



Piazza Maggiore, Bologna



Emilia-Romagna Region, Italy

General overview

The Emilia-Romagna Region in north-eastern Italy is the sixth largest in the country. Its efficient network of infrastructure, strategic geographical position, and excellent connections to the rest of Italy and the main European cities make the region a key business hub.

Covering an area of 22 451 km² (7.4% of the national territory) with a total population of 4 438 937 (beginning 2022), the Region is divided into eight provinces (Ferrara, Forlì-Cesena, Modena, Parma, Piacenza, Ravenna, Reggio Emilia and Rimini) and one metropolitan city, Bologna, the capital of the Region.

The Emilia-Romagna Region is home to the oldest university in Western Europe, strongly oriented towards Industry 4.0 and innovation. It is a top European tourism destination, welcoming more than 11.5 million visitors annually and generating

50 million overnight stays. Its unique attractions – historical, cultural, artistic, social, industrial, and economic – provide visitors with an authentic, all-round experience of the Italian lifestyle.

Emilia-Romagna is one of Italy's leading regions in terms of per capita income and for many years has been classified as one of the richest regions in Europe. In 2020, the gross domestic product per capita was €32 044.

Emilia-Romagna also ranks amongst the top regions in Italy for bureaucratic efficiency and quality of life, and ranks first in Italy and third in Europe – behind the Netherlands and Switzerland – for the quality of its health-care services (1).

Life expectancy at birth is 80.8 years and 85.1 years for males and females, respectively.

Regional activities linked to the WHO European Programme of Work

The following activities are linked to the three core priorities of the European Programme of Work (EPW): (i) moving towards Universal

Health Coverage (UHC); (ii) promoting health and well-being; and (iii) protecting against health emergencies.



Moving towards UHC

The Italian National Health Service is statutorily required to guarantee the uniform provision of comprehensive care throughout the country, covering all citizens and legal foreign residents. It is regionally based and organized at the national, regional and local levels. Under the Italian Constitution, the central Government controls the distribution of tax revenue for publicly financed health care and has defined a national statutory health-benefits package to be offered to all residents in every region.

The 20 regions and two autonomous provinces are responsible for organizing and delivering health services, through local health units (LHUs) and enjoy a significant degree of independence in determining the macro structure of their health systems. These include the following broad intervention areas: healthy populations and lifestyles; chronic diseases; infectious diseases; safe working environments/workplaces/school settings; health environment (2). The Health Service of the Emilia-Romagna Region comprises: 8 local health units; 4 university hospitals; 1 hospital trust; 4 research hospitals; and 38 health districts.

Historically, the Emilia-Romagna Region has a strong system of public, territorial and community welfare. Over the course of time, the system has reduced social and health inequalities, redistributed resources and fostered social inclusion; recently, however, the economic crisis and sociodemographic changes have put the entire system under considerable strain.

The Region has adopted the WHO vision of a world free of the avoidable burden of preventable diseases and the preventable burden of morbidity, mortality and disability, with the aim of eliminating these barriers to well-being and socioeconomic development.



Promoting health and well-being

For the Emilia-Romagna Region, the theme of equity in health services and the fight against inequalities is the central axis of programming. This can be seen in the current Regional Social and Health Plan 2017–2019 (PSSR 2017–2019) in which two implementation sheets (nos 9 and 11) are dedicated to the promotion of equity in all policies) (3), and especially in the new Regional Prevention Plan 2021–2025 (PRP 2021–2025) (4).

To promote equity as a structural approach, the following are identified as necessary at the regional level: (a) systemic action aimed at transforming the system as a whole and not only addressing specific areas of vulnerability and inequity; b) action to investigate the work of organizations/institutions both outside and inside (directed at service users and service operators).

The Emilia-Romagna Region both monitors health inequalities and promotes governance for health equity, in accordance with regional and local planning (for example, PRP 2021–2025 (4)). For the Emilia-Romagna Region, the issue of combatting inequalities and promoting equity is central to the planning of interventions in both the health and social fields. Evidence of this is provided in the new Regional Social and Health Plan 2022–2024, which is expected to be approved this year (2022). This Plan represents transversal action towards promoting equity in access to care, knowledge and know-how, equity between the generations and between the genders, and equity in combatting territorial inequalities and social exclusion, and socioeconomic inequalities and poverty.



Protecting against health emergencies

Protection against health emergencies is at the very heart of the regional policies of Emilia-Romagna, with many integrated actions and specific plans, such as PRP 2021–2025 (4), which includes programmes that address objectives (for example, measures to tackle antimicrobial resistance) and action to tackle health emergencies (such as those related to infectious diseases).

The Emilia-Romagna Region considers it important to adopt a One Health approach to disease prevention to proactively address health risks emerging from the human–animal–environment synergy.

Actions linked to the EPW flagship initiatives

(The Mental Health Coalition; Empowerment through digital health; The European Immunization Agenda 2030; Healthy behaviours: incorporating behavioural and cultural insights.)

Initiatives relative to the Mental Health Coalition

These include the prevention of mental distress and mental disorders, and the treatment, rehabilitation and protection of the rights of citizens of all ages

with such disorders. The services, including those of municipalities, are closely integrated and involve volunteers and families (5).

Initiatives relative to empowerment through digital health

The new Regional Social and Health Plan 2022–2024, will also invest in telemedicine and home care, especially for those in inland and mountain areas and for vulnerable groups. Furthermore, the Emilia-Romagna Region has chosen the Electronic Health Record (Fascicolo Sanitario Elettronico - FSE) as the preferred joint archive for the

clinical histories of citizens/users. This is in the context of the regional health-care system, which is increasingly oriented both to taking care of patients with chronic conditions and to providing long-term assistance and integrated models of health care and social intervention (6).

Initiatives relative to European Immunization Agenda 2030

Within PRP 2021–2025 (4), Programme 16, “Vaccinations”, has been strengthened to promote

informed adherence to vaccination programmes both in the general population and in specific

groups, which – due to chronic diseases or a particular status (work, age, living conditions,

etc.) – are more at risk for and in need of special protection against certain diseases.

Initiatives linked to incorporating behavioural and cultural insights

The Emilia-Romagna Region promotes intersectoral policies on and intersectional approaches to empowerment, networking and community

participation by also monitoring the impact of social determinants and their interaction with health at the local level.

Initiatives specific to the Emilia-Romagna Region

Gruppo REgionale Farmaci Oncologici (GReFO) (Regional Group on Oncology-Haematology Drugs)

The equitable, appropriate and sustainable use of oncology drugs is a major challenge for health-care systems. To address this, the Emilia-Romagna Region relies on a multidisciplinary, multistakeholder panel composed of professionals and patient representatives. This panel produces

and systematically updates evidence-based recommendations about the appropriate use of each new drug, or any new indication for its use, as well as its place in therapy, thus ensuring the maximum appropriateness of the drug and equity in care.

Integrated pathway for breast cancer

The Region offers free and comprehensive prevention and care measures against breast cancer through a coordinated network of breast units. This network provides an integrated pathway

from screening to follow up to complete remission through different diagnostic approaches to patient needs related to age, risk level and symptoms.

The three most important topics for collaboration within the Regions for Health Network

These are:

- 1.** universal public health and inclusive and participatory community welfare;
- 2.** comprehensive primary-care services (including community-health centres, community hospitals and hospices);
- 3.** policies and tools to promote full social inclusion and tackle health, social, territorial and gender inequalities.

Main partners and collaborators

These are:

- 6 universities
- 330 municipalities
- 8 local health units
- 4 university hospitals
- 5 research hospitals
- 38 health districts
- the Regional Drug Commission
- the Regional Conference of the Third Sector
- Lepida S.c.p.A.

Contact list

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1 All URLs accessed 28 June 2022.

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