



Italy: 2023 Emilia Romagna Floods

Coordinating Response
Across Multiple Levels

In May 2023, exceptional rainfall caused devastating floods and landslides across Emilia Romagna. The disaster required coordination among national, regional, and local authorities, demonstrating Italy's multi-level civil protection system in action.

The Disaster

Between May 1-17, 2023, exceptional rainfall hit central-northern Italy. Some areas received 500mm of rain in 36 hours - equivalent to half a year's rainfall. Rivers overflowed, triggering widespread flooding and landslides. Thousands of people evacuated. Critical infrastructure was damaged. Agricultural areas were inundated. The disaster affected multiple provinces, requiring coordinated response at unprecedented scale.





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Multi-Level Coordination

Italy's National Civil Protection Department coordinated the overall response, reinforced from mid-May as the scale became clear. Regional authorities managed provincial operations. Local municipalities conducted evacuations and immediate assistance. The Agency for Territorial Safety assessed damage and planned recovery. An Extraordinary Commissioner was appointed to oversee reconstruction with dedicated funding and sectoral ordinances.

Recovery and Reconstruction

The long-term recovery program addresses infrastructure, watercourses, and private rebuilding. Structured reconstruction under the Extraordinary Commissioner ensures coordination and standards. Sectoral ordinances provide clear guidance for different reconstruction aspects. Dedicated funding enables comprehensive recovery rather than piecemeal repairs.

Key Lesson

Large-scale disasters require clear coordination across governmental levels. Italy's structured civil protection system, with defined roles from national to local, enables effective response and organized recovery. Appointing an extraordinary commissioner for reconstruction provides necessary authority and resources for comprehensive rebuilding.