

**REGIONE LAZIO**  
**POR ESF 2014 – 2020**

**Objective**

**"Investments for growth and employment"**

Evaluation plan of the POR Lazio ESF 2014-2020

**EXECUTIVE SUMMARY**

**Thematic evaluation of the POR Lazio ESF 2014/2020**

**Public notice “Interventions to support the qualification and employability of human resources”, (years 2016-2018)**

March 2021



**REGIONE  
LAZIO**

regione.lazio.it

## **Notes on the economic situation of Italy and Lazio**

The preliminary and provisional estimate of the 2020 national GDP records a drop of 8.9%. National data show that, on the whole, the effects of the employment crisis have mainly impacted on less protected job positions and on the most vulnerable components of the labor market (young people, women and foreigners), often employed in the sectors most affected by the COVID-19 pandemic. At the regional level, the employment rate, albeit with significant gender differences, was growing until 2020, the year in which there is a setback mainly due to the pandemic. The youth employment rate, the NEET rate and long-term unemployment in Lazio also recorded improvements until 2019, the last year available for these indicators. Concerning the issue of income inequalities, on the whole, starting from 2007 the data show an increase in people at risk of poverty or social exclusion and severe material deprivation, but with a reversal of the trend starting from 2016.

## **State of implementation of the POR and interventions to counter the health emergency**

The state of progress of the POR ESF Lazio 2014-2020 denotes a positive picture at 31.12.2019 (see Annual Implementation Report 2019), from a financial point of view (with a total eligible cost equal to 69% of the budget), physical progress (with 114,270 participants involved in 3,810 projects) and also as regards the result indicators. Furthermore, the recent monitoring data as of 31.12.2020<sup>1</sup> show commitments equal to 89.6% and payments equal to approximately 72% of the budget.

Following the Covid-19 emergency, in a framework consistent with the actions of the national government (Agreement signed on July 2, 2020 by the Minister for the South and for Territorial Cohesion and by the President of the Lazio Region), specific reprogramming was immediately activated, with extraordinary interventions, which mobilized about 290 million to promptly implement actions in favor of the most affected categories, in terms of education and training, work and social issues. Looking ahead, the new MFF 2021-2027 and the Next Generation EU Program, within which the National Recovery and Resilience Plan (NRP) is located, will represent the main levers to face the effects of the crisis caused by the Covid-19 pandemic.

## **Objectives and methodology of the thematic evaluation**

The thematic evaluation of the POR ESF Lazio 2014/2020, through a field survey and a counterfactual analysis, had the aim of verifying the effectiveness and impact of the "Interventions to support the qualification and employability of the human resources"(year 2016-2018<sup>2</sup>). These interventions were split into two Macro Actions, which either addressed the issue of attendance, or qualification certificates:

- ✓ Action A (P.I. 8.i<sup>3</sup>): integrated interventions for active participation, work, and professional inclusion aimed at the unemployed. .
- ✓ Action B (P.I. 9.i<sup>4</sup>): integrated interventions for active participation, work, and professional inclusion aimed at immigrants, nomads, prisoners and former prisoners, disabled people, people in poverty, and other people at risk of economic and social marginalization.

Furthermore, from a methodological point of view, the following techniques were used: i) preliminarily, a direct survey was carried out using a questionnaire administered to a sample of over 1,000 adult participants for PI 8. and 155 participants for the PI 9.i. The POR result indicators were quantified and information on other variables was also collected; ii) a counterfactual assessment was then carried out, which was the first time this approach had been adopted to evaluate such Programs, thus making it possible to scientifically evaluate the employment impact of the actions carried out using robust methods.

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<sup>1</sup> [Bollettino Monitoraggio Politiche di Coesione – Progr. 2014/2020 – Situazione al 31.12.2020](#) (SNM Igrue RGS).

<sup>2</sup> It is specified that for a few hundred individuals the interventions took place at the beginning of 2019.

<sup>3</sup> Pi 8.i. Access to employment for job seekers and inactive people, including the long-term unemployed and people on the fringes of the labour market, using local employment initiatives and support for job mobility.

<sup>4</sup> Pi 9.i. Active inclusion, aimed at promoting equal opportunities and active participation, and improving employability.

## The field survey and result indicators

### Investment priority 8.i

The interventions in the context of PI 8.i have the purpose of facilitating workplace integration for people with greater difficulties (inactive, long-term unemployed, etc.) with actions aimed at strengthening skills. The survey showed that the effects on the participants were very positive, with an employment level 6 months after the end of the course (56%) which exceeded the target for 2023, however recording a slight decrease at the time of the survey, probably due to the effects of the pandemic, more marked for women but with a growth in stable contracts. Furthermore, smart working, which was expected to have had positive effects in terms of work-life balance, was more appreciated by men. It is significant that a large majority thinks of using it also in the future.

### Investment priority 9.i

The interventions of PI 9.i aimed at disadvantaged people (immigrants, nomads, disabled people, other people at risk of economic and social marginalization) have recorded quite positive effects, even if the survey shows a smaller number than the other PI. In any case, there is a widespread perception of an improvement in working conditions and the vast majority declares that they are employed and / or committed at the end of the course (CR 05 indicator at approximately 89%). Also, in this case, the number of employed persons had decreased by the survey date (26.8% compared to about 34% at the end of the course).

Table 1 – Result indicators CR 05 and CR 06

Investment priority	Baseline (%)				Target 2023			Field survey* (2020)					
								Indicators (%)			Interviewees		
	W	M	T	Year	W	M	T	W	M	T	W	M	T
8.i Employment (OS 8.5) – CR 06	33%	26,3%	31,1%	2012	43%	36,3%	41,1%	52,7%	58,4%	56,0%	474	577	1051
9.i Inclusion (OS 9.2) – CR 05	NA	NA	68,6%	2013	90%	90%	90%	89,7%	89,7%	89,7%	68	87	155
9.i Inclusion (OS 9.1) – CR 06	22,2%	22,2%	22,2%	2012	34%	40%	37%	25,0%	37,9%	33,9%	68	87	155

\* Source: direct survey in Cawi / Cati mode. The values of the indicators have been reported to the universe.

### Heterogeneity of the effects with respect to the outcome and type of employment: gender differences

The intervention indicators for PI 8.i showed a generally high appreciation by the participants for outcome and occupational typology. They were analysed by crossing different profiles, such as gender, age and educational qualification.

- ✓ First, there is a difference in effectiveness by gender: women with a high-school diploma employed six months after the course are 42% compared to 56% of men, a difference that rises up to 16 percentage points at the time of the interview and which also concerns first level graduates, but not higher degrees.
- ✓ With regards to the type of employment, there is a common trend for stabilization with permanent contracts equal to about 35% for men and women at the time of the survey (as compared to 11% at 6 months from the course), with a relative advantage for graduates compared to those with a high-school diploma equal to about 10%.
- ✓ The interventions were more effective for the 20-39 age group, especially for ages 25-29 , with about 70% declaring to be employed 6 months after the course and at the time of the survey, compared to 35% for the over 50. However, in the case of under 25 there is an increase, albeit contained, in fixed-term contracts.

In the case of the interventions relating to PI 9.i, which found very positive judgments, it is possible to identify some particularities despite the smaller number of interviewees involved the survey.

- ✓ The "active" situations at the end of the course (i.e. people employed, looking for work, or studying) are relatively minor for women with primary or secondary school leaving certificate
- ✓ With respect to the employment level, a significant gender difference emerges for graduates or the largest category, 6 months after the course (about 10%), which, however, diminishes over time.

## Counterfactual evaluation and employment impact of the interventions

For the analysis, the data made available by the Regional Directorate for Education, Training, Research and Work were used, verifying the employment history of all course participants to compare them with a valid control group. The data was analysed using a recent version of the *difference-in-differences matching* (MDiD) evaluation method. This estimator made it possible to compare treated individuals to individuals who did not follow the courses but who were identical from the point of view of the following variables: i) sex; ii) age group; iii) citizenship (Italy or abroad); iv) residence (province of Rome or other provinces); v) starting year of the course; and very similar in terms of previous employment history.

The analysis was carried out taking into account that active employment policies, such as job search assistance, training or work experience programs for the unemployed, in general, initially produce negative effects on employment. These so-called '*lock-in effects*' occur because participants are busy following the training activities and consequently spend less time and effort on job search activities than non-participants. Given the probable presence of *lock-in effects*, the analysis considers as the post-treatment period not the end of the training course, but the beginning of the training course.

The main results relating to Axis I Employment – I.P. 8.i. are shown in Figure 1. The Figure displays the estimates and related confidence levels regarding the employment impact of training courses for both women (left graph) and men (right graph). In each graph, the points represent the difference in the probability of finding work between treated (participants in the interventions) and untreated (control group). As shown in Figure 1, if in the first months the probability of finding a job decreases –as expected– (up to -10 percentage points, 5 months after the start of the intervention), it then increases, eventually resulting in an employment level approximately 7 percentage points higher than that observed in the control group (2 years after the start of the intervention). The results are similar for both genders.<sup>5</sup>

Figure 1 - Employment impact broken down by gender PI 8.i

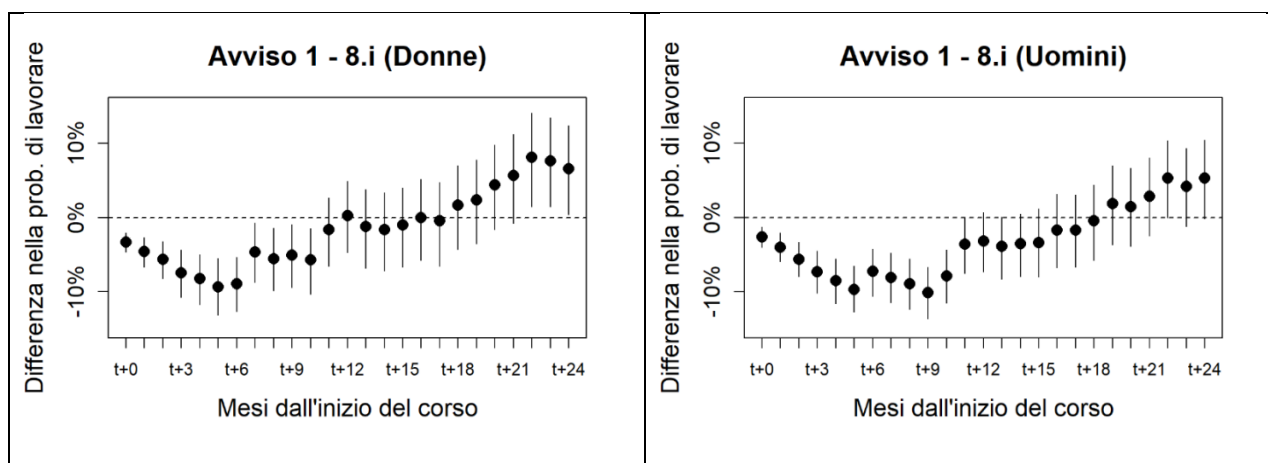
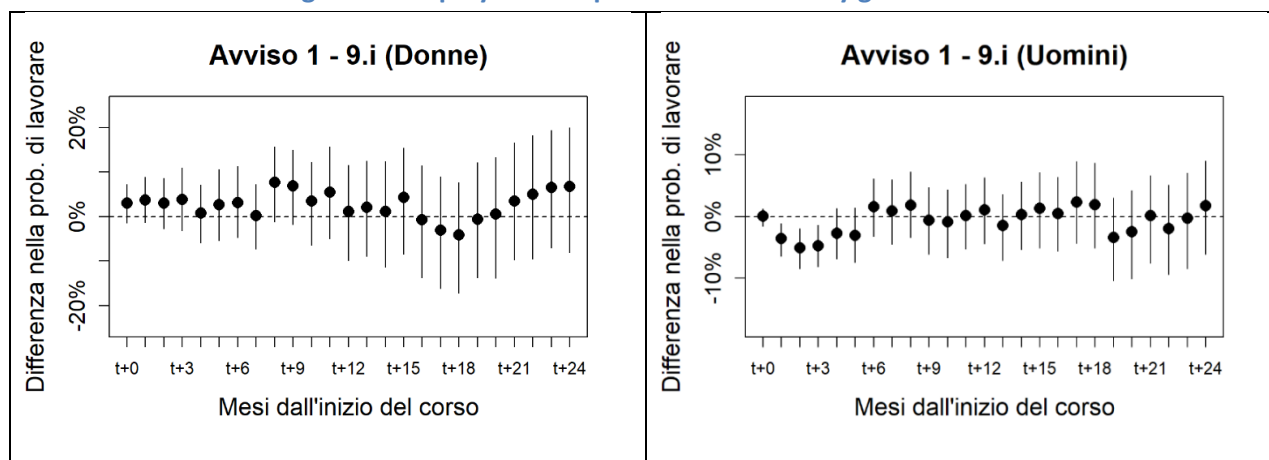


Figure 2 reports the estimates and related confidence intervals for the employment impact of training courses relating to Axis 2 Social inclusion – PI. 9.i. Women's results are shown in the left graph, men's in the right graph. As shown in Figure 2, the probability of finding a job decreases in the first months only for men (up to -5 percentage points, 3 months after the start of the intervention), yet the fall is reabsorbed already 6 months after the start of the course. Although generally positive, the results do not show statistically significant differences in terms of employment between treated and untreated. At least for women, this is partly due to the small number of contracts .

<sup>5</sup> For instance, with respect to women, the impact of the training course on the probability of being employed is negative and statistically significant immediately after the start of the course, and it reaches a maximum difference, equal to -10 percentage points, five months later. The impact remains negative and statistically significant in the ten months following the start of the course. Later on, between month 12 and month 17 the difference between participants and the control group is almost nonexistent. Starting from the eighteenth month following the start of the course, the impact begins to be positive and from month 22 it turns statistically significant and equal to +7 percentage points.

Figure 2 - Employment impact broken down by gender PI 9.i



### Recommendations to strengthen active labor policies and the effectiveness of the Program

In addition to verifying the *achievement of the employment targets represented by result indicators*, the evaluation carried out showed that *the ESF interventions significantly increased the probability of employment in the medium term*. Some specific and transversal recommendations over these results are summarized in Table 2 and articulated in the following paragraphs.

Table 2 - Recommendations to strengthen the effectiveness of the Program

CATEGORIES OF RECIPIENTS				
	Women	NEET	Long-term unemployed / inactive	Subjects at risk of social exclusion
SPECIFIC ACTIONS	Strengthening actions for gender equality (more resources)	Continuous support, beyond the interventions	Personalized paths (skills retraining and career change)	Social inclusion projects (creation of networks and empowerment paths)
	Human resources qualification interventions aimed at the most innovative sectors, linked to the main missions of the NRP and the personal services sector.			
TRANSVERSAL ACTIONS	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➤ Synergy between direct and indirect funds</li> <li>➤ Strengthening and enhancement of CPI (Regional Agency for Work Space)</li> <li>➤ Greater involvement of companies in the planning of interventions</li> <li>➤ Other transversal actions (services for children, smart-working, work-life balance)</li> </ul>			

### Specific actions on categories of recipients.

Overall, considering the future needs related to the presumed post Covid-19 social organization, it is suggested to strengthen the interventions in the following areas: i) the most innovative sectors (eg: IT); ii) sectors linked to the main missions of the National Recovery and Resilience Plan (NRP), such as that for ecological transition; iii) the personal services sector, which often sees a prevalence of female employment. The following paragraphs provide recommendations with respect to specific targets.

- ✓ In the case of **women**, the evaluation revealed that differences in the effectiveness of the interventions persist. Numerous surveys confirm the existence of gaps in terms of employment, but also in terms of salaries and career paths. Therefore, it is necessary to substantially strengthen the actions conducive to **gender equality**, also through reward criteria in the selection phase of the participants, promoting the participation of women in qualifying interventions in the driving sectors for the future (digitization, ecology, etc.) where they often have relatively lower levels of employment. Obviously, as reiterated below, integrated policies are indispensable.

- ✓ **NEETs**, together with women and self-employed workers, were the most affected by the crisis. It is therefore necessary to continue and support actions in their direction, given that the survey showed a good effectiveness of the interventions, especially towards 25-29 year-olds. However, medium-term support beyond the course is appropriate, to be pursued also with the relaunch of the Employment Centers (CPI) to promote continuous qualification paths.
- ✓ The greatest probability of finding work, following the requalification interventions, was found in the 30-39 age group. Therefore, with respect to the **long-term unemployed**, it is appropriate to promote personalized paths to adapt skills and encourage relocation. Also in this case, the role of the regional agency can be strategic.
- ✓ For **those at risk of social exclusion**, it is necessary to support the actions that have found the greatest effectiveness, given the positive results of the interventions in promoting active behavior and also those with existing room for improvement. In this regard, innovative actions shall be promoted to create networks in the area of solidarity economy and social inclusion, so as to encourage the taking charge and continuous empowerment of the most vulnerable subjects.

### **Transversal actions**

Transversal actions are necessary to strengthen the effectiveness of actions aimed at specific targets, in order to create favorable context conditions and/or remove and mitigate the barriers and critical issues that often hinder entry and permanence in the labor market.

- ✓ In general, the evaluation highlighted how interventions aimed at specific types of recipients can have positive effects on the labor market. However, these effects must be amplified by strategic action, capable of developing greater **synergies between direct and indirect funds to achieve common objectives**. This will be a challenge of the new programming.
- ✓ **The strengthening and enhancement of the role of the CPIs** -which proved marginal in the intermediation - also in the light of the new regional agency, must not remain a formal objective. The tools (electronic file) and coordination between national (Anpal) and regional information systems must be made operational, as prerequisites for promoting effective assessment, orientation and matching paths between job supply and demand, in a perspective of intra- and inter- regional mobility. In this context, the involvement of private employment agencies could be assessed, given that the survey revealed a limited but greater role than that of CPIs.
- ✓ To plan interventions consistent with specific needs, **the involvement of companies should be strengthened** during the phases where needs are outlined and actions are planned, also bearing in mind the prospect of a greater use of smart working. The significance of this aspect emerged also in the survey, where, while the opinion on the quality of the courses remained very good, the judgments on their relevance for the occupation found was just sufficient.
- ✓ Finally, to promote gender equality, it is necessary to **strengthen services for children and work-life balance measures**. In fact, the survey showed an improvement in the work life balance related to smart working, but this perception was once again higher for men. In any case, there is a need for multilevel collaboration and a multidimensional connection between the various policies (family, education, work), a strategy that could be relaunched during the implementation of the NRP.

### **Methodological indications for optimizing the planning and evaluation processes**

- ✓ From a methodological point of view, it is necessary to continue the path taken, with particular reference to **field surveys**, to the **connection between administrative and monitoring data** and to the use of the **counterfactual approach**, allows for a scientific evaluation of the results in a timely manner and, therefore, the identification an support future policy choices.
- ✓ It would be useful to define procedures to trace the subjects who, despite having submitted an application, did not proceed in participating in the interventions of the POR ESF. This data, available from institutions, could represent an additional basis for identifying the control group.