

Rieti REMS - Italy

Introduction

The Rieti Residence for the Execution of Security Measures (from now on "Rieti REMS") is a specialized facility established in 2021 within the Italian healthcare and judicial system to accommodate individuals who have been found not criminally responsible for their offenses due to mental health conditions but are still considered a potential social risk. REMS facilities represent a significant evolution in how Italy manages this population, following the closure of the large forensic psychiatric hospitals known as Ospedali Psichiatrici Giudiziari (OPGs) and comprehensive legislative reforms aimed at promoting therapeutic care over mere containment.

REMS were introduced nationally in 2014 and was part of a broader shift in Italy's approach to mental health and justice, rooted in the pioneering psychiatric reform law no. 180 of 1978. That law fundamentally changed mental health care by closing traditional psychiatric hospitals and promoting community-based, human-centered care. REMS embodies the extension of this philosophy into the criminal justice system, emphasizing individualized treatment, social reintegration, and respect for human rights.

Situated within the city of Rieti, this REMS facility operates on a smaller scale and is managed by the local healthcare authority, highlighting the commitment to therapeutic environments that support recovery and social inclusion.

Scale

Rieti REMS can accommodate up to fifteen people (only males).

RESCALED-principles in practice:

- Small-scale
- Differentiation
- Community-integration

Differentiation

Target group:

The target group of Rieti REMS are male adults who have been found not criminally responsible for their offenses due to mental health conditions but are still considered a potential social risk.

Access to Rieti REMS is dependent on a judicial decision. A judge decides on the basis of a forensic psychiatric report whether a person's mental health requires a security measure in a REMS instead of conventional detention. The assessment carried out by psychiatric experts evaluates criminal responsibility and social dangerousness. If the court agrees, the person is placed in a REMS facility, ideally in the region of their residence, in order to respect territorial principles. On February 28, 2023, Rieti REMS housed 8 people, including two foreign nationals.

Forms of security:

Security at Rieti REMS combines static, procedural, and relational elements. Static security includes physical barriers and a video surveillance system that monitors corridors, clinical areas, and communal spaces to support safety measures. Unlike traditional prisons, security personnel are Special Security Guards (Guardie Particolari Giurate) employed by private companies but operating under public service obligations. These guards are held to high ethical standards, tasked with protecting the facility and ensuring the physical safety of residents.

Procedural security involves a set of established protocols and house rules that residents and staff must follow to maintain order and safety within the facility.

Relational security is reflected in the management and operation of the REMS. The health authority oversees the daily functioning and therapeutic activities, while security and external surveillance, including escorting residents to external appointments, are coordinated with local prefectures. The clinical team is multidisciplinary, composed of psychiatrists, psychologists, social workers, therapists, nurses, and sociomedical operators (OSS). To reduce barriers and encourage a therapeutic environment, healthcare staff do not wear white coats or badges. Moreover, staff members intentionally promote relationships based on trust and care with residents. Although not formally defined as relational security, this approach establishes an atmosphere significantly different from that of traditional prisons.

Activities:

Daily life at the Rieti REMS is characterized by a therapeutic approach that focuses on treatment. Each resident follows an individualized care plan created by a team of psychiatrists, psychologists, nurses, social workers and rehabilitation specialists. This system ensures that mental health care is central, unlike the old forensic psychiatric hospitals (OPGs), where medical support was often limited and people were without regular checkups for long periods of time.

Residents at Rieti REMS participate in a variety of activities that promote both their mental and physical well-being. These include individual psychotherapy sessions, group therapies and support for family relationships. Educational opportunities are also offered, such as literacy classes, Italian language courses for non-native speakers and even access to university programs. Physical activity is encouraged through sports, including a rugby project in collaboration with a local team and gymnastics with a personal trainer. Cultural and creative activities such as theater workshops by the Artestudio association and poetry classes offer residents space for self-expression and involvement. Religious needs are supported through meetings with the local chaplain and cultural activities are organized upon request.

Most activities are optional unless they are part of a resident's specific treatment plan. This flexible structure allows residents to participate in a way that suits their needs and pace, while promoting reintegration and personal growth in a supportive environment.

Contact with family members and other key figures, such as lawyers or social workers, is maintained through regular visits, phone calls, or video calls, ensuring that residents stay connected to their support networks throughout their time at the REMS.

Community-integration

Location and architecture:

The Rieti REMS is located within the city of Rieti and is well connected to public transport, with the nearest bus stop just 500 meters away. The city itself has a population of approximately 45169 inhabitants (2025).¹ The building itself has been recently renovated and offers a modern, spacious environment. It includes private rooms for residents, shared areas for communal

¹CityPopulation.de. (n.d.). Rieti (Comune, Lazio, Italy) – *Population statistics, charts, map and location*. Retrieved July 1, 2025, from https://www.citypopulation.de/en/italy/lazio/rieti/057059__rieti/

activities, a canteen, and a designated space for in-facility visits. There are also two outdoor areas equipped with sports fields, along with recreational rooms, a small chapel, a garden, and dedicated spaces for residents who smoke.

Interaction with the community:

Residents have opportunities to leave the facility in small groups, usually two or three people, to take part in planned outings in the city. These activities may include visits to cultural sites, nature excursions, or everyday tasks like shopping. Such experiences are meant to help residents gradually build confidence, practice social skills, and develop independence in everyday life. These moments also allow staff to observe how individuals navigate social situations outside the facility.

Rieti REMS

Founded: 2021

Capacity: 15

Autonomy level: Restricted level of autonomy

Nearest city: Rieti (Italy)

Nature of interaction:

Visited by Antigone (February 2023)

Publicity/ read more

- Report from the Regional Guarantor on Rieti:

Garante nazionale delle persone private della libertà personale. (n.d.). *REMS di Rieti*. Retrieved July 1, 2025, from <https://www.garantedetenutilazio.it/luoghi/rem/rem-di-rieti/>

- Antigone's report on Mental health and REMS:

Antigone. (2024). *Salute mentale e misure di sicurezza psichiatriche*. In *Ventesimo rapporto sulle condizioni di detenzione*. Retrieved July 1, 2025, from <https://www.rapportoantigone.it/ventesimo-rapporto-sulle-condizioni-di-detenzione/salute-mentale-e-misure-di-sicurezza-psichiatriche/>