

ISMERI EUROPA

Unitary Evaluation Service of the 2014-2020 European Union co-financed Operational Programmes

First Interim Evaluation 2017

Executive Summary - English

31 MAY 2017

Evaluation context and adopted methodology

Evaluation objectives: analysis of the Regional Programmes strategy and implementation status

The 2017 First Interim Report of the service “Unitary Evaluation of the 2014-2020 European Union co-financed Operational Programmes” is focused on the Operational Programmes strategic dimension and implementation. In particular, the Report aims at: (i) assessing the implementation status of the Operational Programmes as at the end of 2016; (ii) providing a first overview of what has been accomplished in relation to some of the Evaluation Design questions; (iii) highlighting possible weaknesses of the Programmes.

The working group is composed of: Andrea Naldini (Project Manager), Marco Pompili (ERDF, cross-cutting analysis and coordination), Andrea Ciffolilli (ERDF), Carlo Miccadei, Lucia Fiorillo (ESF), Luca Rossi and Francesco Ciccarella (EAFRD).

The evaluation questions have been agreed with the Operational Programmes Managing Authorities (MAs) and are included in the table below on a Fund basis.

Analysis Field/Evaluation Questions	EAFRD	ERDF	ESF
Programme Strategy			
Is the socio-economic context analysis still relevant? Are the ROP/RDP objectives still relevant?	X	X	X
What is the potential Programme contribution to the EUSALP/EUSAIR macro-regional strategies?	X	X	X
Programme Implementation Analysis			
What is the progress level of the Programmes financial and physical indicators? Which elements emerge in relation to the expected targets?	X	X	X
Management Process			
Are the selected indicators adequate?	X	X	X
Is the functioning of the monitoring system adequate?	X		
How have the horizontal environmental sustainability and gender principles been implemented?		X	
Specific Thematic Focuses			
Which are the first results of the ERDF ROP Action 1.1a?		X	
Are the Young Package selection criteria adequate?	X		
How are the traineeships performing in administrative and organisational terms? Are there any possible improvements?			X

Methodologies: desk analysis, monitoring data analysis, surveys

The desk analysis mostly concerned the assessment of programming and implementation documents as well as monitoring data provided by the Managing Authorities in April and May.

Fieldwork surveys were conducted during the analyses concerning Action 1.1a (ERDF) and the traineeships organised within the PIPOL framework (Employment and Labour Policies Integrated Plan).

A CAWI questionnaire was forwarded to all financed enterprises in order to collect data not included in the monitoring system (such as enterprise characteristics, services suppliers, first impressions in respect to Action 1.1a). The response rate, amounting to 64%, has been positive.

Phone interviews and questionnaires were used during the PIPOL traineeships analysis, which targeted all the actors responsible for the traineeships promotion, such as Employment Offices, training agencies and universities. Interviews aimed at collecting information related to the management and implementation of traineeships.

Finally, in order to assess the coherence of the Operational Programmes in relation to the macro-regional strategies, a number of governance and implementation issues were analysed in cooperation with the Managing Authorities.

Is the socio-economic context analysis still relevant? Are the OP/RDP objectives still relevant?

A number of context issues which were at the basis of initial programming choices are still relevant

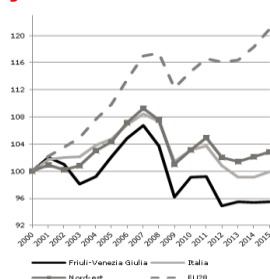
The socio-economic context analysis is relevant for all the three Funds (EAFRD, ERDF and ESF) and it is designed to cover all the intervention areas of the Programmes.

The newly revised version of the context analysis highlights that part of the previously indicated issues at Programme level are still relevant. In fact, **although improvements are reported in relation to some issues, a number of criticalities still persist**. For instance, population decline and population ageing are two of Friuli-Venezia Giulia's main weaknesses. Although Operational Programmes cannot address such phenomena directly, they can contribute to adapt the regional socio-economic model to demographic trends, investing on productivity growth and counter-balance, as far as possible, the population ageing effects.

Crisis effects and economic recovery

The **impact of the crisis on the economy** has been considerable and, to some extent, exacerbated by the reduced regional dynamism. In the period 2014-2015, the economic recovery has been in line with the average of other North-eastern regions. Although the recent recovery, the decline of the manufacturing sector has been particularly severe, and some regional strategic sectors still show limited resilience. Low resilience capacity affects the service industry as well, whose overall performance is inferior to the national and North-eastern average. Investments are still below pre-crisis values, with substantial drops in a number of sectors. By contrast, in 2014-2016 the exports industry performed well, reaching pre-crisis levels. In addition to this, the growth of the agricultural sector outperformed that of other regions. Overall, the gap between Friuli-Venezia Giulia and the average macroeconomic European performance widened.

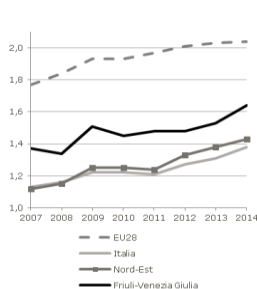
Fig: GDP trend



Good performance in terms of innovation

Following a contraction of the entrepreneurial system, the creation of new start-ups decreased. Despite this, the ratio of new high-tech enterprises is generally positive. It should be noted that this trend is however below the national and North-eastern average.

Fig: R&D/GDP expenditure



The regional productive system performs well in terms of **innovation**, although below the national average. The expected decrease in innovation investments has been limited. It should be noted that private investments in Research and Development (R&D) are currently low, this meaning that the R&D regional ranking is a consequence of investments originating from the public sector. According to FP7 data at project level, the regional research centres continue to cover an important role, undertaking a wide range of activities.

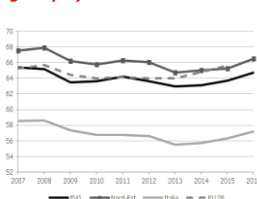
CO2 reduction is still a central issue

With regard to **sustainable growth**, the diffusion of renewable energy sources is growing. A reduction of energy consumption is observed particularly in the industrial sector. Implementing adequate measures in this field is still a priority, especially in relation to the reduction of CO2 emissions, where Friuli is lagging behind in comparison with other Italian regions.

Although overall employment trends are improving, parts of the population are still affected by high unemployment

In terms of employment, the negative trend concerning the manufacturing sector workers with a permanent contract is confirmed. At the start of the programming period, the OPs expected a contraction of the employment rate, an increase of unemployment levels and growth of the labour force. Following the start of the OPs, positive signals are observed in the labour market. After years of negative trends, the unemployment ratio finally decreased, and the participation levels of the aged sections of the population improved. The working conditions of young people are still critical, although some progress is reported in the North-Eastern area.

Fig: Employment rate



Poverty regional levels are stable and below the national average. However, this stability could imply the existence of consolidated areas at risk of poverty. Some groups are particularly vulnerable, such as women

Medium-high levels of human capital

Positive EU 2020 indicators performance

Considering the evolution of the socio-economic context, the programmes strategy is still valid

and children which are particularly at risk of poverty and social exclusion.

Human capital is confirmed as one of the key regional strengths. Friuli-Venezia Giulia is one of the most dynamic Italian regions in terms of young human capital improvement. Adult participation levels to training are also positive. However, in comparison with other regions, the education level is growing more slowly, this probably being due to factors of demographic nature.

Europe 2020 indicators show a region moving towards an European dimension, with key indicators values already above the 2020 targets established at national level. Despite these positive results, the comparison with the European dimension reveals that the gap with EU averages is getting wider.

2020 Indicators	EU Target	IT Target	FVG Target	2010	FVG Values					
					2011	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016
1-Employment rate 20-64 (%)	75	67-69	67,3	67,6	68,2	67,8	67,0	67,3	68,1	69,2
2-Gross domestic expenditure on R&D (% GDP)	3	1,53	1,69	1,45	1,48	1,48	1,53	1,64		
3-Early leavers from education (%)	<10	<15-16		12,1	13,0	13,0	11,1	11,1	6,9	
4- Total tertiary education attainment	40	26,6		19,6	21,0	23,4	27,0	27,0	26,9	
5-People at risk of poverty or social exclusion (Cumulative difference from 2008 in thousands)*	-20 million	-2,2 million	-31 thousands**	-36 thousands	-15 thousands	4,8 thousands	-7,9 thousands	-15 thousands		
6-Greenhouse gas emissions	-20	-13		-7						
7-Share of renewable energy in gross final energy consumption (%)	20	17	12,7			16,7	17,3	19,5		
8-Primary energy consumption (Million tonnes of oil equivalent)	1.483	158								
8-Final energy consumption (Million tonnes of oil equivalent)	1.086	124				3,7	3,41	3,04		

Friuli-Venezia Giulia programmed the use of ESI Funds on the basis of a strategy coherent with the needs emerging from the context. This is formally stated in the ROPs/RDP, in accordance with the specific missions of the three Funds. The analysis of the context highlights that the **initial strategy remains substantially valid.**

What is the potential Programme contribution to the EUSALP/EUSAIR macro-regional strategies?

EUSALP and EUSAIR: the reference Friuli-Venezia Giulia macroregional strategies

EU macroregional strategies date back to 2009. Their main objective is to address specific territorial needs through shared management between Member States and partner countries. Interaction, cooperation and coordination are the cornerstones on which the strategies are built. Given that no specific resources are allocated to the strategies, the support of national policies and programmes becomes particularly crucial. To this end, macroregional strategies are tightly interconnected to Cohesion Policy. However, as stressed in a recent Commission Report on the macroregional strategies implementation status, taking advantage of the 2014-2020 financial opportunities has so far been problematic.

The macroregional strategies currently active in Europe are four. Two of these are of interest for Friuli-Venezia Giulia: the 2014 EU strategy for the Adriatic and Ionian region (EUSAIR) and the 2015 EU strategy for the Alpine region (EUSALP).

The evaluation analysed in depth three different themes...

In order to take full advantage of the macroregional strategies, it is necessary to invest on better coordination between the strategies and the ESI Funds programmes, particularly in terms of focus on strategic sectors and result orientation; cooperation in governance systems; alignment of financial resources.

The evaluation assessed three diverse dimensions: (i) thematic coherence between programmes and strategies; (ii) governance mechanisms and (iii) alignment of the financed operations.

Thematic coherence...

The three Operational Programmes show **good complementarity** and strategic coherence with the pillars and objectives included in the EUSAIR and EUSALP action plans. In fact, the ROPs directly and indirectly support all the strategies pillars.

Governance mechanisms...

As of today, the actions undertaken by the main actors involved in EUSALP and EUSAIR are mostly informal. A number of solutions aimed at improving coordination with the strategies could be usefully implemented by the MAs.

The alignment of the operations financed by the ROPs/RDP with the strategies' objectives

Some actions aimed at ensuring coherence between regional projects and the strategies are currently ongoing, especially within the ESF. Additional actions within ERDF and EAFRD are possible, although with a limited scope. EAFRD and ERDF projects are focused on local development and specific territorial needs, which do not impact directly on the macroregional priorities.

Overall, it should be noted that ready-made solutions for better integration between the Operational Programmes and the macroregional strategies do not exist. Developments in this sense are currently being discussed at EU level.

What is the progress level of the Programmes financial and physical indicators?

Positive ERDF procedural progress

As at the end of 2016, **the activation of ERDF resources is overall adequate**, and equal to half of the total resources available (EUR 230 million). In general, the MA duly followed the programming timeline, apart from a few exceptions due to external processes and specific issues affecting some OP lines. A comparison with the 2007-2013 period shows that the length of the selection procedures is reduced in accordance with the ARP targets (-30%).

The number of projects proposed at territorial level **is remarkable**, with the notable exception of Action 1.2a (Innovation and Industrialisation).

For what concerns the ESF OP, implementation progress is **in line with the Periodic Operation Planning (POP)**, an instrument which determines the ROP implementation timeline. Although a number of operations initially planned for 2015 have been postponed, this did not result in particular delays. In addition to being largely effective, the POP proved to be an excellent implementation and operations management method.

The POP has been an important instrument in the ESF planning

The 2014-2016 interventions envisaged in the POP are in line with those of the previous programming period and the Youth Guarantee. This includes innovative training and education interventions on completion of national level measures such as 'post-secondary higher education' and 'diritto-dovere'. Finally, the MA capacity to adjust the implementation of the OP to the various changes occurred in the reference context proved to be adequate.

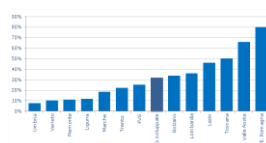
EAFRD procedural progress

Within the **EARDF RDP framework**, the implementation phase of tender publication has an average duration of 148 days. This relatively long duration is explained by the fact that, despite a number of measures started in the first seven months of 2016, issues affecting the SIAN platform for the collection of proposals caused postponements, protracting the implementation phase.

Positive financial progress of the ERDF

As of March 2017, the **admissible ERDF OP expenditure** is equal to 45% of the total resources allocated, scoring +20 percentage points in respect to the situation as at the end of 2016. The financial progress at the end of 2016 is in line with the 'more developed' Italian regions.

Fig: ERDF public admissible expenditure at the end of 2016



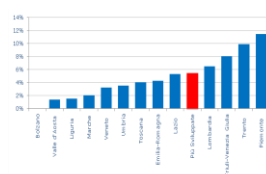
Particularly positive is the investment trend over the OP contribution concerning the Axis 1 activities.

On the basis of our current estimates, it is reasonable to expect that the activated resources should allow to achieve the N+3 rule expenditure targets.

The ESF excellent financial progress

As of December 2016, the **admissible ESF OP expenditure** is equal to 24% of the total allocated resources (EUR 276 million).

Fig: ESF beneficiaries admissible public expenditure - end of 2016



The admissible expenditure declared by the beneficiaries is still low (8%) though higher than the average of the 'more developed' regions (5,4%) and is constantly growing.

Axis III Education and training is characterised by medium estimated costs, higher than those related to Axes II and III, which however include a high number of individual projects.

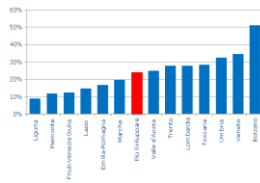
The OP interventions are targeting the previously set areas, employing almost all the programmed resources related to the theme 'Accessibility and efficiency of tertiary education'.

Additional efforts are required in relation to the EAFRD implementation

As of December 2016, the **admissible EAFRD expenditure** is equal to 12% of the total allocated resources. This level of expenditure is somewhat low, especially if compared with the average EAFRD expenditure of 'more developed' regions (24%).

The expenditure capacity of the EAFRD RDP as at the end of 2016 proved

Fig: EAFRD admissible public expenditure – end of 2016



The ERDF ROP physical progress

Fig: ROP and regional enterprises distribution on a sector basis

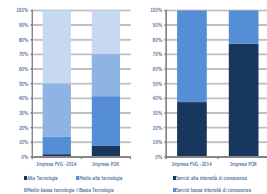
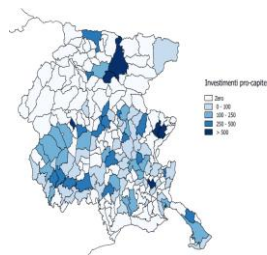
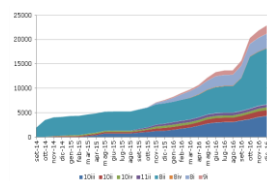


Fig: pro-capita ERDF investments on a municipality basis



The ESF ROP physical progress

Fig: ESF participants



to be rather limited, amounting to 0.8% of the programmed resources. No particular criticalities are signalled in relation to financial implementation.

In respect to the 2018 effectiveness reference framework expenditure target, a 4% RDP implementation level is achieved.

The insufficient performance in terms of expenditure, was in part counter-balanced by an overall **good capacity to activate resources allocated by the RDP**: almost 52% of the financial endowment is activated through tender notices, and the capacity to use these resources equals 18%.

As of March 2017, the ERDF ROP beneficiaries are 331, of which 301 are enterprises.

The sectorial distribution shows a **positive participation of medium/high technology and knowledge-based enterprises**, above the regional average. This is a result of the choices made by the Administration in respect to the sectors to be admitted within Axis I projects, for the contribution to S3 specialisation areas 4 and 5. This is coherent with the Operational Programme objective and with the regional economy needs, pointed out in the context analysis.

At present, most of the projects and investments are concentrated within the S3 area 'Manufacturing and industry: metal-mechanic'. A high number of agri-food projects are active within line 1.1a.

The **universities of Trieste and Udine play a central role** in the financed consortia that request funding for projects within line 1.3b (R&D projects on the S3 areas Health and maritime technologies). These financed activities show good capacity to integrate micro-enterprises in advanced research projects.

Although the ERDF OP territorial strategies are still not fully operational, the projects and investments territorial distribution reveals a reasonable capacity to reach the more disadvantaged areas. This proves that the OP contributes to the regional territorial balance.

As at the end of 2016, the **ERDF OP performed well in respect to the result and implementation indicators of Axis I and III**, with percentage progress in line with the financial progress of the Programme. Considering that the OP was launched less than three years ago, the achievement of the reference efficacy framework's physical milestones related to these two Axes seems most likely.

Although no projects have started and no physical progress is reported in relation to Axes II and IV, a swift activation of the interventions is to be expected, especially in light of the procedures launched in the first months of 2017.

As of December 2016, the ESF OP participants are 22.902. The OP increased the number of participants in the last months of 2015, keeping a constant growing rate in the months that followed.

In addition to this, **all the main beneficiary groups have been reached** (young students, employed adults, unemployed). The low participation ratio of the idle workers could be due to the employment status registration procedure.

Within the above mentioned groups, the OP commits particular attention both to the population at risk of social exclusion (young immigrants, low educated people, etc.) and to the high educated human capital, which however seem to be over-represented.

The OP intervenes equitably in the four provincial areas, and employs a distribution of resources which reflects the population and target groups distribution on the regional territory.

Although the **success in formative terms of the participants is significant**, unemployed and low educate people are at risk of failure if compared to other typologies of participants.

Overall, there is a higher gender balance. However, women within disadvantaged groups (low educated, immigrants, idle workers) are less involved.

The **implementation indicators show a somewhat diversified progress**: Axis III indicators performance is excellent; Axis II indicators are most likely to achieve the target values. By contrast, Axis I progress is rather poor. Progress related to adult unemployed target is a potential criticality, which could be due to the excessively high value of the target. In general, the progress achieved by the other Axes is adequate to achieve the first effectiveness reference framework check.

The EAFRD RDP physical progress

As of December 2016, the EAFRD RDP shows a moderate physical progress, mostly due to activities related to the previous programming period.

The indicator measuring the percentage of the agricultural enterprises which invest in renovation and reorganisation with the support of the RDP (T4), is the only one that shows limited progress, equal to 0,06%, against a 4% target value.

Is the Programmes indicator system adequate?

ERDF: a complete system with minor improvements to be undertaken

The ERDF OP has an overall valid and relevant set of indicators. Almost all indicators are relevant in respect to the interventions objectives. The additional indicators selected at regional level, integrate the information collected through the Programme's indicators and offer complementary data, providing a thorough implementation and results picture.

In relation to the set of indicators system, two improvement actions are recommended: (i) to provide a more accurate definition of some indicators; (ii) to encourage better uniformity in measuring the additional indicators, particularly in relation to Axes I and II.

Monitoring and evaluation indicators related to the communication strategy are relevant. As above, some indicators should be better defined and broke down.

ESF: adequate indicators, with some degree of improvement

The ESF OP has an overall adequate set of indicators which is however too limited. Additional indicators concerning some Investment Priorities could be usefully provided, allowing to collect further information on the interventions.

Although the targets set at the start of the programming period are adequate, a number of them seem to be unrealistic or rather unfeasible. For instance, the target 'Unemployed, including the long-term unemployed' related to Axis I is currently set at 26.500.

Result indicators are sufficiently adequate, though in relation to some Specific Objectives, other indicators could have been more relevant. The calculation methodology of the result indicators is somewhat unclear.

Despite the weaknesses observed, the monitoring system is capable of providing useful information to the implementation and evaluation of the Programme. The recommended improvements could therefore be implemented without modifying the set of indicators.

EAFRD: the positive ex-ante assessment is confirmed

For what concerns the **indicator system of the EAFRD RDP, the ex-ante positive assessment is confirmed** in reference to the adequacy and relevance of the target values selected.

In respect to the results of the ex-ante evaluation, the RDP has adequately quantified indicators T11 and T13 (linked to Priority P4 and P5) concerning the forestry surface.

How have the horizontal environmental sustainability and gender principles been implemented?

Selection criteria are overall adequate in supporting the horizontal principles

The tender notices related to Axes I and II of the ERDF OP launched in 2016, show **adequate selection criteria**, particularly in respect to the projects environmental sustainability. The adopted criteria are coherent with those approved by the Steering Committee.

Within the tender notices, selection criteria scores which include horizontal principles of environmental sustainability and gender are clearly indicated.

In relation to the **environmental sustainability principle, a possible improvement** would be a selection criteria which considers whether enterprises are in possession of environmental certifications or product environmental certification, in coherence with the recommendations of the Strategic Environmental Evaluation.

As regards the gender principle, selection criteria are less clear, especially if compared to other regional experiences. Gender principle criteria are however extensively employed within the tender notices.

Which are the first results of the ERDF OP Action 1.1a?

Characteristics of financed enterprises

The 136 enterprises financed within line 1.1a are mostly high technology and knowledge-based. These SMEs are characterised by good human capital level and show a moderate propension to research and innovation. Micro-enterprises are mostly found within line 1.1a rather than other lines of Axis I.

The survey allowed to outline **a profile of the micro-enterprises**, showing the following characteristics: (i) most of them are recently founded, and several are innovative start-ups (30%); (ii) the covered sectors are advanced tertiary and high-knowledge rather than manufacturing; (iii) presence on international markets is rather low; (iv) growth dynamics are similar to those of other SMEs in the three years prior to the intervention; (v) most of them have recently carried out R&D activities, without having experience in outsourced innovative services.

Most request services by the enterprises

The most requested services are those related to business innovation and product and process innovation, followed by R&D project design and innovative organisation. Services such as intellectual property valorisation and energetic efficiency are less used, and no requests concerned services such as contractual research. The reasons for lower demand of some offered services are mainly two: (i) the lower amount of funding received by the projects, which ultimately discouraged the request of additional services; (ii) the existence of OP lines focused on research (the number of line 1.1a enterprises that participate to other OP lines is relevant, 20%).

In terms of requested services, micro-enterprises are not substantially different from SMEs, the only relevant difference being that micro-enterprises benefited to a greater extent of services integration within the same project as well as product/process and organisational innovation.

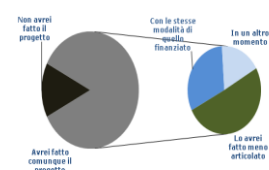
The catalogue proved to be a flexible instrument in regard to enterprises needs, allowing them to pursue diversified strategies. In case of future use, the catalogue could be usefully simplified in some of its parts (removing contractual research services) and integrated in other sections, for instance including internationalization services.

Relations between enterprises and service providers

The choice of the service provider is based on the previous knowledge of its 'reputation'. Research centres and universities are scarcely considered. According to the enterprises, **relations with service providers are not problematic**. The most appreciated providers added value is the contribution to specific competences.

Line 1.1a additionality

Fig: SMEs behaviour without ERDF



Line 1.1a propaedeutic to R&D projects in 25% of cases

73% of the enterprises declared that OP financing was supplementary, a statement in line with the findings of other national and international surveys covering the same typology of interventions. Additionality is higher for micro-enterprises, which are less active in the field of R&I and seldom recur to such instruments. This highlights that Action 1.1a has been more relevant for those enterprises that are more in need of this typology of support.

Enterprises expectations in terms of result are as follows: (i) a business organisational improvement; (ii) a better approach to R&D; (iii) an improved position on the international market. Less sought-after is the growth of relations with other actors.

For almost a quarter of the enterprises, **Action 1.1a is an instrument functional to the preparation of R&D projects** to be submitted for future funding or to be realised autonomously. This is coherent with one of the objectives of the tender, namely to stimulate a proactive approach of the enterprises. Within this group of enterprises, diversified strategies are undertaken: for instance in a number of cases the objective is to develop projects for future applications.

Are the Young Package selection criteria adequate?

Selection criteria are relevant and balanced for the EAFRD needs

The Young Package (YP) is a RDP implementation instrument which aims at **supporting young farmers**, reducing costs and improving productivity, competitiveness and innovation, favouring a generational turnover and a stable presence of young people in rural areas. In relation to the RDP, the YP aims at fulfilling Focus Areas 2B and 2A as well as F8 and F5 requirements (favouring the generational turnover throughout development of qualified human capital; incentivise sustainable practices, product and process innovative technologies which improve competitiveness).

The **adopted selection criteria refer to 4 macro-categories:** (i) cross-cutting criteria, (ii) positive spill-over effects, (iii) improvement of production quality, (iv) more focused support and economic performance.

As a consequence of the limited procedural progress, the analysis focuses on the EAFRD needs and the macro criteria. A high coherence of the first tender criterion with two requirements (F8 and F12) is observed. The second macro criterion (positive environmental spill-over) is coherent with 6 requirements (F5, F6, F7, F14, F15, F17). The third macro criterion (valorisation of quality production) is coherent with requirement F10, whereas the last criterion (economic and social sustainability of the enterprises) is coherent with 6 requirements (F5, F7, F9, F17, F19, F20). The implementation rules of the YP show a cross-cutting coherence of the tender with the need to improve the training of agricultural and forestal entrepreneurs for the acquisition of adequate competences (F1). The opinion on the score distribution among the various criteria is positive as well.

Is the RDP monitoring system adequate ?

A monitoring system still in development

The regional monitoring system is strictly connected to the Unitary Monitoring National System, which is still in phase of implementation. Regional monitoring has still not been defined in all its parts.

Part of the informations provided by AGEA as well as information included in the Friuli-Venezia Giulia Information System will feed the monitoring system (S.I.AGRI).

The monitoring procedure starts from the collection of information at MA and OP level, which are requested by the National System before being sent back through specific information queries.

As per Partnership Agreement, the publication and consultation of the monitoring data will be available through the OpenCoesione web portal.

At present, monitoring is not a criticality, however wider checks are needed

Given the preliminary progress level of the Programme, **as of today the lack of a regional monitoring system is still not a criticality.**

The Region is currently developing dedicated check lists concerning the phase preliminary to the funding requests. These checks should however be wider and include controls on the Programme as a whole as well as on single measures, in order to allow a thorough procedural, financial and physical monitoring.

How are the traineeships performing in administrative and organisational terms?

Allowance distribution: the only criticality within an effective management process

Extracurricular traineeships are overall effectively managed, and are appreciated both by trainees and hosting enterprises.

An average delay of two months is reported only in relation to the **distribution of the first monthly allowance phase**. This is due to the amount of time necessary to perform checks on the traineeship contracts, in accordance with a timeline agreed and in line with conventions stipulated by Inps.

The causes of payment related delays are structural and do not concern the Region or the managing bodies

The responsible bodies successfully tackled the structural shortcomings which caused the above mentioned delays, paying particular attention to informing trainees in case of issues and ensuring transparency. Following the first traineeships, the situation sensibly improved. However, according to a number of responsible bodies and ATI, the frequency of the complains reached an extent which could jeopardize the overall appreciation of the instrument.

A number of specific improvements could limit delay negative effects

Given the structural nature of the issue as well as the difficulties in cooperating with Inps, the responsible bodies ask to define a procedure which allows them to monitor the payments status and make reference to a single responsible within the Institute. This would allow to provide accurate information to trainees.

The overall length of the administrative process is an element of weakness, which has been signalled by the enterprises. This issue is mostly due to the burdensome regulation requirements rather than to inefficiency of the administration. Therefore, possibilities to improve are, at present, limited.

In order to reduce further the administrative procedures, the only viable solution seem to be **intervening on small delays that occur in the various phases**, recurring to technical-organisational solutions. For instance, an information system which allows enterprises to submit requests and interact with the Administration in case of missing documents.

Evaluation Recommendations

Analysis Field	Recommendations
ERDF/ESF/EAFRD - Cross-cutting elements	
Programmes Strategy	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - The evolution of the context did not change the reference framework of the regional issues. There are therefore no specific recommendations in this regard. - In relation to the ESF only, it is recommended to pay more attention to unemployed adults and low educated women.
Programming progress	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Programming progress is still rather limited. This applies in particular to the EAFRD and to a limited extent to the ERDF, in relation to which no projects are still completed. - Progress of the EAFRD RDP should improve in the next future, especially thanks to a prompt assessment of the proposals received. As of today, the allocated resources indicate that the N+3 expenditure target is potentially feasible. - In relation to the ESF OP, it is necessary to accelerate the PI-OS adult unemployment implementation.
Programmes Indicator System Adequacy	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Neither of the three Funds needs adjustments to the indicators system which require formal revisions of the Programmes. - The data collection methodology related to some ERDF Axis 4 result indicators should be verified. Data collection should be differentiated among lines in relation to the additional indicators. Although targets are well defined, it should be verified whether, in a more advanced state of the Programme, the target related to the indicator "enterprises with active projects aimed at introducing innovations" will be underestimated. Communication indicators could usefully be better defined. - In the next future, RDP targets adequacy shall be verified. Given the limited extent of the Programme progresses, this aspect is not analysed in this report. - The ESF OP indicators system is overall valid. Only marginal improvements can be implemented, such as the collection of additional information on some intervention priorities.
Specific themes	
EAFRD Monitoring System	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - The current lack of a regional information system that shall contribute to the Unitary National Monitoring System is still not a criticality. It is however recommended to adopt monitoring practices aimed at guaranteeing and reducing potential issues to the minimum.
ERDF Horizontal principles	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - The criterion 'enterprises in possession of process or product environmental certifications' within the sustainable development area should be used.
ERDF Action 1.1a	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Minor adjustments can be implemented to the catalogue of services, simplifying it (the contractual research services could be removed) and including internationalisation services. - R&D feasibility studies and project design services could be mandatory or incentivized for those enterprises that aim at using vouchers as an instrument to prearrange future studies on R&I.
Young Package EAFRD	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - At present no specific recommendations are necessary. The set of criteria seem adequate and coherent with the intervention objectives and with other needs identified in the programming phase. - The concrete functioning of the criteria during the selection phase shall be verified. Given the lack of final ranking lists, this is currently not feasible.
ESF extracurricular traineeships	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - A new procedure should support the responsible bodies and allow them to monitor the payments status in order to provide accurate information to trainees. - The adoption of a new information system open to beneficiaries would be a relevant time-saving measure, which would also decrease the number of missing procedures related to missing documents.