

REGIONE LAZIO

Regional Operational Programme (ROP) ESF 2014-2020

Target

"Investments in favor of growth and employment"

Evaluation Plan of the ESF ROP LAZIO 2014 - 2020

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Ongoing evaluation and quantification of the
result indicators at 31/12/2018

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Notes regarding the Regional and Italian economic situation.

Italy remains in stagnation, despite having overcome the technical recession, and remains in low growth. In the first quarter of 2019, the GDP increased 0,1% with respect to the previous quarter but decreased 0,1% with respect to the first quarter of 2018. Nevertheless there are signs of recovery on the employment side. In fact, on a yearly basis, as compared to March 2018, the employment rate (15-64 years) overall equals 58,9%, increase for both men (68%; +0,4%) and women (49,8%; +0,5%). Also, the unemployment rate, overall equals 10,2% (-0,8% annually) decreasing for both components (-0,5% for men and -1,1% for women). The rate of inactivity is stable for men and increase by 0,1 points for women.

In the Lazio Region within the last 5 years, an improvement in employment data has been observed (unemployment rate had fallen from 12,5% in 2014 to 11% in 2018) and forecasts, even in the latest DEFER (Economic and Financial Planning Document of Lazio Region), call for an increase which will depend on varying factors, including the combined effects of regional and national maneuvers. In any case, one area to be explored regards the "quality of work", a factor that has significant implications for both demographic dynamics characterized by low birth rates as well as for the increase of people at risk for poverty or social exclusion. In this regard, the multidimensional approach based on the paradigm of the BES (Equitable and Sustainable Well-being) appears to be useful, which allows for verifying progress in areas such as employment, quality of work, education and training, and inequalities.

Current State of the ESF ROP Lazio

The Implementation Report (RAA) presented in 2019 made a commitment of resources equal to about 48% (which stands at around 84%, if we consider the budgetary documents issued by the MA, including those based on multi-year initiatives and intervention plans aimed at specific population targets) and an achievement of the expected goals. In particular, the reprogramming carried out in 2018 which increased the resources designated to the Axis III "Education and Training" which proved to be a positive strategic choice, given the results achieved and verified at the time of the evaluation concerning Axis 3.

Objective of this ongoing evaluation

The general objective was to evaluate the progress of the 2014-2020 ESF ROP - with an in-depth look at the program's contribution to pursuing the objectives of Europe Strategy 2020 and an analysis of the transversal themes regarding gender equality and sustainable development - and to verify the results of some of the main interventions carried out. Specifically regarding this second aspect, the Report evaluates the results of actions completed relating to procedures (call for tenders) issued in the specific Priority Investment area (field), which represents a critical and strategic part of the Program (see the following table)

Table 1 - Investment priorities (PI) of the interventions subject to the assessment

PI	Description
8.i	Access to employment for all persons in search of work and inactive , including persons unemployed for a long period of time and persons who find themselves on the margins of the labor market, also using local employment initiatives and support for professional mobility.
8.ii	Sustainable labor market integration for young people, in particular those who do not work or follow a course of study or training, including young people at risk for social exclusion and those from a marginalized community, also through the implementation of the Youth Guarantee
9.i	Active inclusion , also to promote equal opportunities and active participation and improve employability
10.ii	Improvement of the quality and effectiveness of higher education and its equivalency level, as well as access to both for the purpose of increasing participation and success rates especially for disadvantaged groups.

Methodology of the ongoing evaluation

This ongoing evaluation was done taking into account both the regional socio-economic framework of reference -wherein the actions of the FSE ROP were implemented - and the results of the direct survey, with the scope of answering “questions evaluative”, aimed at verifying the effectiveness of the interventions on the identified participants, using appropriate data sources. In particular, the quantification of the result indicators provided for in the ESF ROP was completed starting from the data of the SIGEM regional information system relating to the participants in the interventions financed by the Program and concluded by 2018, randomly extracting a “sample” who was then given a detailed questionnaire. Collectively, around 3.000 interviews were completed (over 40% of the interventions’ adult recipients) which allowed the possibility to identify the intervention’s employment results and as well other elements regarding effectiveness, and it also made it possible to construct an assessment of the indicators established in the ESF ROP.

Evaluation results

The recap of the analysis results is mainly performed with respect to the employment outcome of the interventions carried out under the investment priorities 8.i, 8.ii, 9.i and 10.ii, estimated using the following indicators, identified in the ROP:

- ✓ CR 06: Participants who are employed, even self-employed, within 6 months following the end of the participation in the intervention;
- ✓ CR 05: Disadvantaged participants searching for work, following an educational/training program, acquiring a qualification, in an occupation, including self-employed, at the time of concluding their participation in the intervention;

In general, the effects observed in terms of intervention’s outcome and occupational stability are satisfactory and in some cases very positive, especially if one takes into account not only the situation within the 6 months after the intervention, as gathered by the indicators, but also what has happened in the followings months and recorded by the questionnaire. The results, shown in Table 2, are summarized by indicator:

Table 2 – Result indicators CR05 e CR06

Investment Priority	Base line (%)				Target 2023			Survey (2019)					
								Indicators* (%)			Interviewees		
	W	M	T		W	M	T	W	M	T	D	U	T
8.i Employment – CR 06	33%	26,30%	31%	2012	43%	36%	41,10%	40,80%	51,40%	47,50%	358	488	846
8.ii Employment – CR 06	40%	42%	41%	2013	50%	52%	51%	27,50%	32,70%	30,90%	120	214	334
9.i Inclusion (OT 9.2) – CR 05	nd	nd	68,60%	2013	90%	90%	90%	61,45%	68,08%	65,41%	166	260	426
9.i Inclusion (OT 9.1) – CR 06	22,20%	22,20%	22,20%	2012	34%	40%	37%	37,50%	ND	37,50%	8	0	8
10.ii Education and Training – CR 06	21,90%	22,10%	22,00%	2010	55%	55%	55%	67,70%	68,00%	67,90%	688	582	1270

Priority 8.i (OS 8.5)

The effects on the participants of the interventions designed to facilitate job placement for those persons with greater difficulty (inactive, long-term unemployed, etc.) which show result indicator value equal to 47,5%, greater than the baseline (31%) and the 2023 target (41,1%). Also, the employment situation at the time of data collection indicates a trend in growth (54%), while only 4% of the interviewees were declared “inactive”.

Priority 8.ii (OS 8.1)

Moderately positive results, taken from the direct survey, regarding the increase in employment of the NEET or rather young people that neither study nor work. The analysis considers the NEET to be of legal adult age, since about 80% possess a middle school license. The employment outcome at 6 months is at 31% (Indicator CR06), less than baseline (41%), which however overestimated the phenomenon and to the target (51%). However if we consider that at the time of the study, 40% of the interviewees were declared unemployed, values similar to the baseline. Also, at the date of the survey only 4% declared themselves “inactive”, compared to 39% actively searching for work and 8% engaged in education and qualification courses.

Priority 9.i (OS 9.1 - 9.2)

The direct survey has revealed moderate results for interventions geared towards social inclusion and active participation oriented towards disadvantaged people. The percentage of people employed and/or committed at the end of the course (Indicator CR05) was equal to 64%, a slightly lower value than the baseline (68,6), which, is however, also overestimated. Interestingly enough, those who declared themselves “not employed” and not actively searching for work , “inactive”, were about 32,5% while the amount of employed increases over time.

Priority 10.ii (OS 10.5)

Very positive results on those participating in initiatives geared toward improving the quality and effectiveness of higher education, benefitting young high school and college graduates. In fact 68% of the people interviewed declared themselves employed within six months of completing the course (Indicator CR06) a much higher value than the baseline (22,1%) and of the target (55%). Furthermore at the time of the survey, this level remained stable (70%), with prevalence of employee relationships, that went from 38% (6 months) to 52% (current data). The result achieved through the investments on this priority provides a positive ex post component on the choice of the Managing Authority to increase, with reprogramming the ROP in October 2018, the endowment of the Axis III, in relation to the "Torno Subito Initiative" capacity to immediately determine critical results both in terms of elevating the knowledge/competence levels of the interviewees and in terms of job placement.

In summary, the actions undertaken strengthen the subjects’ ability to find employment present in the labor market, even if disadvantaged, especially if they are educated. The NEET group of adults with a low education level is one which, in differential terms, is less affected by regional intervention.

Evaluation on the heterogeneity of the effects compared to the employment outcome (CR 06 indicator)

The intervention shows a significant difference in effectiveness between gender, in particular for the PI 8.i employment, where 51% of men found work after 6 months, while this occurred for only 41% of women.

There doesn’t appear to be a substantial difference between Italians and foreigners. The age distribution meets expectations: the age range where the intervention had the most success was between 18 and 29 years of age. The effectiveness by qualification appears to be quite homogenous, except in the cases where the intervention was directed mainly at young high school/college graduates in search of work. These interventions, particularly effective, had a greater impact on those who possessed a first or second level university degree (70% found employment) while the result slightly lower in those with a high school diploma (59%).

Indications and strategic recommendations to strengthen the effectiveness of the Program

The following are the main recommendations that emerged after following an analysis of the direct survey.

- ✓ **Strengthen and innovate the "ex post" interventions in favour of NEET (8.ii)**, category of end-users that presents the most critical issues, considering that the surveyed sample concerned people under 25 years of age with at most a middle school license. What emerged from the direct survey is that the employment status improves over time, even with periods longer than the calculated 6 months. Therefore, more time appears to be necessary to stabilize the employment results and post-intervention support and follow-through actions could be useful, perhaps innovating the orientation initiatives aimed at favouring the relationship between work supply and demand, promoting its usability also for the NEET.
- ✓ **Supporting innovative actions in the area of social inclusion to promote the "continuous" empowerment of those with the greatest vulnerabilities (9.i)**. In this case, employment is not the only goal to be achieved, but also the promoting pro-active behaviour, such as the search for employment or participation in education and qualification courses. The survey highlights that about one in three vulnerable individuals who participated in ESF interventions declared themselves inactive. Therefore, the suggestion is to support the post-intervention phase, also by activating

and/or establishing relations with the third sector networks or reinforcing the personalization of public employment services, to which the target recipients seem to resort to a much greater extent compared to other categories.

- ✓ **Investing actions favouring gender equality**, so as to intervene where there is significant gap or disparity. The direct survey confirmed that the situation remains critical most of all for women with the greatest difficulties in entering the labour market (PI 8.i) and the interventions carried out still fail to close the gap. The way could be to design innovative actions that can combine initiatives aimed at employment and employability with “agile work” opportunities, supporting smart working measures with a focus on a work-life balance.
- ✓ **Maintain the path undertaken, regarding the areas that have found the greatest effectiveness, monitoring the trend in the medium term.** The interventions involving the unemployed (long and short-term) and people seeking employment have been effective, but it is good to continue to monitor the situation over time, also to verify the “quality” of work conditions (for example by activating targeted consultations using panels). A similar approach is also suggested for gifted and talented youngsters, who have benefited from successful initiatives such as “Torno Subito”, which counter the phenomenon where a growing number of graduates who gain experience abroad choose to remain, since they find better conditions.

Finally, regarding a **method for future evaluations**, the following aspects are considered relevant:

- ✓ Enhancement of the dataset relating to territorial indicators for development policies (Istat, DPcoe, ACT) and taking into account the analysis dimensions of BES (Equitable and Sustainable Well-being).
- ✓ Regarding evaluating the differential impacts of the actions implemented, it is recommended to use the *counterfactual analysis*, which could also be an opportunity to investigate themes connected to the “quality of work”. With respect to this technique, the problems associated with identifying a significant control group are known. It is believed that the statistical or administrative data (for example surveys and/or databases of Istat or Inps) could present difficulties in reconstructing the control group. It would therefore be useful to define a way to track the subjects who, for various reasons, have submitted an application but have no longer participated in the ESF POR interventions. This data would be available at the institutions that carry out the interventions and represents an excellent basis for identifying the control group.
- ✓ In the end it must be noted, there is the question of statistical data, fundamental for monitoring and evaluating interventions. In this regard, in some areas there is a delay in statistical information, at regional level and in some specific sectors of interest. It would be useful to define, on the one hand the information needs, and on the other to identify the possible areas of improvement by involving strategic subjects of the Sistan network, to create an integrated archive to be used for Regional evaluations.