



ISMERI EUROPA

Unitary evaluation service for programmes co-financed with EU funds in the 2014-2020 programming period

III Evaluation report 2021

Executive Summary — English

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Introduction

Objectives of the evaluation

In the 2021 Extended Evaluation Report, like the previous 2017 and 2019 Reports, the analyses are divided into two main areas:

- a first area of assessment focuses on the financial and physical advancement of the three funds, EAFRD RDP, ERDF ROP and ESF ROP. This part of the evaluation is common to the three funds;
- a second area of analysis concerns the specific aspects of each Programme, agreed with the respective MAs. In the case of the EAFRD RDP, the specific analyses shall cover the Programme's capacity, and in particular local development interventions, to respond to the needs of disadvantaged and mountain areas, as well as to the effects of the COVID-19 pandemic. For the ERDF, there are two themes for discussion: the analysis of the strategy and actions of the ROP aimed at addressing the negative socio-economic effects of the COVID-19 health emergency and the outcomes of the projects of Line of Intervention 1.1.a.1 "Support for the purchase of services for technological, strategic, organisational and commercial innovation of enterprises". For the ESF, in addition to the analysis of the anti-COVID initiatives included in the Programme, the focus is on the results of measures to support disadvantaged families' access to early childhood services.

Methods of analysis

The analytical methodologies and information sources used vary according to the programmes analysed. In general, in all cases, a mix of desk analysis of monitoring documents and data, and analysis of information collected directly by the evaluator (through interviews with managers and surveys with beneficiaries) was used.

Authors

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Objectives of the evaluation

The evaluation of the EAFRD RDP covered two main themes: the progress of the Programme and its capacity to respond to the needs of certain regional areas, as well as to the effects of the COVID-19 pandemic. Compared to the first topic, the analysis of the state of the art of the RDP from a financial, physical and procedural point of view allowed to highlight trends and identify the most important areas of criticality. With regard to the second theme, the analysis focused on actions in favour of local development, especially in disadvantaged and mountain areas, and in particular services to the local community, in order to gather useful information on:

- the RDP's capacity to respond to local needs;
- problems in the territory and in particular in the local community following the COVID-19 pandemic;
- the opportunities/solutions provided by the RDP;
- the effectiveness of these opportunities/solutions.

Methods and data

As regards the first survey topic (progress of the RDP), the evaluator carried out a desk analysis of the physical, financial and procedural monitoring data received from the MA. For the second topic, a qualitative survey was carried out based on the nature of the beneficiary (public body, company, etc.) on various instruments such as the online survey (CAWI) for public and private beneficiaries (including the municipalities targeted by ultra broadband (UB or BUL, in Italian – 7.3) and the questionnaire distributed by email for regional and LAG managers.

The results of the evaluation applications are set out below.

Question 1

What is the state of play of the RDP in relation to the targets set?

In the light of the needs identified during the programming period, the Region intended to respond to them with the use of the RDP, mainly through a concentration of measures aimed at a plurality of public-private entities, both to safeguard the territory and revitalise disadvantaged local communities. However, the financial progress of the projects does not make it possible yet to fully grasp the effects of these choices.

While the intervention 7.3.1 seems to have already achieved its objectives, other interventions/sub-measures still show a lagging-behind progress, especially when considering the "maturity" of the RDP (close to its end) and the number of operations financed. All sub-measures and types of interventions supporting local development have been extended, either due to anomalies in issuing the application on National Agricultural Information System (NAIS – SIAN in Italian) (2 cases), or to the COVID-19 emergency (3 cases). The investigations appear, in two cases in particular (7.4 and 7.6), excessively long, especially in the view of the limited number of beneficiaries and applications for funding submitted. Regarding the level of commitments (i.e. the ratio of the resources committed on the resources activated by the RDP) for each sub-measure/type of intervention, it emerged that sub-measures 7.4 and 7.6 are slightly below 100 %, which will be monitored throughout the remainder of the programming. The same sub-measures 7.4 and 7.6 show an unsatisfactory level of payment claims (18 % and 39 %), although they both have a high level of reporting of eligible amounts compared to those requested (7.4 also shows carry-overs).

Turning to the analysis of the LEADER data, and in particular for the three different sub-measures (19.2, 19.3 and 19.4), it can be seen that there has been little progress. For 19.2 (including the National Strategy for Inner Areas – NSIA or SNAI in Italian), even if the level of calls published overall appears to be adequate, the level of payments is still excessively low, with rates of progress not adapted to the resources provided and committed. A similar evidence emerges for sub-measure 19.3 (LEADER cooperation) for which, although the level of activation appears to be for three LAGs out of five good or relatively good (the LAG Open LEADER and Torre Natisone did not use any of amount allowed to them yet), the progress of the expenditure is zero. Finally, it is worth noting, on the other hand, the progress of sub-measure 19.4, relating to the operating costs of LAGs. In this case it is possible to note that, unlike the above-mentioned measures, the level of both commitment and expenditure seems much better (except for the Euroleader LAG). The low level of implementation has a clear impact on the achievement of the targets set by the

Programme and mostly related to Priority 6, such as the number of jobs created. Looking at the analysis of the field surveys, it can be observed that the beneficiaries consider that all the objectives (including the intangible ones) of the interventions under consideration are substantially met.

Question 2 **What were the possible implementation problems and how were they resolved?**

The implementation problems encountered are generally linked to the complexity of the structure of Community programming and to the rigidity of the programming instruments, resulting from an increasing demand for detail in control and verification activities. In any case, the hypertrophy of the administrative and bureaucratic burdens affecting the beneficiaries, as well as the timing of the implementation of operations and relations with bodies such as the Agency for disbursements in agriculture - AGEA, need to find a complete response in the next programming cycle, which will experiment a different delivery model from the current one (National Programme) and which, therefore, could be aggravated by some of these problems.

On the other hand, the implementation delays in the activation of calls for local development in LEADER, due to several concurrent factors (including the availability of IT tools and their management), have been resolved through training courses and support for IT management and the use of calls — uniform type. In this respect, it is recommended that these forms of support should also be used in the next programming cycle, as well as for the interventions activated during the transition period.

Question 3 **What criticalities have emerged in the territory and in particular in the local community, following the pandemic?**

The COVID-19 pandemic seems to have exacerbated the problems encountered at the beginning of the programming period, in particular those related to the lack of willingness to network among the actors, the poor tourist offer and the lack of territorial promotion, the low diffusion of technology and the need for company investment, the difficulty of accessing finance, and the infrastructure gap (including the lack of the Internet in the territory). Moreover, the lengthy procedures and/or the administrative and bureaucratic burdens underlying the payment of contributions, and which irretrievably lead to a delay in the execution of operations, are not always reconciled with the needs of stakeholders.

Question 4 **What opportunities/solutions did the RDP provide?**

The structure and rigidity of the RDP (as well as OSH), mainly aimed at agriculture and its business realities, has not yet ensured a full response to the needs of the territory. However, for some of the above problems, good operational solutions have been identified (particularly through the support provided by the regional offices and the operational reorganisation of the interventions; e.g. advance payment, extensions), for others it is not always sufficient only to intervene through regional funding, since the disbursement of the former RDP funding is subject to supranational rules. The following table summarises the RDP's response to the problems in the area identified during the programming.

Criticality	Relevance of criticality	RDP response according to respondents	Relevance of the reply
Low propensity to network among the subjects present in the territory	++	Support for different forms of aggregation (business network, study circle, participatory design, etc.)	+++
Poor tourist offer and poor promotion of the territory	+++	Support for the start-up of non-agricultural activities and promotion of the territory (e.g. social farming)	++
Low diffusion of technologies and the need for company investment	++	Support for company investments to improve local productivity (e.g. purchase of HW and SW)	++
Difficulties in accessing funding	++	Financial support to fill the higher cost for obtaining authorisations compared to	++

		more "simple" areas/territories and information support	
Depopulation	+++	—	
Environmental fragility	++	—	
Infrastructure shortage (including the Internet)	++	—	
+ Low; ++ Average; +++ High			

Question 5 **How effective was the implementation of these opportunities/solutions?**

As regards the RDP's policy areas to facilitate the development of disadvantaged areas, the support seems to have been particularly focused on the diversification of economic activities and, only residually, on social services. While support for diversification can be justified by the productive character of the RDP, as regards the support for social cohesion, it is useful to underline that the projects financed are significant (e.g. the creation and consolidation of community cooperatives; strengthening the resilience of local communities and reactivating production systems; development of forms of diversification of agricultural activity), also to provide services to the population (educational and social factors, agro-kindergartens and agro-residence for the elderly). However, without expressing any prejudice to the UB/BUL project, support for local infrastructure is completely lacking.

With regard to the actions to be implemented, in order to optimise the support of the RDP to the most disadvantaged areas of the regional territory, a certain focus should be placed on those dedicated to the tourism sector (one of the most affected by the pandemic), in particular by setting them on mechanisms for the use of the territory that could be exploited in emergency situations such as the pandemic: the areas concerned, in fact, seem to be particularly oriented towards sustainable tourism.

A further element which should be particularly strengthened in the future (with actions of reduced economic impact), is that of the operations involving the activation of projects in favour of the local population (including in the field of social and welfare, social and health or childcare services). Such projects could, in fact, constitute a driving force for keeping the population in the territory.

With regard to the most exquisite interventions in favour of the landscape and the environment, it is recommended that cooperation be stepped up between those responsible for safeguarding the territory, both in the planning phase of the same interventions and in the implementation phase.

Finally, in relation to support for companies operating in the area, it is recommended, where this option is possible, to identify the most effective alternatives to overcome the difficulty of accessing credit and, therefore, to encourage the participation of small producers (e.g. financial instruments).

It is also recommended that work be continued on the dissemination of the introduction and use of technology. In this sense, a more comprehensive communication on the benefits that such innovations can bring (e.g. dissemination of good practices) could generate greater interest on the part of actors operating on a different basis in the territory (both public and private).

THE ERDF

Objectives of the evaluation

The Extended Evaluation Report for 2021 integrated analysis aimed at verifying the progress and functioning of the ERDF ROP as a whole and providing an in-depth analysis on specific areas and/or themes agreed with the MA. In particular, the evaluation analyses have pursued the following three objectives:

- A.** understanding the progress in the implementation of the ERDF ROP, verifying the level of physical and financial implementation with the targets set and identifying the most critical areas in relation to the achievement of the end-of-programming objectives;
- B.** rebuilding the overall picture of ERDF COVID-19 response initiatives and analysing their level of consistency with the negative effects of the pandemic, including through a comparative analysis with interventions carried out by other Italian regions (in terms of resources mobilised, areas and types of measures implemented, objectives and targets);
- C.** analysing the medium-term results of innovative projects under line 1.1.a.1 "Support for the purchase of services for the technological, strategic, organisational and commercial innovation of enterprises" and their effects on the behaviour and performance of beneficiaries, as well as analysing business dynamics following the COVID-19 pandemic.

Methods and data

To address objectives A and B, the methodology used was desk-type, based on a desk analysis based on the programme monitoring indicators updated at 31 December 2021, and additional data available from secondary sources. For Objective C, the methodology, in addition to the analysis of monitoring data, foresaw the implementation of a CAWI survey of the beneficiary companies, by sending a questionnaire to supplement the monitoring data on the profile of the participating companies and to collect original information on the projects carried out and the results achieved.

The results of the evaluation applications are set out below.

Question 1

What is the advancement of the values of financial and physical indicators, also in relation to the targets set?

The analysis of the monitoring data, as of November 2021, highlights the good performance of the ERDF ROP of Friuli Venezia Giulia in terms of physical and financial progress. Thanks to the use by the Region of PAR (Programma Attuativo Regionale/Regional Implementation Programme) resources, the eligible public expenditure of the operations selected amounts to 132 % of the total budget of the Programme (an increase of 32 % of the resources allocated compared to the previous Extended Evaluation Report) and the expenditure declared by the beneficiaries amounts to more than 74 % of the total resources (+ 23 % compared to the previous survey). The values of these indicators are significantly higher than the national average (104 % and 52 % respectively) and show the high programming and spending capacity of Friuli Venezia Giulia ERDF funds compared to other Italian regions. This is confirmed by the level of achievement of the expenditure target foreseen at the end of 2020 by the "N+ 3" rule, easily achieved by the Programme, and the higher value among the ERDF ROPs of the Italian "more developed" regions.

Figure — % of expenditure allocated to selected projects (horizontal axis) and % of expenditure of beneficiaries (vertical axis) in June 2021 — Italian regional ERDF ROP

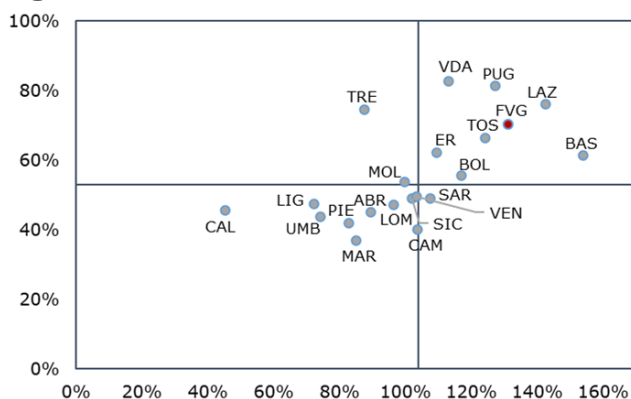
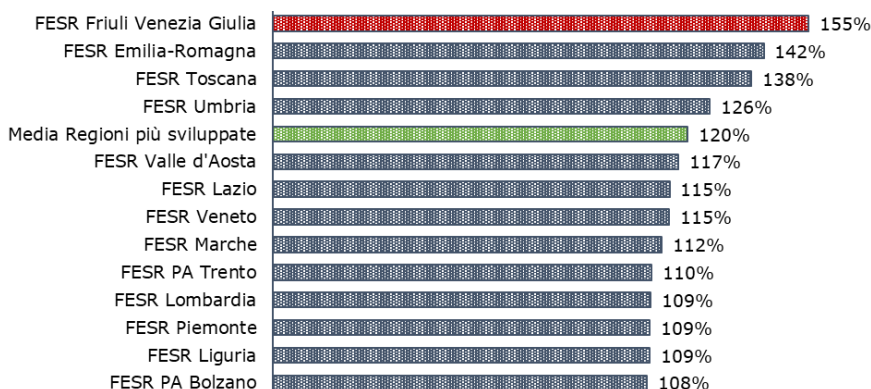


Figure — ratio between certified expenditure in 2020 and target stemming from the N+ 3 rule



In more detail, the high performance of Axes I “Research” and II “Competitiveness SMEs” should be highlighted. Axis III (energy efficiency projects) and IV (urban development projects) are lagging behind, with a spending capacity of 39 % and 30 % respectively. The initial problems with the implementation of the projects, already highlighted in the previous evaluation report, are added to the lengthy administrative procedures for the beneficiary local authorities, which risk jeopardising the achievement of programme targets by 2023.

Considering the physical progress of the ROP, there is consequently a high performance of direct and indirect initiatives to support companies under Axis I and Axis II, in respect of which, considering the operations selected by the ROP, the output indicators show potential values higher, and sometimes much higher, than the targets set for 2023. Major problems arise for Axis III “Low-carbon economy” and, above all, for Axis IV “Urban Areas”, whose projects, in the view of major delays in implementation, are for the most part still underway. However, on the basis of data from the selected operations, the relevant output indicators show potential values equal to or higher than the end-of-programming targets. The exception, under Axis IV, is represented by the indicators relating to enterprises and employment of Investment Priority 3.b and the indicators of Investment Priority 6c. The former are not progressing since the investigation of the call to support the creation and consolidation of SMEs in the BioHighTech and HighTech sectors of the Municipality of Trieste, published in May 2021; the latter are below the end-of-programming target values also on the basis of the values derived from the operations selected by the Programme.

Question 2 Have the responses given following the COVID-19 pandemic been adequate and consistent with the problems identified?

Friuli Venezia Giulia, in addition to establishing derogations and extraordinary extensions for the conclusion and implementation of the operations financed in the years 2020 and 2021, activated specific actions to address the emergency situation by making a set of amendments to the ERDF Programme and to the selection criteria. The Region intervened on both lines set out in the State-Regions Agreement, investing overall about 23.5 million of public resources on

strengthening the social and health systems and economic support of local businesses. The new Action 1.5, with a budget of EUR 1.7 million of ERDF resources, supported the provision by the Regional Coordination for Health (ARCS) of products and services aimed at strengthening the response capacity of regional health services to the COVID-19 epidemiological crisis. As part of the package of measures to support businesses, the Region implemented a new call within Line of Intervention 1.2.a.1 "Incentives for enterprises for process innovation activities and organisation" and financed under Axis II the new Line 2.3.c.1 "Supporting the competitiveness and technological innovation of SMEs in the different sectors of the regional production system, financing technological investments to address the COVID-19 health emergency". The analysis showed different implementation performance in relation to these two business support initiatives. 1.2.a.1 financed 212 projects for more than 16.4 million contributions against an initial budget of EUR 9 million in the 2020 call; the 2.3.c.1, in the light of a similar financial envelope, slightly above 9 million Euros, supported 175 projects corresponding to 4.7 million Euros in grants granted.

The comparative analysis with the other Italian regions shows that Friuli Venezia Giulia has opted for a softer reprogramming of the ERDF programme in response to the COVID-19 emergency. The other regions, and in particular the most advanced regions of Northern Italy, have made greater use of the opportunities granted by the amendments to the Community regulations on the ESI Funds and have put in place initiatives of a significant financial dimension, through the use of the remaining ERDF resources obtained through the splitting and subsequent financing from FSC resources of initiatives/projects already programmed in the ROPs. In particular, in support of regional health systems, Lombardy, Emilia-Romagna, Piedmont and Veneto have allocated substantial ERDF resources: overall, more than 615 million Euros have been invested by these four regions for the support of the health emergency and the prevention and containment of the virus in healthcare and hospital facilities.

Question 3

What are the results and effects financed by line 1.1.a.1 in the medium term?

In the evaluation of the ERDF ROP, companies benefiting from Action 1.1.a "Support for the purchase of services for technological, strategic, organisational and commercial innovation" were involved through an online survey (response rate of 28 %). The Action financed the acquisition of one or more innovation services by SMEs, to be chosen from a "services catalogue" (e.g. feasibility studies for R & D & I projects, audit services, innovation support services, energy efficiency services, intellectual property support services, advanced certification support services, etc.). From the first signals reported in the survey, encouraging results can be seen, such as the satisfaction of companies with the regional initiative, a general perception of the improvement of managerial and technical skills, and a greater propensity to innovate through research projects (follow-ups) stimulated by the calls in question. Gaps remain to be bridged, such as poor collaboration with universities and research centres on the one hand, and relationships with suppliers and customers too anchored in the local context on the other. It is important to reiterate that the information obtained from the monitoring data and the ad-hoc survey is to be read within the specific objectives of Action 1.1.a and therefore these gaps are not to be understood as representative of the entire regional innovation context. The results of the survey also show that COVID-19 has slowed down the innovative propensity of companies, making it necessary to reconfigure business models and therefore new strategic public-private partnerships. Of course, it remains necessary to consider how the access to this type of financing involves the majority participation of small and micro-sized enterprises, and therefore the need to calibrate these instruments to these archetypes remains a priority, as a rethinking of the more green transition-oriented services.

THE ESF

Objectives of the evaluation

The 2021 Report analysed the interventions financed by the ESF ROP 2014-20, with the aim of verifying the progress of the Programme, and assessing some specific measures, especially in the light of the new issues arising from the COVID-19 pandemic crisis, which required a reallocation of funds and the planning of emergency interventions. There are three thematic areas on which the analyses have focused:

- A.** Adequacy of the ESF ROP response strategy to COVID-19
- B.** Financial and physical advancement of the ESF ROP
- C.** Thematic focus on the results of the “Measures to support disadvantaged families’ access to early childhood services” (TO 9).

Methods and data

The evaluation of the COVID-19 response strategy (**Theme A**) was mainly based on a desk analysis aimed at reconstructing the overall picture of policy changes and their level of consistency with the problems arising from the pandemic.

As regards the progress of the ESF ROP (**Theme B**), the analysis carried out was mainly desk-type and based on monitoring data contained in the AAR2020. In addition, the micro-data of the ROP recipients updated in mid-2021 were analysed in order to understand which targets have been most achieved, including in relation to the characteristics of the labour market. Another aspect is the 2021 Compulsory Communications (COB) data related to the employment situation of recipients six months after the end of the interventions, so as to provide an analysis of the results of the interventions funded by the Programme.

In relation to the thematic focus on childcare (**Theme C**), the evaluation activity was based both on the analysis of the available monitoring data and on a constant link with the Regional Service responsible for the delivery of the measures, in order to reconstruct the logic of the interventions and how these are part of the broader framework of the actions put in place by the Region for conciliation. Finally, an online survey was carried out for families who requested the regional voucher for facilitated access to these services.

The results of the evaluation are set out below.

Question 1

Have the responses put in place following the COVID-19 pandemic been adequate and consistent with the problems identified?

The situation created by the COVID-19 pandemic has necessitated a reprogramming of the resources allocated to the ESF ROP in order to respond effectively to the new needs that have emerged, in particular in terms of reorganisation of training interventions, educational services, as well as face-to-face work in both the public and private sectors. The reprogramming involved approximately EUR 48 million for measures to combat COVID-19, mainly with the aim of supporting workers’ incomes through social shock absorbers, tools for reconciling work, training and care for children, development of smart working, but also in the field of education and training, and support for businesses. In financial terms, the revision of the ESF ROP resulted in an increase in appropriations from TO8, which was increased by EUR 11 million, mostly stemming from TO9 and, to a lesser extent, from TO11 and Technical Assistance.

The reprogramming carried out by the Region has therefore affected several areas, interpreting the scale of the effects resulting from the pandemic crisis. The measures implemented have been numerous and have covered different types of policies, from work in both the public and private sector, to support workers through the extension of the funding of the layoffs in derogation (Cassa Integrazione in deroga). The main aim of these measures was to preserve the health system as much as possible by ensuring the greatest possible social distancing — especially in the most acute stages of the spread of infections — but, at the same time, the resilience of the production system and the regional labour market. The newly funded or refinanced measures have proven to be effective in curbing the adverse effects of the pandemic crisis, encouraging the deployment of alternative tools for the provision of distance learning, services to citizens, as well as agile work for the various public and private sectors whose activities have been negatively affected by the effects of the pandemic. This has allowed many of the activities funded by the ESF ROP to continue, albeit in a manner other than those in the ESF, supporting businesses in the internal reorganisation of work, providing incentives for

recruitment, and helping families with children up to 36 months to access childcare more easily. This approach highlights a 360° ROP strategy to support the most effective recovery possible after COVID-19.

The measures taken seem to act with a view to promoting as much as possible the resilience of regional systems, so that, when the pandemic crisis emerges, the ESF can continue to be strategic in repairing the economic damage suffered by workers and self-employed workers who have become unemployed as a result of the crisis, reintegrating them into the labour market, anticipating skills needs and helping to balance labour market supply and demand, transitional measures and mobility, so as to ensure a rapid recovery of the economy. The ESF will also be able to continue to intervene in support of sectoral networks between enterprises and social partners (e.g. joint actions) which can help to anticipate and manage change in an integrated way, and to support business networks and advice on change management.

Question 2

What is the level of advancement of the values of financial and physical indicators, also in relation to the targets set? What do discards depend on?

The implementation performance of the ESF ROP remains good, in line with what was highlighted in the previous evaluation report. The COVID-19 pandemic, and the resulting negative health, social and economic effects, have brought all regions to face a series of extraordinary events giving rise to the need for resilience. The reprogramming of the ESF ROP, in accordance with the Provenzano Agreement, has brought with it the need to adopt substantial changes, i.e. not only reallocating part of the available resources, but also introducing new Investment Priorities and new indicators, as well as removing those output and result indicators which are no longer significant for the Programme. At the same time, the need to revise the targets in 2023 has become apparent, in order to better reflect the evolution of the situation and better respond to it.

The financial progress of the ESF ROP has accelerated compared to 2019, with expenditure rising from around 71 % to over 95 % by the end of 2020. While it is true that this reflects the approaching of the end of the programming and, consequently, a greater number of operations and projects moving towards their natural conclusion, it is also important to underline that the progress made is nevertheless very significant, because it is more than 20 pp higher, confirming the resilience of the ROP, despite the problems faced due to the lockdown and the need for reprogramming all the interventions that involved in-person activities.

To address the effects of COVID-19, output indicators have been revised almost completely, by increasing, for example, those targets related to the employment situation of the young, inactive, unemployed (including the long-term unemployed) and focusing on the increased involvement of target audiences in upskilling measures. This testifies to the willingness to support the regional labour market with ESF resources, which has been negatively affected — like the rest of the country — by the limitations and closures imposed to counter the pandemic. The latter, in fact, net of the social shock absorbers and the ban on dismissals imposed by the Government, has inevitably negatively affected employment rates and the survival of enterprises. The choice to review the indicators, therefore, seems appropriate.

As far as the performance indicators are concerned, the achievement ratio appears to be slightly lower than in 2019, but still shows a good resilience when considering the extraordinary situation created by the pandemic. In addition, the data analysed essentially show a picture of the situation of pre-COVID-19 interventions; indeed, the results of the ROP can be seen in the 2021 AAR in the light of the changes made to the Programme.

Question 3

To what extent have the opportunities for activation and employment of people, especially women, been expanded thanks to childcare support? What was the added value of the ESF ROP in ensuring access to this type of services?

The measures under review are part of a broader vision of support for households to facilitate access to early childhood services. While the Region has for some time made available substantial funds outside the ESF to facilitate such access, the ROP has provided additional support to families in the area. The purpose of the two types of funds is different: the resources allocated outside the ROP have the main purpose of supporting work-life balance, also encouraging women's participation in the labour market, while ROP funds focus on economic support for the most

disadvantaged groups and, therefore, have greater difficulty in bearing the cost of school fees.

From the analysis carried out, however, two important aspects emerge, namely that the ROP, through this voucher, has greatly facilitated access to early childhood services in well over half of the cases analysed, but that it has also reasonably supported the employment of some of the applicants (and spouses, when present), although it should be pointed out that most of them were already employed at the time of applying for financial support. In fact, the families that have applied for the contribution are characterised by 2-3 individuals, and in which most of the members work; on the other hand, the ISEE limit set by the Region for 2020-2021 shows how families traditionally considered "middle class" increasingly face an economic crisis that is reflected in the possibility of using educational services. This aspect is particularly relevant if we consider how, despite the fact that Friuli-Venezia Giulia is one of the most virtuous regions, our country suffers from a general shortage of places in early childhood services, especially in public services, which often entails being forced to bear the huge costs of private fees.

The analysis carried out showed, therefore, that the request for the contribution, often also made for the previous year 2019-2020, did not come from groups in extreme poverty or characterised by a predominant presence of elderly/disabled to be cared for — thus preventing applicants from entering the labour market — as the applications almost always came from people who found it very difficult to reconcile family life (particularly childcare) and work, and that in many cases they could not bear the cost of school fees. In this sense, therefore, the measure financed by the ROP was, even according to the beneficiaries, of fundamental importance in order to allow access to educational facilities but also, another important factor, to access higher quality facilities. In several cases, in fact, the choice of the facility to register the child was guided by the reputation of the service provider and/or the educational project that it is offered.

Other important aspects are, on the one hand, the possibility to look for work or to extend (part-time to full-time) the working time, and on the other hand the positive impact of the voucher on the income of the families. As regards the positive impact on work, around 25 % of beneficiaries indicates this as a predominant factor, but more than 30 % argue that the main benefit is the economic support provided. This therefore indicates the substantial coherence between the purpose of the measure as planned by the Region and its actual usefulness and effectiveness, from the perspective of the beneficiaries.