



The port of Gioia Tauro, logistic centre in the heart of Mediterranean Sea

HIGHLIGHTS

Calabria Region: www.regione.calabria.it
 Calabria Tourism: www.turiscalabria.it
 Economic Development: www.regione.calabria.it/sviluppo
 Economic Planning: www.regione.calabria.it/calabriaeuropa
 Lamezia Terme Airport: www.sacal.it



olive oils of the region, citrus fruits and deliciously sweet red onions. Another draw of the region is the hot springs. Calabria's mountains are rich in springs that have been enjoyed for their reviving properties since Roman times.

Tourists can enjoy the healing benefits of these mineral rich waters in the beautiful natural setting of the Calabrian hills. Spas in different geological settings have water at different temperatures and with different mineral properties offering spa tourists a range of options. But for all its potential to be a tourist heaven, Calabria is still limited by its infrastructure. The Government of the region is well aware of this and has made it a priority to improve the region's transport network. Giacomo Mancini comments: "Our plan is to conquer a large part of the global market, starting with tourism. For this reason we want to bolster infrastructure to make reaching Calabria much easier. Already new flights have been established linking Calabria to important European cities. Our goal is to create a cutting-edge infrastructure network to allow as many people as possible to enjoy our magnificent coastline, captivating mountains, our typical cuisine and our warm welcome." The Councillor emphasised that these ambitions plans are not merely lip service but represent a commitment to invest responsibly and intelligently the significant resources put at the region's disposal by the European Union to stimulate sustained development in Calabria. These investments in infrastructure are not only designed to reach the tourist potential of the region but are part of an ambitious plan to raise Calabria's profile as an important centre for logistics and transport: what the President of Calabria Giuseppe Scopelliti describes as: "The pivot of the Mediterranean; a bridge between the countries of Northern Europe and those of the Mediterranean, North Africa and beyond." He sees the region taking an important role in Sarkozy's Union for the Mediterranean and which is supposed to promote prosperity and

stability in the entire Mediterranean region and bring about closer relations between these countries and the greater European Union. Central to Calabria becoming the "pivot of the Mediterranean" is the port of Gioia Tauro. With 3,000 employees the port produces 50% of the local GDP and it moves more than 3,5 million TEUS (Twenty-Foot Equivalent Unit) per year. The seaport handles a third of Italy's transshipment traffic and it's one of the most important port in Europe with Valencia's port.

The port is ideally situated to become the central node for transshipment activity in the Mediterranean. The new administration's first important act was to sign an accord providing for the enlargement of the port. According to Mancini, 459 million euro have been set aside for investment in the extension and modernisation of the Gioia Tauro port. Mancini: "With the enormous finance we have managed to secure we will be able to give our region a highly competitive port and a modern railway infrastructure network which together will go a long way towards closing the gaps that still afflict the region. These developments will see Calabria becoming a central player in the transport network linking Northern Europe and the Mediterranean world through the Corridor 1 Berlin-Palermo, shortening the distance goods have to travel to reach their markets and substantially increasing the prosperity of the region." An example of the increasing of the transshipment of Gioia Tauro port is the growth of goods arrivals from the Far East. In order for Gioia Tauro to meet its full potential as a Mediterranean port for the whole of Europe, the development of the port will have to be matched by developments in the road and rail infrastructure of the region as a whole. This falls under the portfolio of Giuseppe Gentile: Councillor for Infrastructure and Transport for the Calabria Region. He points to two major projects planned in the region. The first is the extension of the A3 highway from Salerno to Reggio Calabria which will greatly increase the region's transport capacity and speed.

The second is the Straights of Messina Bridge, a project of national importance and the largest engineering project ever attempted in Italy. The bridge will be the longest in the world and represents a massive investment in money and human energy. The project is one of the national Governments key priorities and according to Gentile, "it is a project of inestimable importance that will provide employment for thousands of workers and technicians and focus the attention of the world on Calabria." Other important, though less high profile, projects mentioned by Gentile are aimed at better managing the water resources of Calabria by modernising the system. This is critical in this water stressed region and will provide ready access to clean drinking water for people in water starved regions as well as maximising the agricultural capacity of Calabria's fertile plains. Urban renewal plans to revive the historical centres of many of Calabria's ancient cities are also afoot. Once restored and made accessible these character-rich towns will prove a great draw for cultural tourists. Gen-

tile is buoyant about the region's future saying: "There is renewed enthusiasm, a will to change and to achieve what was once thought impossible. I believe that in ten years Calabria will be completely different." The promised explosion in Calabria's tourist popularity will require the region's airports being upgraded and links to more destinations being added. Sacal S.p.A is the company that manages Calabria's international airport. The president, Vincenzo Speziati, spoke about the company's strategies to improve the region's accessibility. The strategy focuses on low cost airlines which have become the key players in the European airline industry. The region is already serviced by Easyjet which flies in and out of Lamezia. From April next year Ryanair will connect Lamezia to many important European and British cities. "We forecast that the company will transport 350 thousand passengers annually to Lamezia: Calabria will open up to the world" said Speziati. According to Speziati a total of 2 million passengers have been welcomed to Calabria this year which is already an increase of 15 % as compared to last year. Calabria's long term development strategy involves more than just opening up the region to tourism and international trade but also includes a comprehensive set of measures designed to bolster the productive capacity of existing industries and to foster the development of new ones. The portfolio charged with realising this objective is the Calabria Department of Productive Activities and is headed by Antonio Caridi. His department has outlined a scheme designed to create a Calabria where business is able to flourish unhindered by bureaucracy, poor access to finance or skills shortages. Some of the measures taken are incentive schemes to encourage the growth of industry. These include taxation benefits for industries and small to medium sized enterprises. Lower taxes as well as subsidised

electricity will go a long way towards increasing the competitiveness of Calabria's industry in the short term. The Region is also making funding available to businesses wishing to expand their activities. Funding for individual companies ranges between 50.000 and 5.000.000 euro depending on the size and nature of the industry. The Region also plans to enact banking reform in order to make credit more easily available. These measures will increase liquidity and stimulate growth. Caridi's department also aims to take an active part in the creation of business networks to stimulate commerce, strengthen partnerships and create economic cohesion. The Region also envisages a closer link between the University system and businesses to ensure that the brightest minds trained in Calabria's Universities are absorbed into the local economy and put their talents to use on home soil. One of the most important changes that Antonio Caridi mentions involves the creation and promotion of Brand Calabria. This brand will be created to certify the real hand-made local craft and agrofood: Calabria is the sixth largest producer of controlled origin products and this richness of local typical products is known for their high quality and regional uniqueness. To this end his department aims to label these products with a regional guarantee of authenticity and quality. In this way he hopes that awareness of Brand Calabria will grow in Italy and abroad. Also in the interests of reinforcing the regional brand the Department has decided to create a unified body representing the region at trade fairs, as at the World Trade Market now in London. That's could be a good occasion to show that Calabria is a region which offers many opportunities for foreign investors. Calabria is ready to grow now, becoming the beating heart of the South of Italy, in terms of economic and social growing.

A Public service for the common good

Calabria has long been plagued by water shortages as a result of poor distribution systems. Maurizio Del Re, CEO of Sorical S.p.A., speaks about how his company plans to solve the region's water woes. Sorical is a mixed private/public company which was created to reorganise and manage Calabria's water supply network. The company is jointly owned by the Calabria Regional Government (53,5 %) and the French water management company Veolia (46,5 %). The French company is present in 60 countries worldwide and has a wealth of experience in managing water systems. The ethos of private enterprise which emphasises one of goal reaching, service delivery and customer satisfaction will be invaluable in rectifying the mistakes of the past and definitively solving Calabria's water problems. The mixed private/public structure that the company has adopted is based on very successful models that exist in other European countries. Sorical's mandate is to manage the water network in Calabria

for a period of 30 years and to provide water to Calabria's 400 municipalities and certain other entities. The municipalities are then individually responsible for the distribution of water to homes and businesses within their territories. Despite receiving initial resistance from some municipalities, the new system has led to less wastage of water and to lower charges being paid by the consumers themselves. Sorical has also been charged by the Region of Calabria to invest state funds to carry out the modernisation, and streamlining of the region's water infrastructure to

ensure an efficient and sustainable system for years to come. For these purposes the Region has provided ample funding to supplement the 300 million euro of private funds that the company has already invested. Calabria is a region that offers great potential but has suffered in the past from Governments that lack cohesion. Giuseppe Scopelliti's new Government appears to have the drive and energy to impact positively on this culture of factionalism and provide decisive and innovative leadership which will have a positive effect on the region's development.



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