

One of Italy's most spectacular—and overlooked—historic sights, the Palace of Caserta, will at last receive the attention it needs through a €22m grant from the EU and the Italian government.

The former royal residence of the Bourbon kings of Naples, now a Unesco World Heritage site, was built in the second half of the 18th century 36km north of Naples. It is considered one of the finest and most grandiose examples of Baroque architecture, but has fallen off the list of tourism destinations in Italy after decades of neglect.

The regional authorities have announced that the tender for the first round of restoration works is now ready. An initial €1m will pay for urgent structural work, while an additional €9.3m will be used to restore the palace's façades. An unspecified portion of the total grant, however, will also be used to restore the royal palace and Capodimonte park, both in Naples.

The authorities in Caserta are worried about the government's plan to lump the palace with several Neapolitan institutions, such as the Museo di Capodimonte, under the newly formed cultural body, the Polo Museale di Napoli e Caserta (similar to the centralised museum systems of Florence and Venice). The president of the province of Caserta, Domenico Zinzi, believes the palace will become "subordinated to the sites [in the neighbouring province] of Naples", but the government insists that the project will not only regenerate the palace but, by extension, the entire province.