

Presentation



There are almost seven and a half thousand kilometres of Italian coastline overlooking the Mediterranean.

The relationship between our country and the sea surrounding it has always been one of extraordinary intensity. Since ancient times, the Mediterranean has been not only a place of travel, communication and commerce, but also a precious source of wealth from fishing, aquaculture and tourism. Today, the maritime sector constitutes a significant part of the national economy, making up about 2.3% of GDP and employing the equivalent of more than 350,000 full-time workers (about 1,5% of total occupation).

The environmental and cultural heritage of the sea is a particularly strong facet of Southern regions, and presents one of the main opportunities to speed up the development of Southern coastal economies by promoting and improving services, and especially infrastructural resources, for tourism, transport and the protection of natural habitats.

The importance of the sector is confirmed by the attention given to marine and coastal policies by the European Structural Fund plans for less-developed regions. The Structural Funds allocated to Objective 1 regions for the period 2000-2006 (Campania, Molise, Puglia, Basilicata, Calabria, Sicily and Sardinia) specifically aim to enhance the value of the sea, providing for interventions through a number of components: productivity (fishing and aquaculture), tourism (bathing, leisure sailing), environment (marine reserves, cruising) and geography (material and cultural links within the Mediterranean area).

The following pages show some of these interventions. The summaries are organised according to the division of structural funds into National and Regional Operational Programmes (NOPs and ROPs). Particular attention has been paid to the subject of tourist harbours, one of remarkable importance for the competitiveness and attractiveness to tourists of the South; also included are two interventions promoted in this field by Sviluppo Italia in co-operation with the Regions.