



EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Evaluation service for the quantification of long-term result indicators of ESF+ Programme 2021-2027

Lazio Region – Directorate of Education, Formation and Employment Policies

English version

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SOCIO-ECONOMIC CONTEXT

The current socio-economic context is characterised by a combination of positive signals in the labour market and persistent structural challenges. At the national level, employment indicators have improved, with employment growth ([chart on employment and economic trends](#)) and a decline in unemployment, against a backdrop of moderate economic growth. These positive developments coexist with structural weaknesses, including low productivity growth, stagnant real wages, and still-limited labour market participation among specific population groups, particularly young people and women.

In the regional context, Lazio records overall more favourable indicators than the national average, particularly with regard to the overall employment rate. However, significant gaps remain, especially in youth employment, which continues to be lower than both the national average and the average for the more developed regions. The share of young people who are not in employment, education or training (NEETs) remains a structural concern, as do persistent gender gaps in labour market participation.

Looking ahead, these challenges are likely to intensify in light of the ongoing structural transformations. Demographic decline and the shrinking working-age population, together with the growing diffusion of digital technologies and artificial intelligence, are reshaping labour demand and skills needs. Against this backdrop, European Social Fund Plus (ESF+) interventions remain highly relevant in supporting employability, human capital development, and social inclusion.

IMPLEMENTATION STATUS AND PROGRESS OF THE 2021–2027 ESF+ OF LAZIO REGION: SUMMARY

- As of 31 December 2025, the Programme had total resources amounting to €1,602.5 million ([Table 1](#)), 4,307 selected operations, resources destined to the emanation of actuation procedure (tender notices, call for the selections, etc.) equal to 807,4 M€ and a total eligible cost of selected operations of €700.7 million (circa 87% of the procedures). This corresponds to a ratio of committed resources to the overall financial allocation of 43.7%, an indicator that can be interpreted as measuring decision-making capacity. It should be noted that the largest allocation is recorded under Priority 3, **Social Inclusion**, accounting for approximately 30% of the total; this priority also shows the highest ratio between total eligible cost and financial allocation, at 39%.
- In terms of **financial progress**, the ratio between declared eligible expenditure (€299.2 million) and the total allocation stands at 18.7%, reflecting the Programme's **spending capacity**. However, there are marked differences across Priorities and across the Specific Objectives within them. The highest values are recorded for: i) ESO4.11 under Priority 3 (47.7%); ii) ESO4.2 under Priority 1 (24.6%); and iii) ESO4.6 under Priority 2 (23.7%).
- The values achieved as of 31 December 2025 for **the output indicators** ([Table 2](#)) point to a diversified picture across intervention priorities and target groups. For example, for interventions targeting “children under the age of 18”, the intermediate targets have been exceeded, whereas for “unemployed persons” the values are relatively lower. This may partly reflect the activation of measures under other employment programmes aimed at similar target groups (such as the GOL Programme under the NRPP).

EVALUATION ACTIVITIES: OBJECTIVES AND METHODOLOGY

The evaluation of the Programme interventions aims to assess the extent to which the funded actions have increased employment and improved participants' qualifications, as well as promoted education and training pathways, while also examining participants' satisfaction with the services received. To this end, the so-called “long-term result indicators” were quantified ([Table 3](#)) through an analysis of monitoring data covering the full population of participants included in the evaluation, approximately 84,000 individuals, and through a CAWI/CATI survey administered to a sample of participants (with approximately 3,500 completed questionnaires collected between 22 December 2025 and 28 January 2026).

The population of participants in ESF+ interventions

The analysis of participants in the Programme interventions identifies an overall population of approximately 84,000 individuals, obtained by integrating regional monitoring data from the Sigem system. These data are organised into three main categories: “trainees”, “participants”, and the “addendum database”, (essentially beneficiaries of vouchers for nursery schools and non-self-sufficient elderly).

Population of participants: total database records after the data-cleaning phase, by gender

Gender	“Trainees” n (%)	“Participants” n (%)	“Addendum database” n (%)	Total n (%)
Males	25.043 (60,53%)	16.800 (52,88%)	-	41.843 (49,79%)
Females	16.322 (39,45%)	14.963 (47,11%)	-	31.285 (37,22%)
Not specified	7 (0,02%)	1 (0,01%)	10.909 (100%)	10.917 (12,99%)
Total	41.372	31.764	10.909	84.405

From a socio-demographic perspective, the composition of participants shows a slight prevalence of males, approximately 50%, compared with females, approximately 37%, while a residual share consists of individuals for whom this information is not available, recorded in the addendum database. The distribution by age and educational attainment, although heterogeneous, confirms the strong presence of young people involved in training pathways and school-to-work transition schemes, in line with the Programme’s strategic priorities.

The analysis by type of intervention points to a significant concentration in a number of high-participation measures, particularly those related to guidance, vocational training, and apprenticeship pathways, which represent the main access channels to the services funded by ESF+. At the same time, there is a relatively lower uptake of interventions targeting specific vulnerable groups or more targeted active labour market policies, suggesting scope for strengthening targeting and diversifying the range of services offered.

THE FIELD SURVEY AND RESULT INDICATORS

This section summarises the main evidence emerging from the analysis of long-term result indicators, based on data collected through the direct survey of participants in the 2021–2027 Regional Programme of the ESF+. The aim is to provide an integrated reading of the results achieved by the Programme, relating them to the main evaluation questions defined in the evaluation design. From this perspective, the analysis makes it possible to assess not only the extent to which the planned targets have been achieved, but also the perceived quality of the interventions and their effects on participants’ employment, training, and inclusion pathways. The findings point to a varied picture, which provides useful evidence for the summary considerations and strategic recommendations (for further information on some of the types of interventions carried out by the survey respondents, see [Table 4](#) and [Table 5](#)).

Has the Programme achieved the expected results?

Overall, the evidence points to a positive performance, with several indicators reaching or exceeding the expected values. In particular, the indicators related to user satisfaction (EESR02 and EESR04) show very high levels, confirming the perceived quality of the interventions. At the same time, the indicators related to qualifications obtained (EECR03) exceed their targets, suggesting good effectiveness of the training pathways. The picture is more mixed for employment outcomes (EECR05) with differentiated values across Priorities: the strongest

performance is observed for interventions targeting young people, while outcomes are more moderate in other areas. This heterogeneity may partly reflect interactions with other active labour market policies, particularly the GOL Programme, which may have generated both complementary effects, by strengthening labour market integration pathways, and, in some cases, displacement effects. Overall, the Programme shows a good capacity to achieve the expected results.

Overview of result indicators and achievement ratio¹

Investment Priority and Specific Objective	Indicator	Baseline (%)	Target 2029 (%)	Indicators (%)			Achievement ratio	Respondents			Universe			Sample
				M	F	T		M	F	T	M	F	T	
P1. Employment – ESO 4.1	EECR05	47,50	52,50	31,50	15,40	24,52	0,4671	100	79	179	404	309	713	918
P1. Employment – ESO 4.4	EESR02	63,30	73,30	87,30	81,50	84,84	1,1574	203	145	348	3.445	2.359	5.811	
P2. Education and training – ESO 4.6	EECR05	30,90	35,90	35,30	31,00	32,94	0,9177	165	105	270	1.800	2.181	3.981	877
P2. Education and training – ESO 4.7	EECR03	35,50	40,50	83,30	71,40	78,36	1,9349	42	26	68	526	373	899	
P3. Social inclusion – ESO 4.11	EESR04	69,00	74,00	NA	NA	86,90	1,1743			1487	1.541	1.036	13.486	1000
P3. Social inclusion – ESO 4.12	EESR03	65,40	40,40	72,40	80,90	75,88	1,0778	58	47	105	1.155	800	1.955	
P4. Youth – ESO 4.1	EECR05	30,90	35,90	83,40	57,10	72,94	2,0317	428	324	752	20.033	13.230	33.263	1049
P4. Youth – ESO 4.6	EECR03	35,50	40,50	62,50	68,70	65,35	1,6135	141	92	233	12.881	10.967	23.849	
Total								1.137	818	3.442	41.785	31.255	83.957	3.844

Source: direct CAWI/CATI survey.

- EECR05: “Participants in employment, including self-employment, six months after leaving the intervention”
- EESR02: “Degree of satisfaction among users who participated in continuing training activities”
- EECR03: “Participants obtaining a qualification upon leaving the intervention”
- EESR03: “Disadvantaged and vulnerable participants, including persons with disabilities, engaged in job search, education/training, obtaining a qualification, or employment, including self-employment, upon leaving the intervention”
- EESR04: “Degree of satisfaction among participants using socio-educational and social care services”

Calculation method for scaling up the total indicator (T) to the reference population: the response percentages of questionnaire respondents by gender are weighted by the gender distribution of the reference population. (Example: $24,52 = 31,5 \times 404 / 713 + 15,4 \times 309 / 713$).

¹ It's specified that the indicators transmitted in the SFC system and sequentially published come from specific calculations and for these reasons, in some instances, may present some differences compared to the ones deriving from the survey. In particular: i) for the “common indicators with related output”, on SFC must be inserted the absolute value for gender (M and F) calculated by applying the percentage on the sample deducted by the survey (M and F) to the value of the related output and the achievement ratio; ii) for the “specific indicators” on SFC it's possible to insert directly the percentages of the sample deriving from the survey; iii) for the “common indicators without related output” on SFC it's inserted the absolute value and the system calculated the indicators.

Are Programme participants satisfied with the interventions?

The assessment of satisfaction indicators points to a **particularly positive and consistent** picture, showing that beneficiaries' experience is firmly at high levels and above the Programme's expected targets. Both indicators considered show a substantial positive deviation from their targets: the share of participants satisfied with the services received (**EESRo2**) reaches **84.8%**, exceeding the target of **73.3%**, while the indicator on perceived quality (**EESRo4**) stands at **86.9%**, compared with an expected value of **74%**.

The systematic overachievement of the targets, in both cases by **more than 10 percentage points**, provides robust evidence of **the overall quality of the provision and the effectiveness of service delivery processes**. In particular, these results suggest not only a high level of ex post appreciation, but also a strong capacity of the interventions to respond to participants' needs and translate them into services perceived as useful, accessible, and consistent with initial expectations. From an interpretative perspective, the satisfaction results are strategically important, as they provide a cross-cutting measure of implementation quality, complementing the employment and training result indicators. In this sense, the high level of satisfaction observed strengthens the overall assessment of the Programme's effectiveness, pointing to the adequate functioning of the mechanisms for participant intake, support, and service delivery. At the same time, the substantial overachievement of the targets calls for a forward-looking reflection on whether **the level of ambition of these indicators is appropriate**, in order to ensure, in future programming periods, stronger discriminatory power and more effective performance monitoring. This appears particularly relevant in a context in which satisfaction indicators tend to remain consistently high. Overall, beneficiary satisfaction emerges as **one of the Programme's main strengths**, highlighting the high perceived quality of services and a strong alignment between provision and needs, and contributing significantly to the positive assessment of the Programme's overall implementation.

What is participants' employment status six months after participation?

The assessment of employment outcomes points to a **more nuanced picture than that emerging from the satisfaction and training indicators**, with heterogeneous results across priorities and target groups. The key indicator measuring the share of participants in employment after six months (**EECRo5**) shows differentiated levels of achievement. Under employment policies (**ESO4.1**) it stands at **24.5%**, compared with a target of **52.5%**, indicating a significant negative deviation. By contrast, for interventions targeting young people (**ESO4.6**) the indicator reaches **72.9%**, well above the target of **35.9%**, with an achievement ratio above 2. This variability primarily reflects **the different characteristics of participants**, with young people showing, on average, higher probabilities of labour market integration than other more vulnerable groups or those further from the labour market. Second, it reflects the nature of the interventions themselves, which combine measures with different levels of intensity and objectives, ranging from direct labour market insertion to the strengthening of employability, thereby making comparisons with planned targets less homogeneous. Possible interactions with other active labour market policies, such as the GOL Programme, may also have influenced employment outcomes through mechanisms of complementarity or overlap. Overall, the results suggest that the Programme is able to **generate relevant employment outcomes in specific segments of participants**, particularly among young people, while showing greater difficulty in achieving targets for more vulnerable groups. This points to the need to strengthen the targeting and differentiation of interventions and, where appropriate, to review the calibration of targets, so that they more realistically reflect participants' initial conditions and labour market dynamics.

Which participants, and how many, look for work after the intervention?

The assessment of training outcomes shows **strong performance, systematically above the programmed targets**, making this one of the areas in which the Programme appears most effective. The indicator relating to the achievement of a qualification or certification (**EECRo3**) records values well above expectations across all the Priorities considered. In particular, under education and training (**ESO4.7**) it reaches **78.4%**, compared with a target

of **40.5%**, while for interventions targeting young people (**ESO4.6**) it stands at **65.4%**, also significantly above the same target of **40.5%**. The overachievement of the targets, in both cases by **more than 20 percentage points**, indicates a strong capacity of the interventions to produce concrete and certifiable training outcomes, confirming the soundness of the pathways delivered and the effectiveness of the support mechanisms aimed at completion. These results also suggest a good alignment between the design of the interventions and participants' needs, as well as an adequate level of quality in the training provision. From an interpretative perspective, the strong performance of the training indicators is also particularly relevant in view of **their enabling role for employment outcomes**, contributing to the strengthening of participants' employability. In this sense, the observed results indicate that the Programme is able to have an effective impact on participants' skills, even in the presence of more differentiated employment outcomes across target groups. At the same time, the marked and widespread overachievement of the targets points to the need to reflect on **the calibration of the indicators and on the level of ambition set during the programming phase**, in order to ensure greater discriminatory power of the result metrics in future programming periods. Overall, training outcomes **represent a structural strength of the Programme**, highlighting a high degree of effectiveness in producing tangible results in terms of qualification and certification of skills, and contributing significantly to the positive assessment of overall implementation.

Which participants, and how many, continue in education and training pathways?

Participation in education or training pathways after the intervention is widespread across all Priorities, with particularly high absolute numbers under Priority 4 and Priority 3, which record the largest numbers of participants continuing in training activities. In relative terms, Priority 2 records the highest shares. This result appears consistent with the nature of the interventions, which in many cases are aimed at strengthening skills and supporting possible progression into further training or qualification pathways. **With reference only to Priority 3 ESO 4.12**, for which the specific indicator was calculated, participants engaged in education or training at the end of the intervention account for approximately 16% of respondents in this category. Overall, the data therefore indicate that a non-negligible share of participants continue in education or training after completing the intervention. This evidence can be interpreted as a positive outcome of the Programme, as it points to the capacity of the interventions to guide participants towards pathways that strengthen their skills and improve their employability, including through the continuation of studies or participation in further training activities.

CONCLUSIONS AND STRATEGIC RECOMMENDATIONS

This concluding chapter provides an integrated reading of the findings that emerged from the evaluation of the 2021–2027 ESF+ Programme of the Lazio Region, in light of the strategic objectives defined and the empirical evidence collected. In particular, the analysis shows the extent to which the Programme has contributed to strengthening labour-market investments in response to people's needs, supporting the employment and social development of the region, and outlines a number of recommendations to improve future policies.

A sound assessment of the results requires placing the 2021–2027 ESF+ Programme of the Lazio Region within the context of the regional labour market, which is characterised by particularly complex dynamics. On the one hand, Lazio displays overall more favourable indicators than the national average, especially in terms of the employment rate. On the other hand, significant structural challenges persist, particularly with regard to youth employment, gender gaps, long-term unemployment, and the risk of social exclusion. The Report also highlights that, looking ahead, Lazio's labour market will be increasingly affected by the demographic transition, digitalisation and the pervasive use of artificial intelligence, with significant effects on both the quantity and quality of labour demand, as well as by the green transition, with important implications for the composition and adaptation of the productive system. In this scenario, the role of the ESF+ appears strategic in supporting the adaptation of human capital and strengthening the resilience of the regional socio-economic system.

A first element that clearly emerges from the Report concerns the scale and complexity of the intervention. The Programme involved a population of approximately 84,000 participants, across a wide range of measures linked to the four strategic priorities and their specific objectives. This quantitative scale is accompanied by considerable qualitative heterogeneity in the interventions, which range from active labour market policies to training, and from social inclusion to educational and social care services. This breadth represents a strength of the intervention, as it makes it possible to address diversified needs and act simultaneously on multiple drivers of territorial development. At the same time, it poses important challenges in terms of coordination, targeting, and monitoring capacity, which clearly emerge from the analysis of the results.

The evaluation of the project was based on a database constructed by integrating economic and financial monitoring data with data from a direct survey involving approximately 3,500 respondents, which represented the core component of the evaluation exercise. This survey made it possible to capture relevant qualitative aspects, such as beneficiary satisfaction, perceived impacts of the intervention, and individual pathways in training and labour market integration. However, some limitations of the survey should be acknowledged, including the presence of selection bias related to willingness to respond, which varied across categories of beneficiaries; sample sizes that were not always large; and the difficulty of isolating the net effects of the interventions in the absence of a control group. Despite these limitations, the survey provided a coherent and plausible picture of the Programme's effects, strengthening the overall credibility of the evaluation through the convergence of quantitative and qualitative evidence. The resulting dataset also remains as an output of the analysis, made available as a basis for strengthening the information system with a view to improving subsequent interventions.

Evaluation of the Programme against the five strategic lines

Overall, the Programme showed a good capacity to achieve the predefined targets, particularly for indicators related to training, satisfaction, and social inclusion. Performance on employment indicators is more mixed, with differentiated results across targets and groups of participants. The main challenges concerned the integration between training and labour market insertion, the role of employment services, and the effectiveness of active labour market policies for the most vulnerable unemployed people. In addition, as highlighted above, output indicators show uneven progress for some categories of participants

The evaluation analysis presented in the Report can be summarised with reference to the five strategic lines defined for the 2021–2027 ESF+ Programme:

1. Reducing unemployment and promoting female employment

The results show that the Programme has a capacity to support labour market integration. When considering only participants who were not employed at the start of the intervention, the share in employment after six months appears more differentiated: modest for Priority 1, at 24.52%, and more substantial for Priority 4, at 72.94%, which targets young people.

This suggests that the Programme has been more effective in pathways targeting young people, while its effects appear more limited for adults and the long-term unemployed. Gender differences also persist, both in terms of participation and outcomes, pointing to possible scope for strengthening policies dedicated to female employment.

2. Expanding access to the labour market and strengthening services

The results point to an improvement in the capacity to activate participants, but they also highlight the limited direct role played by employment services in labour market integration pathways. Their use remains very limited, although it is associated with generally positive levels of satisfaction.

This suggests that the objective of strengthening the effectiveness of these services has only been partially achieved, particularly in terms of their ability to have a tangible impact on matching labour demand and supply. This points to the need to enhance their role in intermediation processes, including through stronger integration with training pathways.

3. Skills development and support for innovation

The Programme shows particularly positive results in terms of skills development. The indicators related to the achievement of qualifications substantially exceed the targets, with high achievement ratios. In addition, the perceived improvement in skills is widespread among participants and represents one of the clearest impacts of the interventions.

However, a certain gap remains between skills acquisition and their full valorisation in the labour market, suggesting the need to strengthen the link between training provision and firms' skills needs.

4. Strengthening the education and training system

Interventions in this area appear consistent with the predefined objectives, with broad participation among young people and a good level of satisfaction with the quality of the training provision. However, the prevalence of certificates of attendance over more structured qualifications points to a possible area for improvement in terms of the quality and labour market value of the credentials obtained. The contribution in terms of inclusion is also relevant, although there remains scope to strengthen access to more advanced levels of education.

5. Social inclusion and equal opportunities

The results for Priority 3 are among the most positive. The indicators related to satisfaction and the activation of disadvantaged participants exceed the targets, with significant values. In particular, the share of beneficiaries who, only a few weeks after completing the intervention, are in a condition of activation, whether in employment, training, or active job search, is high. This highlights the strong capacity of the interventions to reactivate pathways of economic and social participation. This result is even more relevant when interpreted in light of participants' initial disadvantaged conditions, confirming the Programme's effectiveness in reducing the risks of exclusion.

Recommendations

The analysis of the intervention and the results of the field survey highlight some scope for improvement in order to strengthen the effectiveness of the intervention and address potential critical issues:

1. Strengthening the information system

Strengthening the monitoring system through the systematic collection of quantitative and qualitative information can improve the evidence base needed to refine the intervention. The development of longitudinal tracking systems for beneficiaries appears particularly useful, together with the standardisation of definitions and, more generally, improved integration between administrative databases and data collected through specific surveys, as in the case of the present evaluation. The database released as part of this evaluation can be considered a first building block of these new information resources for the Programme.

2. Strengthening specific result indicators

The analysis suggests that the information collected could be improved by further refining the employment indicators, better distinguishing between target groups and standardising definitions. In addition, qualitative indicators on employment outcomes could also be introduced, covering aspects such as job stability, job quality, and consistency with the training pathways undertaken.

3. *Better integration between policies and interventions*

The broad range of interventions confirms the need to strengthen the link between training, employment services, and firms, in order to make the process of labour market entry smoother and more effective. From this perspective, it may be useful to promote integrated and personalised approaches for beneficiaries.

4. *Strengthening targeting*

In line with the objective of further personalising services, and therefore improving the capacity to reach the most vulnerable groups, interventions could be more clearly differentiated according to specific needs, by refining and strengthening their targeting.

5. *Development of advanced evaluation tools*

The evaluation research suggests that indicator-based analysis can only represent a first step in understanding the overall effects of the intervention, both directly on beneficiaries and indirectly on the regional labour market as a whole and across its different segments. The analysis could benefit from the use of a counterfactual approach, which would, however, require a more complete and refined information system. This could also draw on data downloadable from the Statistical Information System on Mandatory Communications (SISCO) of the Ministry of Labour and Social Policies, which would make it possible to reconstruct beneficiaries' employment histories for dependent and quasi-subordinate employment relationships. In addition, it may be useful to promote real-time monitoring of interventions, including through business intelligence tools, while taking into account the activities of the Regional Observatory for Labour, Training, and Education Policies.

Concluding remarks

In conclusion, the 2021–2027 ESF+ Programme of the Lazio Region has demonstrated a good capacity to influence the main areas of intervention envisaged, contributing significantly to strengthening employability, skills development, and social inclusion.

Although some critical issues remain, requiring further strengthening of active labour market policies, employment services, and monitoring systems, the results achieved appear overall positive and consistent with the strategic objectives. They point to a context in which the policies supported by the ESF+ represent a fundamental pillar for the future development of the regional labour market.