



**INDEPENDENT EVALUATION SERVICE OF THE  
REGIONAL RURAL DEVELOPMENT PROGRAMME FOR  
THE PERIOD 2014-2020 OF THE LIGURIA REGION**

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**ANNUAL EVALUATION REPORT 2022**

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## LIST OF ACRONYMS

MA: Managing Authority

AT: Technical Assistance

EAFRD: European Agricultural Fund for Rural Development

FA: Focus Area

LAG: Local Action Group

OG: Operating Groups

LEADER: Liaison Entre Actions de Développement de l'Économie Rurale

CAP: Common Agricultural Policy

PF: Performance Framework

RD- Priorities: Rural Development Priorities

RDP: Rural Development Programme

CMEF: Common Monitoring and Evaluation Framework

CEQ: Common Evaluation Question

AIR: Annual Implementation Report

RoW: Measure Manager

AER: Annual Evaluation Report

LDS: Local Development Strategy

SM: Sub Measure

SWOT: Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities, Threats

EU: European Union

VA: Value Added

IE: Independent Evaluator

EXPEv: Ex Post Evaluation

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## Foreword

This Annual Evaluation Report (hereinafter RVA), therefore concerning the state of implementation of the RDP 2014-2022 of the Liguria Region as at 31 December 2021, has been structured in line with what was agreed upon during the coordination meetings with the Regional Administration.

The document is structured as follows:

- ▶ **Description of activities carried out in the year 2021**, implementing the RDP Evaluation Plan (see Chapter 9);
- ▶ **Description of ongoing activities**;
- ▶ **Summary of methodological support activities to LAGs on the self-assessment of Local Development Strategies**;
- ▶ **Definition of the methodological approach for the ex-post evaluation of synergies and complementarities between the Programme measures**.

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## 1 Description of the evaluation activities carried out in the previous year (2021), recommendations emerged and follow up

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### 1.1 List of evaluations carried out in 2021, summary of completed evaluations and dissemination of evaluation results

In the framework of the evaluation service of the RDP Liguria 2014-2022, the activity of the Independent Evaluator was finalised in 2021, with the production of the following documents

- ▶ The **Survey Plan** (January 2021);
- ▶ The **Annual Evaluation Report 2021** (April 2021);
- ▶ The **Thematic Report - The effectiveness of the selection criteria for Sub-measure 4.1 geared towards reducing environmental impacts and introducing product and process innovations** (final delivery March 2022);
- ▶ The **Thematic Report 2021 - The Effectiveness of the Communication Strategy of the RDP 2014 - 2022 Liguria Region** (final delivery March 2022);

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### 1.2 Description of the follow-up of the evaluation results.

In order to make the evaluation activity useful to the decision-making process, the independent evaluator produced a series of recommendations based on the interpretation and judgement of the evidence resulting from the analyses carried out.

The recommendations made by the independent evaluator can be broadly grouped into three groups that contain common elements:

- General recommendations on the need to speed up the implementation of the measures, accepted by the Liguria Region.
- More specific recommendations on the need to increase the incidence of the score value linked to the introduction of product and process innovations and on the need to define a catalogue of interventions considered innovative on the basis of the planning priorities and the innovation needs of individual production sectors.
- More specific recommendations regarding actions to be taken to further improve communication tools, such as: improving the organisation of the contents of the Agriligurianet.it web page, making the various thematic areas more recognisable; improving the usability of the site from a device; verifying the opportunity to strengthen interaction and the exchange of opinions on social networks; verifying the possibility of expanding and giving visibility to the contents of the YouTube channel.

## 2 Description of ongoing evaluation activities

- ▶ **Update of the Appraisal Design:** Following the extension and renewed requirements of rural development programming, the related contract extension and the consequent reformulation of the deliverables under Article 4 - points 8, 9 and 10 of the Terms of Reference and the related delivery deadlines, the Appraisal Design was updated (delivered in January 2022). The amendment focuses in particular on the chapter on '*Planning and Timing of Activities*'.
- ▶ **Annual Evaluation Report 2022** on the state of implementation of the RDP 2014-2022 of the Liguria Region as at 31 December 2021. The document provides a summary of the update of the LAGs' OSH self-assessment support activities (this analysis will also be returned in a separate document from the RAV 2022). (*See bullet point number 4*).
- ▶ **Thematic Evaluations 2022:**
  - **Thematic Report "Integration of EIS Funds and Pillar I"** which focuses on the evaluation of European Structural and Investment Funds (EIS) support and how this has contributed to the achievement of the objectives of each priority. (*Expected delivery: june 2022*).
  - **Thematic Report 2022** focused on the analysis of procedural issues in order to understand the problems related to the lack of implementation capacity of some RDP beneficiaries (public and private). (*Expected delivery: september 2022*).
  - **Updating of the Catalogue of Good Practices 2022:** which returns the outcomes of the dialogue with various actors and makes use of multiple survey tools, which in the first instance aim to identify interventions that can be catalogued as good practices. (*Expected delivery: by the end of 2022*).
- ▶ Methodological support to **Leader self-assessment:** the activity of methodological support to the self-assessment of Local Development Strategies is reported in a separate document. The activity addressed to LAGs was started in 2019 and aimed at defining and implementing a common self-assessment methodology (and tools for the purpose), so that LAGs could periodically self-administer a questionnaire, with the support of the Independent Evaluator.
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### 3 Summary of Methodological Support Activities for the Self-Assessment of Local Development Strategies

Evaluation is a complex discipline with equally challenging objectives. The analysis of complex phenomena, even on a small scale as may be the activity of a LAG in an area involving a multiplicity of other subjects, requires an evaluative maturity that it is unfair to demand of LAGs. Moreover, considering the number of activities that staff have to carry out to fulfil all administrative and other commitments, the resources to devote to self-assessment are limited. To try to comply with this, the IE, with the support of the Region, undertook to create a stimulus for the construction of a simplified methodology that could guide the LAGs along this path. The aim has been to maintain a methodological structure that respects the principles of evaluation with the awareness of not wanting to place an excessive burden on the resources made available by the LAGs.

**The process of supporting the Ligurian LAGs' self-assessment has reached an advanced stage. After identifying in a participatory manner the issues to be addressed and sharing the methodology to be used, the LAGs embarked on their first attempt at self-assessment.** To support the LAGs, the IA provided a record of the various collective meetings held since 2019 and a kind of instruction booklet for filling in the forms.

**Future activities will be geared towards further refining the methodology to meet the needs of LAGs.** The quality of evaluation responses and adherence to the basic principles that have been established for self-assessment are two key elements in ensuring that this activity is effective. The IE undertakes to systematise the results delivered by the LAGs from year to year with a view to highlighting any critical issues and good practices. Exchanges between the IE and the LAGs will continue with a view to progressive improvement that will lead the LAG to acquire the necessary confidence to develop this work independently and profitably.

#### 4 Methodological approach for ex-post evaluation of synergies and complementarities between Programme measures

During the drafting of the RAV 2021, the IA, at the instigation of the Liguria Region, had carried out an initial reflection on the synergies between measures that, although programmed in certain Focus Areas (FAs), can contribute to strengthening the achievement of needs falling under other specific objectives. In that case, the integration of MS 4.1 for the modernisation of agricultural holdings (FA 2A) and MS 6.1 (FA 2B) for the setting up of young farmers had been analysed in order **to assess the synergies triggered between the actions aimed at supporting the generational change in the agricultural sector with respect to the opportunities promoted by the Programme for the modernisation of holdings in favour of the newly settled young farmers themselves.**

Despite the fact that the two sub-measures analysed were programmed in different FAs, FA 2A and 2B respectively, and that there was no activation of a real predefined integrated planning, the IA was able to ascertain the role played by some implementation choices made by the MA and, in particular, **the simultaneous activation of the calls for tenders for the two sub-measures and the setting of bonus criteria both for the interventions eligible for financing under sub-measure M.4.1 as well as for the support to the first establishment** (about 80% of the young beneficiaries of the MS 6.1 also carried out business investments).

Another sub-measure activated under M6 "Business start-up aid for young farmers", i.e. MS **6.4 "Investment in the creation and development of non-agricultural activities"** activated from 2017 and programmed in FA 2A, should be considered in this framework. So to complete the answer to the evaluation question **"How did the material interventions of TI 4.1 (programmed directly in FA 2A) influence/supplement the first establishment financed with TI 6.1 (FA 2B)?"** - already partially satisfied with the analysis conducted last year - the contribution of MS 6.4 by newly settled young people was considered where, of course, agricultural activity remains primary.

**The approach** pursued by the IA was therefore of a **mixed type**: from the analysis of the main programming documents connected to the various RT (measure cards and par 11.3 of the RDP) to those of the implementation type, starting from the first merit rankings up to the concessions at 31/12/2021. This made it possible not so much to verify the indirect effects of the RT on the Programme's objectives (Table 11.3 of the RDP), but rather to bring to light the connection grafted between the various RT and to build a deeper knowledge of the interactions that took place during the Programme's implementation.

**The various interactions were quantified** by reporting the level of adherence to several MS by the young beneficiaries (who are presented below as "multimeasure" beneficiaries), while a further qualitative analysis made it possible to delineate in greater depth the profile of the beneficiaries and the types of interventions activated. This made it possible to identify those areas in which potential synergies or complementarities of evaluative interest actually occurred.

In addition, as carried out for the drafting of the RAV 2021, the attainment of the individual Programme objectives was verified with the analysis of the **level of achievement of** the ex-

ante set values for the **result indicators** included in the FAs and **the target indicators** that make up the Performance Framework.

The evaluation of the *performance* achieved by the sub-measures through this detailed analysis of the procedural and expenditure progress data as at 2021, made it possible to verify the effectiveness of the mix of policy choices (resources - outputs - results) made by the Administration, demonstrating the relevance of the selected interventions to the achievement of a given result.

In summary, the "multimeasure" beneficiaries who have activated two or more sub-measures between MS 4.1, 6.1 and 6.4 represent 37.4% of the total beneficiaries of the three MS as at 31/12/2021. Within this group, the number of beneficiaries that have jointly activated MS 4.1 and 6.1 is significant - 326 in total, about 60% of new settlers, following the positive trend already noted in the RAV 2021, of young new settlers who make business investments. The 6.4 is positively integrated (29 projects) with MS 4.1 (about 8 % of the multimeasure beneficiaries).

It is likely that the link between FA 2A and 2B was made possible by the simultaneous opening of the calls and the selection criteria rewarding the age of the beneficiaries (4.1 and 6.4) and the implementation of other interventions (MS 4.1). Finally, there are few (7 in total as at 31/12/21) multimeasure beneficiaries of MS 4.1 + 6.1 + 6.4 and no beneficiaries of MS 6.1 + 6.4.

In general, therefore, at the Programme level, MS 4.1 and 6.1 are confirmed as the "drivers" of expenditure for their respective FAs, contributing positively to the overall progress of Priority 2: payments to "multimeasure" beneficiaries represent a substantial share in relation to the total. It is therefore plausible to assume that the interventions involving several MS have a greater spending speed due to the greater resources invested (not only economic but also "entrepreneurial") by the beneficiaries.

In the face of these conclusions, the IE suggested that the planner take into account the elements that play to the advantage of the speed of expenditure and the opportunities to propose and enable integrated design between different measures.