



SHERPA
Rural Science-Society-Policy
Interfaces

GOVERNANCE IN RURAL AREAS



MAP EMILIA-ROMAGNA, ITALY

The Emilia-Romagna MAP focuses on the regional level and includes diverse policy, science and societal stakeholders.

Emilia-Romagna is located in the Po River basin, which has been repeatedly hit by droughts, including a severe drought in 2022. The water governance system is thus vital for the region. In this Fiche, the MAP listed whether and how the persistence of drought is boosting collaboration among the different water-use sectors of the territory, what the needs are regarding water governance and recommendations that can further improve it



RECOMMENDATIONS

Future rural policy

- Adopt a long-term, future-oriented approach, moving from crisis management to risk management by focusing on preventative strategies.
- Set up strategies considering the characteristics of the affected water bodies and basins and the expected impacts
- Solidify cooperation among different water uses through common platforms where stakeholders can discuss and elaborate strategies to react to drought with a coordinated approach.

Future rural research

- Develop scenarios to forecast the potential futures of the territory and its agricultural practices.
- Support the identification of the most suitable technical solutions for each specific area through economic research (e.g., cost-benefit analyses and ex-post evaluations).
- Identify governance arrangements (e.g., norms, contract solutions, policy) that can ease collaboration among water users.

KEY STRENGTHS

- The drought in 2022 indicated some strengths of water governance in the region:
- Different water-use sectors were able to collaborate during the drought of 2022, and there was the co-development of a Drought Management Plan.
- The governance system proved flexible enough to cope with the emergency thanks to the steering role played by the Canale Emiliano Romagnolo (one of the main water infrastructures in Italy ensuring the water supply for an area of more than 3,000 km²).
- The availability of different sources of water (i.e., groundwater and surface water), and the ability of the governance system to shift among different sources, prevented service interruption.

KEY NEEDS

- Structural weaknesses of the water governance system in the region and in Italy in general, however, need to be addressed:
- Address the limited coordination along the regions belonging to the Po basin. Upstream actors should consider the needs of downstream actors so that water for all can be guaranteed.
- Address the high fragmentation of drinking water services.
- Improve rainwater harvesting and wastewater reuse. Wastewater reuse requires discussion among all interested parties to discuss opportunities and risks and overcome cultural, technical and economic barriers.



EXAMPLE OF GOOD PRACTICE

Multi-level governance of drought and coordination

The drought of 2022 boosted collaboration among the main water use sectors whose representatives participated in the MAP. The key was the steering role played by the Canale Emiliano Romagnolo diverting water from the Po and supplying it to agriculture, potabilization treatments for drinking water and industry. The multifunctional role of this infrastructure creates the basis for a good multilevel and coordinated water governance.

