

Subiaco REMS - Italy

Introduction

Located in the town of Subiaco, the first facility, REMS Castore, opened in 2015 inside the Angelucci Hospital. In 2023, a second one, REMS Polluce, was added right next to it. Both are run by the regional healthcare system and are designed as small-scale, therapeutic settings that focus on recovery and helping people return to society.

The Subiaco Residences for the Execution of Security Measures (hereafter "Subiaco REMS," referring collectively to both the Castore REMS and Polluce REMS, which are located next to each other) are specialized facilities within the Italian healthcare and judicial systems. They are meant for people who committed an offense but were found not criminally responsible due to mental illness, and who are still seen as a possible risk to others.

REMS facilities are part of a major shift in how Italy handles this target group, following the closure of large forensic psychiatric hospitals (called OPGs) and a push for laws that prioritize care over punishment. Introduced nationwide in 2014, REMS are grounded in Italy's 1978 Law No. 180, which transformed psychiatric care by closing traditional mental hospitals and promoting treatment in community settings. REMS apply this same approach within the justice system, focusing on personalized care, reintegration, and respect for human rights.

Scale

Castore and Polluce REMS can each accommodate up to twenty individuals, for a total capacity of forty. Although located next to each other, they operate as two separate facilities, each maintaining the characteristics of a small-scale, therapeutic environment.

RESCALED-principles in practice:

- ✓ Small-scale
- ✓ Differentiation
- ✓ Community-integration

Differentiation

Target group:

The target group of the Subiaco 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

these facilities 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. As of 10 March 2023, Castore REMS housed 18 people, of which three are foreigners. Within their PTRI (Individualised Therapeutic and Rehabilitative Program), 8 residents were positively evaluated for release.

Forms of security:

Security at the Subiaco REMS combines static, procedural, and relational elements. 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 staff is made up of: 2 psychiatrists, 2 psychologists, 1 social worker, 2 rehabilitation therapists, 15 nurses and 4 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.

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.

Activities:

Daily life at the Subiaco REMS follows a therapeutic approach centered on treatment and recovery. Each resident has an individualized care plan developed by a multidisciplinary team that includes psychiatrists, psychologists, nurses, social workers, and rehabilitation specialists. This ensures that mental health support remains a central focus, unlike in the former forensic psychiatric hospitals (OPGs), where care was often inconsistent and medical follow-up was lacking.

Within the two facilities, residents can take part in various therapeutic group sessions, typically involving six to nine participants, as well as remote multi-family support programs. Vocational training is also available, offering some residents paid opportunities through kitchen workshops held three times a week or by helping maintain public green spaces. Educational options include literacy classes, English and IT lessons, and even university-level courses. Physical activity is encouraged through swimming lessons, made possible by a new pool built in February 2023, alongside football, ping-pong, and postural gymnastics. For those interested in cultural enrichment, theater and dance courses are offered by local volunteers and community organizations like the Artestudio Association. Cultural mediation is also available when needed.

Most of these activities are voluntary, unless specifically included in a resident's treatment plan. This flexible structure allows individuals to engage at their own pace, supporting both personal development and gradual reintegration. Maintaining contact with family members, lawyers, and social workers is also a key part of life at the REMS, facilitated through regular in-person visits, phone calls, and video calls to help residents stay connected to their social support networks.

Community-integration

Location and architecture:

The Subiaco REMS are located in the small town of Subiaco, about an hour and a half by bus from Rome. The Castore building has two floors. The ground floor is used for shared activities and workshops and includes a covered terrace. The upper floor has staff offices, residents' rooms, and the canteen. There's also an outdoor area where residents can take part in sports and recreational activities.

In 2023, the building was renovated, including new flooring, ventilation system maintenance, and a fresh coat of paint.

Interaction with the community:

At the Subiaco REMS, residents have regular opportunities to go out into the community in small groups, usually two or three at a time. These outings might include cultural visits, walks in nature, or everyday activities like going shopping. The goal is to help residents gradually rebuild confidence, practice social interaction, and gain more independence in daily life. These outings also give staff a chance to observe how residents handle real-world situations and interactions outside the facility.

Castore/ Polluce REMS

Founded: 2015/ 2022

Capacity: 20 + 20

Autonomy level: Restricted level of autonomy

Nearest city: Subiaco (Italy)

Nature of interaction:

Visited by Antigone (February 2023)

Publicity/ read more

- Report from the Regional Guarantor on Castore:

Garante dei diritti delle persone private della libertà personale del Lazio. (n.d.). *REMS Castore di Subiaco*. Retrieved July 2, 2025, from <https://www.garantedetenutilazio.it/luoghi/remss/remss-castore-di-subiaco/>

- Report from the Regional Guarantor on the opening of Polluce:

Garante dei diritti delle persone private della libertà personale del Lazio. (n.d.). *Subiaco, inaugurata la nuova REMS Polluce*. Retrieved July 2, 2025, from <https://www.garantedetenutilazio.it/subiaco-inaugurata-la-nuova-rems-polluce/>

- 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/>