



Programme cofinancé par le Fonds Européen de Développement Regional

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# MED projects contribution to Italian regional planning

## The experimentation's final results

 Regione Emilia-Romagna

**ERVET**  
Emilia-Romagna Valorizzazione Economica Territorio



REGIONE PUGLIA



REGIONE CALABRIA



Regione Umbria



REGIONE LAZIO



REGIONE DEL VENETO



Regione Autonoma della Sardegna



REGIONE MARCHE

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The full version of the report – in Italian language only – is available for the download at the page:

[www.ervet.it/?page\\_id=13111](http://www.ervet.it/?page_id=13111)

## ***Executive Summary***

### ***MED projects contribution to regional planning: evaluation and results of 8 Italian Regions***

The Report presents the results of an experimental activity implemented in the framework of the 2007-2013 MED Programme, aiming at testing the evaluation methodology developed by ERVET – an in-house company of Emilia-Romagna Region - for capturing the contribution of European Territorial Cooperation - ETC – projects to regional planning.

In the first phase, the work plan has involved Emilia-Romagna, Lazio and Apulia Regions and in the second one Calabria, Marche, Sardinia, Umbria and Veneto Regions.

The key criteria identified by ERVET for the purposes of the evaluation are:

- **Know-how:** the ability of the project to strengthen skills and knowledge of local stakeholders
- **Innovation:** the ability of the project to make an innovative contribution to processes, products, and services
- **Direct or generated investment:** the ability of the project to stimulate and/or channel productive and/or structural investments
- **Capitalization:** the ability of developed practices (both those available from previous experiences and those generated during project implementation) to be built upon
- **Networking:** the ability of the project to initiate/strengthen network strategies at cross-border/transnational level
- **Integration/Mainstreaming:** the ability to integrate the project into the overall regional planning
- **Governance:** the project ability to create functional relationships at territorial level, involving the largest possible number of stakeholders

These criteria have been considered as crucial to grasp the ability of projects to influence local context – each project was evaluated by accumulating evidence showing that outputs and results were in line with some or all of them. Together with an identified set of indicators, they have been adopted by the Regions participating in the experimental evaluation. The aim was to focus the analysis of project results on territories, integrating, where needed, the original model with further indicators not yet considered.

The identified indicators have been then filled in with information gathered through direct interviews; the collected information has been used to develop evaluation tables, considered the main instrument to return the work results. Only in a second phase, the evaluation focused on the analysis of the contribution of MED projects to regional planning.

The activity, started at the end of 2012 and closed in spring 2014, has been based on the concept that not all the good performances achieved by a project as a whole, necessarily imply good impact results at local level and vice versa. The effects of projects should in fact be sought and investigated through the direct involvement of beneficiaries, the only ones able to offer a balanced assessment about what of the cooperation actions endures in the local context and about which is the contribution from the achieved results to the development of the territory and / or to the Regional Programmes and the MED goals. It is only through the analysis of results with the beneficiaries - therefore in a second phase - that the links with the objectives of regional planning and with those of the cooperation space were identified.

Overall, the evaluation investigated 36 MED projects that included partners belonging to the involved regional territories.

As a whole, the analysis clearly showed the added value of transnational cooperation in terms of growth of skills and social capital in the involved organizations, higher knowledge on MED priorities, networks

among actors and territories, innovation produced by means of tangible and intangible outputs. The survey also demonstrated the spontaneous coherence between themes and activities of the analyzed projects and the objectives of regional policy. However, the analysis also shows that these correspondences are not fully developed. This happened for two reasons. The first one is that some results remain constrained within the time and space limits of the project, without being integrated into regional and / or local planning or are just conceived for the benefit of a limited group of beneficiaries. The second reason is that only few projects are able to ensure real territorial resonance to the implemented actions, having built a structured dialogue with local decision makers and policy tools.

This weak link between the activities carried out by MED projects and ordinary planning appears to have several causes: first, the high turn-over among the individuals involved in project management — which prevented the accumulation of knowledge and the persistence of organizational practices; second, there was poor or ineffective coordination among regional structures with different sector of expertise - affecting all the project - or between local actors and political level. Another cause of the weakness of this link was the frequent less than efficient composition of the partnerships. At the Community level, they were solely valued on the basis of their transnational added value, rather than on the balanced contribution and ability of each partner to endorse outputs and results at territorial level. In addition, the scheduled mechanisms for integration of ETC project results into mainstream Programmes are still poorly efficient. In all cases, projects seem to have poor visibility in ordinary planning, where they are often perceived as sole opportunities for exchange and dissemination of good practices, undermining the contribution they can offer to the development of effective policies and innovative strategies.

The research, on the contrary, has shown that - especially when an institutional body is involved as a partner - some interventions are able to support and complement regional / local planning. This confirms that the MED Programme plays a concrete role in regional cohesion policy and in the development of a strategy for the Mediterranean—and that this role can be furthered.

Another crucial element shown by the work is related to the mechanisms of governance of the MED Programme. It is envisaged that the coordination mechanisms between MED (or ETC) project partners and the institutional actors involved in the definition and implementation of sector strategies should be strengthened. Coordination should be also reinforced, via participatory planning processes (place-based approach), between MED (or ETC) project partners and the institutional, economic and social partnership.

From the methodological point of view, the comparison across Regions has allowed to contribute to the definition of the system of output and result indicators of the new Programme MED2014 +.

Assumed that "outputs are the direct products of Programmes and are intended to contribute to results,"<sup>1</sup> a proposal for "integrated" output indicators was formulated. This proposal was justified by the idea that the direct products of the MED Programme may be described not just as *tools and services*, but as *integrated tools and services in public planning* and / or as *tools and services that affect the collective behavior in a defined field*.

As for the suggested new Outcome/Result indicators, they have to grasp the changes that occur in Knowledge, Integration, Governance, when the specific objective clearly focuses on the cognitive and organizational dimension of change.

In the final phase of the activity, the need to better specify the scope of each criterion and to measure the graduation of the intensity of results has emerged.

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<sup>1</sup>EC DG Regio: The programming Period 2014-2020: Guidance Document on Monitoring and Evaluation – European Regional Development Fund and Cohesion Fund, January 2014.

Therefore, the "Capitalization" criterion has been split between "Capitalization" - in a more restricted sense, referring only to the capacity of the project to build on past experiences - and "Generativity" – referring, instead, to the ability of the project to generate new project planning, building on the results already achieved. Similarly, the criterion "Governance" has been split into "Governance" in a strict sense, referring to the project ability to generate stable forms of local coordination between the involved actors, and "Awareness", referring, instead, to the ability of the project to create awareness and sensitivity to the objective focusing by the project, by possibly activating new organizations which already deal with the project issues and goals.

The scale of assessment adopted three levels of intensity of results:

- Low or Very poor
- Weak or Moderate
- Relevant or Significant

Criterion by criterion, descriptors have been used for each degree, in order to explain empirically detectable situation and to guide the evaluator in the formulation of judgment.

At Programme level, the suggestions raised up from the evaluation refer to the following aspects of programming:

- **Focus on results;** improve and increase comparisons between assessment tools used at local and at Programme level, in order to foster a better understanding of the effects of projects at local and Programme level and enhance cross-fertilization mechanisms.
- **Co-ordination and governance of the Programme;** schedule a step by step evaluation of completed projects, aiming at verifying the contribution of MED projects to regional planning. This process should be adopted as a Programme activity, in order to make the evaluation of MED projects contribution to regional policies and to territory development systemic and to promote the integration of results into local contexts as a real added value.
- **Involvement and participation of stakeholders;** encourage greater involvement of stakeholders, through the definition and structuring of dialogue fora with socio-economic partners and also of cross-cutting thematic analysis.

The evaluation shows that numerous suggestions can be drawn on regional, national and Programme planning through the identification and development of specific analytical instruments capable of capturing the real added value of MED projects. The above considerations draw the attention to the strategic vocation of Programmes and to the will of Institutions to use evaluation findings, in order to put the evidence collected to value and to make Structural Fund resources converge towards growth and cohesion goals, improving thereby the performance of the use of funds.



«Keep on searching to keep understanding»  
Giorgio Ceriani Segrebondi