

Toscana Diffusa: integrating policies for balanced territorial development in Tuscany, Italy

SUMMARY

Toscana Diffusa is a regional governance framework established by Tuscany's Regional Law n. 11/2025 to promote balanced territorial development and equal opportunities across the region. Rather than creating a new funding programme, it coordinates existing EU, national and regional policy instruments through integrated territorial planning and multi-level cooperation.

The framework focuses on Tuscany's peripheral, mountainous and more fragile territories. It allows territorial boundaries to be adapted using criteria such as population density, peripherality and geomorphological characteristics, recognising that territorial needs are dynamic and multidimensional.



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Themes: Governance

Country: Italy

Organisation:

> Government of Tuscany, public authority

Start & end date: 02/2025 - ongoing

Funding sources:

> European Regional Development Fund (ERDF)

> European Social Fund Plus (ESF+)

> European Agricultural Fund for Rural Development (EAFRD)

> European Maritime, Fisheries and Aquaculture Fund (EMFAF)

> Italy's national Development and Cohesion Fund (FSC)

> Italy's national Fund for the Development of Italian Mountains (FOSMIT)

> Toscana region's own budget resources, alongside other national/state funding

Website: <https://www.regione.toscana.it/toscana-diffusa>

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CONTEXT

Tuscany has around 3.7 million inhabitants, with rural areas covering much of the territory beyond its main urban and coastal centres. These areas hold significant environmental, cultural and landscape assets, but face challenges related to demographic change, accessibility and service provision. Addressing these challenges often requires combining CAP, cohesion policy, national and regional funding that would otherwise operate through separate sectoral and administrative frameworks.

Toscana Diffusa builds on Tuscany's long experience of integrated territorial governance and provides a common framework for coordinating these instruments around territorial needs.



OBJECTIVES

- > Promote the resilience and attractiveness of Tuscany's inner, mountainous and more fragile territories;
- > Ensure equal access to opportunities and services across the region;
- > Align EU, national and regional policy instruments around shared territorial priorities;
- > Strengthen local governance, cooperation and shared responsibility for territorial development;
- > Support action across public services, territorial assets, the (re)location of activities and residents, and local identity.



ACTIVITIES, KEY ACTORS, AND TIMELINE

Toscana Diffusa provides a **common strategic framework through which different regional policies and funding instruments can contribute to shared territorial development objectives**. Rather than establishing a dedicated fund, it aligns existing European, national and regional resources through a **coordination mechanism based on multi-level cooperation** between regional institutions, municipalities, local partnerships and civil society.

The framework allows **flexible territorial perimeters** to be adapted according to technical criteria including population density, peripherality and geomorphological constraints. This enables interventions to respond to changing territorial conditions rather than relying exclusively on fixed administrative classifications.

Actions are organised around **four thematic clusters**, reflecting the multi-dimensional nature of territorial development:

- > **public services**, including digitalisation, transport, health and education;
- > **territory enhancement**, including urban regeneration, energy resilience, ecosystem services and rural and natural capital;
- > **(re)location of economic activities and residents**; and
- > **identity**, including cultural heritage, agrobiodiversity and commons.

Existing policy instruments can be mobilised through tools such as selection criteria incorporated into general funding calls, compensatory or fiscal measures, and shared multi-level projects.



RESULTS

Regional Law n. 11/2025 formalised Toscana Diffusa as a **regional governance framework for integrated place-based development**. It provides for **multi-level cooperation agreements** to align European, national and regional resources, **flexible territorial perimeters** that can be applied across regional policy interventions, and **four thematic clusters** providing a common structure for integrated action.

The framework has also **strengthened the institutional basis for cooperation** between different levels of government, local partnerships and communities and for **greater coherence** between regional, national and European territorial policies.



SUCCESS FACTORS/LESSONS LEARNT

A key feature is the decision to **coordinate existing instruments rather than create a new fund**. This enables different funding streams and sectoral policies to contribute to shared territorial objectives while retaining their respective structures.

Tuscany's **long-standing experience of integrated territorial governance** has also been important. Since the decentralisation reforms of the 1970s, the region has experimented with Territorial Pacts, integrated regional programming and integrated territorial programmes. This has helped build administrative experience, partnerships and a culture of inter-institutional cooperation on which Toscana Diffusa can draw.

Another important feature is the use of **flexible territorial perimeters**. Updating boundaries according to technical criteria allows interventions to respond to changing demographic and territorial conditions.

Finally, codifying the approach through **regional legislation** provides a stable institutional framework, while flexible territorial boundaries, thematic clusters and implementation tools allow interventions to be adapted to different territorial needs. The experience highlights the importance of local actors, established partnerships, administrative capacity and regional coordination in translating multiple policy instruments into coherent place-based approaches.



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