in the Abruzzo Region, I [must] emphasise how each one of them represents an opportunity for sustainable enrichment in our territory. The invitation is [...] to engage with the Environmental Education Centres in the area and addresses anyone who recognises sustainable development as an effective strategy for environmental action.”*

*Daniela Stati,  
The Regional Councillor for Civil Protection  
and Environment of the Abruzzo Region.*

## Environmental Education Centres to achieve local climate change adaptation

Each Environmental Education Centre operates in diverse geographical areas – hilly, mountain, coastal, and urban – allowing them to implement localised projects like educational courses and training sessions. Funded by regional, EU, and local contributions, they focus on sustainability and climate adaptation. These centres play a vital role in participatory processes, using unique methodologies for sustainability themes. A Regional Monitoring System oversees their activities to ensure relevance and continuous improvement, fostering a network of various social actors in the region.

The Environmental Education Centres are part of [INFEAbruzzo](#), the regional system for environmental information, training, and education, and are legally of regional interest. Collectively, they form the network of Environmental Education Centres of the Abruzzo Region.

## The Environmental Education Centre ECOTUR as an example in the Abruzzo region

The [Environmental Education Centre Ecotur](#) is located in the centre of Pescasseroli, the historic capital of Abruzzo, Lazio, and Molise National Park, where it operates. It has a reception hall, library, newspaper library, video library, and media library open to users and offers educational workshops, exhibition spaces, and multimedia means for reproducing sounds and images.



Figure 2: Abruzzo Chamois and fawn. Image Credit: © Angelina Iannarelli, Mammiferi. From: [parcoabruzzo.it](#).

The state recognised the National Park in January 1923 after its establishment in September 1922. The National Park extends over the three regions of Abruzzo, Lazio, and Molise and covers an area of about 50,000 hectares, surrounded by another 60,000 hectares of buffer zone, which aims to protect animals that often roam beyond the National Park's core boundaries.

About 25 villages distributed among the three regions fall within the Park's territory. The Park completely immerses five villages (Pescasseroli,



Opi, Villetta Barrea, Civitella Alfedena and Barrea). The Abruzzo, Lazio and Molise National Park is one of the richest wildlife mountain areas in the Apennines. It is renowned for its rich biodiversity, housing over 60 mammal species, 300 bird species, and 40 reptile species, along with numerous insects and invertebrates. Notable wildlife includes native and endemic species like the Marsican Brown Bear and the Abruzzo Chamois, which are significant to the region's ecological heritage.

Over the years, the Environmental Education Centre Ecotur proposed several environmental education projects for local and national schools, involving dozens of institutions of all levels (early childhood, primary school, and secondary school) and thousands of students. It has promoted educational projects involving a series of in-classroom and outdoor meetings and residential projects to identify effective and stimulating training and education. The educational pathways focused on nature experiences, perception of nature and discovery activities. "Playing while learning" fostered the student learning experience and social, cognitive and emotional capacities. The efforts focused on stimulating the students' curiosity and facilitating the understanding of nature's complexity.



*Figure 3 Student education program. Image Credit: © Author Archivio Sistema Natura, Educatione Ambientale. From: parcoabruzzo.it.*



*Figure 4: Mountain excursion. Image Credit: © Archivio pnab, Paesaggi. From parcoabruzzo.it.*

*Figure 5: Marsican Brown Bear. Image Credit: © Valentino Mastrella, Mammiferi. From: parcoabruzzo.it.*



The Centre Ecotur offers specific tourism programmes to promote greater interest in environmental issues, such as educational trips or mountain excursions. It also conducts environmental awareness campaigns like "Save the Marsican Bear," aimed at protecting the Marsican brown bear. This initiative has successfully reduced conflicts between predators and farmers in the park, facilitating continued pasturing that aids in climate change adaptation. Additionally, the initiative has provided low voltage electrified fencing donations to prevent predation on domestic livestock.

## Summary

Abruzzo faces significant climate threats, emphasizing the need for resilient infrastructure and sustainable land management. To address this, the region prioritizes environmental education through over 40 Environmental Education Centres that conduct educational courses and projects funded by regional and EU grants, local authorities, and private sponsors. These centres form a network under INFEAbruzzo, which aims to promote a culture of sustainability. Regulated by regional law, this initiative fosters awareness and sensitivity towards environmental and social issues, enhancing citizen engagement in climate change adaptation and protection efforts.

## Further information

The Italian [INFEA](#) System (Informazione, Formazione ed Educazione Ambientale) is a national framework to promote environmental education, training, and information dissemination. The Ministry of the Environment established the framework to support the creation and operation of Environmental Education Centres across various Italian regions, including Abruzzo. [INFEAbruzzo](#) (in Italian) is managed by the Service Policies for Sustainable Development Directorate of Parks, Land, Environment, and Energy in the Abruzzo region. The system governs actions in the field of Environmental Education and aims to foster a culture of environmental protection. It comprises a network of public and private facilities and services, collectively forming the regional network of Environmental Education Centres of regional interest.

- [https://www.ecotur.org/it/cea\\_ecotur.shtml?\\_gl=1\\*tcbsiz\\*\\_up\\*MQ..\\*\\_ga\\*MTIzMzUyMTU3NC4xNzlwNTEwODgw\\*\\_ga\\_7FF8DDREE9\\*MTcyMDUxMTg3OC4xLjAuMTcyMDUxMTg3OC4wLjAuMA..](https://www.ecotur.org/it/cea_ecotur.shtml?_gl=1*tcbsiz*_up*MQ..*_ga*MTIzMzUyMTU3NC4xNzlwNTEwODgw*_ga_7FF8DDREE9*MTcyMDUxMTg3OC4xLjAuMTcyMDUxMTg3OC4wLjAuMA..)
- <https://www.regione.abruzzo.it/xInfea/docs/CEAInteresseReg/CEAAquila.pdf>
- <https://fedarene.org/best-practice/abruzzo-region-network-of-education-centre-for-environment-a-reference-for-education/>
- [OpuscoloCEA.pdf \(regione.abruzzo.it\)](#)
- <https://news.un.org/en/story/2021/09/1098662>
- <https://www.parcoabruzzo.it/index.php>

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