



REGIÓN DE MURCIA

*Executive summary of the
Evaluation report of the 2014-
2020 ESF Operational
Programme of the Region of
Murcia.*

2014-2016 Period



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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

This evaluation report corresponds to the **first assessment** of the 2014-2020 ESF OP of the Region of Murcia, according to what established in the Specific Evaluation plan of the abovementioned Programme for the current programming period.

This evaluative exercise responds to what set out by the art. 54-57, 111 and 114 of the Regulation N°1303/2013 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 17 December 2013, repealing Council Regulation (EC) No 1083/2006 laying down general provisions, establishing that during the programming period, the Management Authority has to ensure the realization of evaluations in order to estimate the programme efficacy, efficiency and impact, as well as to improve the quality of the design and implementation of the programme, and to determine its effects regarding the aims of the European strategy for a smart, sustainable and inclusive growth.

The scope to whom this evaluative exercise seeks to address starts from the logic of evaluating if the Programme is being implemented in line with what foreseen, if actions are being addressed to target groups and lastly, if the results are aligned with what expected.

Regarding the methodology, this evaluation corresponds to an **intermediate evaluation**, therefore it corresponds to the period included from the begin of the Operational Programme until the 31st December 2016, therefore the evaluation will adopt a formative and comprehensive approach which will let prosecute the Programme taking into account key aspects of the context in which it is implemented, its structure, conception or design, generated processes and achieved results regarding what foreseen at the moment of this evaluation.

The evaluation contemplates the **temporal field** established in the Evaluation Fiche, corresponding to the period from 2014 to 2016 (both inclusive).

In relation to the **geographical field**, it is relevant to specify that it corresponds to the totality of the Region of Murcia, whose territory has impact in the ESF Operational Programme.

The methodology of this evaluation combines several information tools:

- 1- Documentary sources about the legal, regulatory and programmatic framework.
- 2- Tools for collecting information: in-depth interviews (face-to-face and online).

The main **conclusions** achieved in this evaluation report are, in general terms, the following:

PROGRAMME STRATEGY AND LOGIC OF INTERVENTION:

➤ In relation to the Programme strategy, findings have been tackled starting from 3 different criteria:

- *Complementarity between the OP and strategy:*

The structure of the programme shows an appropriate complementarity between the OP and the national strategy, which has been addressed by the Multi-regional Programmes and the European policy. As well, the ESF Operational Programme of the Region of Murcia presents a regional itemization, tackling existing challenges and priorities.

- *Analysis of the internal coherence:*

The OP shows high internal coherence because of its strength and consistence. The structure of the proposed Axes of Intervention and the kinds of actions foreseen in each Investment Priority contribute to the achievement of the Specific Objectives.

○ *Analysis of the external coherence:*

There is a wide external coherence of the OP, as it is noted that several initiatives at regional, national and European level strengthen coherence.

➤ In relation to the logic of intervention of the Programme:

In the analysis of the logic of intervention of the ESF OP of the Region of Murcia it is highlighted that there is an appropriate alignment between the logic of intervention of each axis and the foreseen strategy, expected results and changes. In this sense, it concludes there is a positive connection of the challenges and identified needs with the defined strategy. On the other hand, concerning the social and economic indicators that have largely influenced the justification of the Programme strategy, it concludes that although there is an improvement in the evolution of the most influent indicators, the need of developing a public policy on the four priority axes underlined in the Programme is underlined. The OP **represents a useful and effective tool** for applying public policies.

EVOLUTION OF THE OPERATIONAL PROGRAMME

EFFICACY OF THE RESULT AND PRODUCTIVITY INDICATORS

The evolution of the Programme regarding the result indicators is negative, as the results are still quite far of the forecasts carried out on this matter. However, the progress of these indicators is mainly linked to the one of the productivity indicators, which generally count with a positive result.

In this sense, after analysed the effectiveness of the results linked to the productivity indicators, it has been identified a range of elements and difficulties that have been common in the evaluation and have determined the analysis:

- During the eligibility period of the OP, the Autonomous Community has experienced a strong internal restructuration process (changes at institutional level or inner in the organisms that execute actions). Although it is a standard element in the administration, it led to a process of adaptation and learning. This restructuration has been also made in several municipalities of the region, as result of the local and regional elections of 2015, which required a strong process of adaptation and learning.
- Delay in approving the OP of the Region of Murcia¹ and designing the IO of the Programme², which could limit the policy-making on occasion.
- The delay in approving the OP also conditioned other elements such as: definition and approval of the selection criteria of the operations, definition of the simplified costs, and vagueness on the method to carry out the administrative verification as well as delay in publishing the Ministerial Order on eligible expenditures for ESF, published in December 2016.
- The IT application foreseen for the 2014-2020 programming period by the Managing Authority was not active at time of this evaluation, which has hampered an appropriate functioning of the regional programmes.

¹ Approval on the 17th August 2015

² The appointment of the IO of the DG Budget and European Funds was carried out on the 19th June 2016.

- According to this, the verification of participants' data, gathered in the Excel tables generated in the absence of the IT application brought high load management for all actors involved. For this purpose, it is relevant to make the new IT application available as soon as possible in order to carry out automated queries.
- In other terms, even if there is no a big delay, an adaptation process have been developed in order to present in a separate way the regulatory bases for the calls. This issue supposed a differentiated functioning model which could influence also on the delay of the OP.

However, despite these exogenous elements which influenced on the functioning on time, the operations of the Programme have been internally launched, and progress has been made both concerning the Intermediate Organism which developed its own IT application and the most relevant internal process (selection of operations, claim for reimbursement, verifications, fraud).

More in concrete, for each axis it is relevant underlining the following:

- *Priority Axis 1. TO 8*

In this priority axis, disparities are observed in the level of efficacy concerning the several IPs framed in this Thematic Objective. Concerning the 8.1 and 8.5 Investment Priorities, the result is very positive with a high degree of effectiveness, meanwhile the 8.3 and 8.4 Investment Priorities, the result shows a low degree of effectiveness. In general terms, there are no risks of breach of the foreseen milestones in the OP.

- *Priority Axis 2. TO 9*

Concerning the Thematic Objective 9, in the framework of this evaluation it can be only quantified the indicator related to 9.1 IP, corresponding to *Participants in situation or risk of social exclusion*, where the degree of effectiveness is plenty aligned with the forecasts made.

The actions that contributed to this indicator are those of active inclusion, framing operations of different kind led by several managing organisms according to the target groups to those have been addressed.

- *Priority Axis 3. TO 10*

- In the framework of the 10.1 Investment Priority:
 - *Improvement Programmes in Centres (PAMCE)*: it is required to check the convenience of the milestones established for this action, whose target value for 2023 is the improvement in 202 centres.
 - Concerning the *Programme of Prevention, Monitoring and Reduction of School Drop-out; Programme of Academic and Social integration* and *Programme of Attention to Students with Mental Health Problems* are many the actors (services) involved in the management which conditioned its effective and agile management, due to the need of a further coordination of actors. These actions had not at their disposal an established management process until January 2017, which supposed a limited factor so far, if considering that it is an organism of recent incorporation in the management of the ESF operations.
- For the 10.3 Investment Priority, the evolution is aligned with the foreseen objectives.

- Concerning the indicators of the 10.4 Investment Priority, the degree of effectiveness is appropriate. However, deviations are detected in relation with the *Trainees contracts of Higher Vocational Training* action, in which case, the non-contribution to the quantification of the indicator has been justified as the managing organism has no experience in the management of the European Funds. On the other hand, it is a totally new action, and therefore there are no references of previous similar actions. This produced a lack of systematization as well as several problems for the implementation.
 - *Priority Axis 6*: It has not been possible making value judgments on this axis, due to the lack of implementation.

EFFICACY OF THE PERFORMANCE FRAMEWORK

The productivity and financing indicators of the performance framework show a full alignment regarding the forecasts, with the exception of the Priority Axis 6, as there are no implementing values.

EFFICIENCY

The results presented do not let make concluding assessments on this aspect, as it is a very rough analysis and on which a future depth analysis will be requested, observing if there are deviations regarding the identified unit costs.

HORIZONTAL PRINCIPLES

- Concerning the principle of partnership and multi-level governance, the OP proceeded according to the requirements and conditions established in the Regulation (EU) N° 1303/2013 and in the European Code of Conduct on Partnership, as well as the identification and selection of those agents considered as relevant and pertinent according to their competences, functions and representativeness at regional level, regarding the action fields and objectives of the Programme. In this way, the principle has been made operational with the organization of several meetings and events.
- The principle of equal opportunities between men and women and non-discrimination has been applied in a transversal way all over the OP, according to the article 8 of the Regulation (EUU) N° 1304/2013. As well, the programme foresees specific actions in this field in order to contribute the elimination of inequalities.
- Lastly, concerning the principle of sustainable development, even if it counts with a moderated influence due to the idiosyncrasy of the European Fund, an effort has been made in order to create synergies in the OP between the sustainable development in the employment, training and education.

OTHER FIELDS OF THE ASSESSMENT

- The contribution to the mitigation of climate change is quite limited as the nature of this Fund has not a direct impact on this element. Being practically inexistent, the allocation percentage in the Axes 2 and 3, and for the Axis 1, represents around 5% of the total budget.
- Regarding the Transnational Cooperation, if there is no specific field foreseen, as indicated in the OP, the list proposed by the Commission will be addressed, according to the art. 10.3, in collaboration with the pertinent agents and the Managing Authority, in order to select those themes that can be of interest. This dimension will be taken into account by all agents of this programme in order to propose throughout the development of the programme those topics that can be useful and interesting in the region.

- The social innovation occupies a strategic position in the ESF OP of the Region; however at time of this assessment conclusions cannot be made regarding the quantification of its associated indicators that measure the degree of evolution.

On the other hand, a set of **recommendations** has been made as result of the achieved conclusions.

RECOMMENDATION 1.

In order to continue with the assessment of the strategy and the logic of intervention, for the evaluative exercise foreseen for the next period, it is necessary to check those values linked to the main social and economic indicators that justify both dimensions, and to assess the convenience of the strategy according to the evolution made.

RECOMMENDATION 2.

As result of the analysis of the degree of effectiveness of the OP, the following recommendations are considered as appropriate:

- Boosting the implementation of those actions whose development is well below of the forecasts made.
- The Thematic Objective 8 presents in general terms an evolution aligned with the forecasts, except for those indicators linked to the 8.3 and 8.4 Investment Priorities which have a low degree of effectiveness. In a global way, it seems there is no risk of breach of those challenges established in this TO.
- Regarding the TO 9, and more in concrete the 9.1 Investment Priority, and taking into account the good results achieved in this intervention field, it would be appropriate to assess the possibility of a wider budget distribution letting give a wider coverage to the actions implemented so far, as they are operations of special sensibility with an adequate absorption of the foreseen funds.
- Concerning the TO 10, and more in particular *Trainees contracts of Higher Vocational Training* action, it is important to pay attention on the evolution of this action in order to assess its alignment with the established objectives.
- Lastly, it has been challenged to articulate the means to initiate the implementation of the Priority Axis 6, for its opportunity in the ESF framework and its transcendence regarding the performance framework to which it is subjected.

RECOMMENDATION 3.

Despite the positive results concerning the effectiveness of the productivity and financing indicators associated to the performance framework, it is recommended to continue in this way in order to avoid deviations and to achieve the milestones established in the OP.

This recommendation is not applicable to the Priority Axis 6, even if it is extremely important to boost the implementation of its actions, and therefore avoiding the risk of breach of forecasts.

RECOMMENDATION 4.

In the interest of continuing with the application of horizontal principles, it is recommended to continue with the development of those actions and activities that contribute in a concrete way to the fulfilment of those agreements and regulations.

RECOMMENDATION 5.

Following the recommendation 1, it is extremely important to articulate the necessary means and to boost from the corresponding organisms the development of the Priority Axis related to the social innovation