



**INDEPENDENT EVALUATION SERVICE OF THE REGIONAL
RURAL DEVELOPMENT PROGRAM FOR THE PERIOD
2014-2022 OF THE REGION OF LIGURIA**

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SUMMARY – ANNUAL EVALUATION REPORT 2023

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Foreword

This Annual Evaluation Report (hereafter RVA) relates to the state of implementation of the RDP 2014-2022 of the Liguria Region as of December 31, 2022, and has been structured in accordance with the terms of the Tender Specifications and with specific attention to the cognitive needs that emerged from the coordination meetings with the regional administration.

The document is organized as follows:

- ▶ **Description of evaluation activities carried out in the year 2022** in implementation of the RDP Evaluation Plan (see Ch. 9), as a contribution to the drafting of Chapter 2 of the Annual Implementation Report (AAR) for the year 2023;
- ▶ **Summary of methodological support activities to LAGs on self-assessment** and description of the main results that emerged from the implementation of the survey instruments.

Only the results that emerged from the methodological support course on self-evaluation are reported in the following summary document.

1. Summary of methodological support activities for the Self-Assessment of Local Development Strategies.

Ligurian LAGs self-evaluation process 2014-2022

The process of supporting the self-evaluation of Ligurian LAGs 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 the self-assessment effort. To support the LAGs, the IA provided a record of the various meetings and a *booklet of instructions* for filling out the forms. In the RAV 2022, the Evaluator presented the results of the second attempt carried out by the LAGs while also setting out the next steps and adjustments to be made to improve the VI's process of supporting the LAGs' self-assessment. The steps and events held so far are summarized below.

Events report

The "objects" to be evaluated in the self-assessment process

On February 26, 2019, an evaluation session aimed at identifying the objects of self-evaluation together was held at the Liguria Region headquarters. The course involved the use of different techniques summarized below:

A. Evaluative Brainstorming,

B. Scale of Obligatory Priorities; the prioritization of identified items with respect to two dimensions: external effectiveness (what ensures greater impact of OSH on territories), internal efficiency (what ensures greater fluidity of the OSH implementation process).

Sharing the self-assessment methodology

A meeting aimed at enriching the process of co-construction of OSH self-assessment activities by Ligurian LAGs was held on November 5, 2020. The meeting, which took place in a "remote" mode due to the continuing restrictions due to the COVID-19 pandemic, aimed to build on the results obtained and finalize the method for LAGs to start the self-assessment activities.

LAGs' turn

With the 2020 event concluded, the IA gathered input from the LAGs on changes to be made to the forms and shared them again for the first self-administration of the self-assessment forms. Along with the forms, the IA delivered a methodological support document so as to provide the LAGs with as much guidance as possible to carry out work that is comprehensive but most importantly useful.

The third meeting: return of results and next steps

Considering that the methodology proposed by the IA is an experimental model defined through the participation and consultation of all LAGs in two collegial events, it is important to check whether it was adequate with respect to both the objectives and the knowledge and skills of those who implemented it. In the guidelines that accompanied the self-assessment forms, the IA explicitly clarified that each LAG could make its own choices and decide to gloss over some issues and focus on others, perhaps developing a more comprehensive analysis of

the dynamics that most influenced the implementation of the OSH. Nevertheless, the LAGs preferred to assess all the items identified in the previous meetings.

In the event held on 04/19/2022, an attempt was made to highlight the importance of using all the elements in the self-assessment forms to argue and support one's judgments. The logical structure of the constructed methodology may seem superfluous, but it is instead the basis for the clarity and transparency of the judgment made. The completeness of an evaluative response comes primarily from the intermediate steps between question and judgment. The suggestions put forward by the LAGs have not always been reciprocated and they have often failed to follow the proposed and shared method-logical thread. This does not mean that the judgments are unfounded or cannot be taken into consideration however, it was noted that the LAG often tended to formulate responses in an informal and discursive manner.

Cues for improving the result of self-assessment

To improve the quality of evaluative responses, it is suggested that only a few themes be selected in order to further deepen the analysis and make it clear and understandable. In this case it is desirable to focus on data collection and involvement of the local area.. For the selection of themes one can focus on specific aspects (e.g., of the set strategy/goals) or use what emerged in the various meetings with the IA.

The following is a check **list** to verify the correct completion of the forms that make up the self-assessment questionnaire.

- Have I filled in all the fields?
- Are the answers to the criteria and/or assertions to be tested comprehensive and create a solid basis to support my judgment?
- Have I met the definition and goal of each element of the board?
- Is the articulated judgment consistent with the summary judgment and responses to the criteria to be tested?
- Is the form, in the complexity of its elements, clear, understandable, and complete?

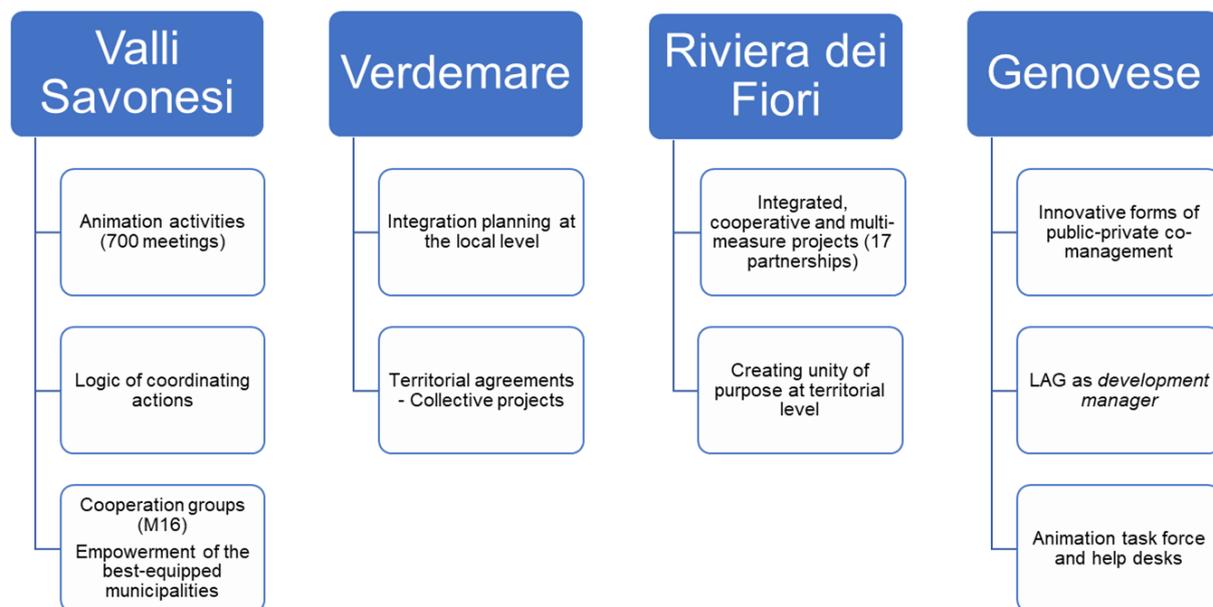
The activities of 2023

Self-assessment activities continue throughout the programming so that certain topics of particular interest can be checked periodically. Given the limitations encountered in the self-administration of the forms in 2021 and 2022 for this year, the IA chose to target, in agreement with the MA, the self-assessment on the theme of added value. This choice was made for a twofold reason; on the one hand, the time may begin to be considered ripe to address the topic of added value, and on the other hand, the opportunity was taken to stimulate the LAGs in identifying a project that can be considered representative of their work. In the experience of previous years, LAGs often failed to report concrete experiences and examples to argue the answers to the self-assessment questions, and this additional step required for the value-added sheet is precisely intended to remedy this limitation.

The results of the 2023 self-assessment activities.

Regarding the feedback from the Ligurian LAGs, only one did not follow up on the self-assessment activities and therefore the analysis of the results will focus on 4 LAGs. It is important to clarify that the information reported and judgments made are based on the insights provided by the LAGs, which will eventually have to be validated at a later stage through a comparison with the beneficiaries themselves.

The first theme addressed in the sheet aims to understand, in a general way, the ways in which the LAG promotes/has promoted added value in the target area. The answers are summarized in the diagram below.



Systematization of beneficiaries and networking were highlighted by all LAGs as priorities both at the planning stage and as a result of strategy implementation. The aggregation of interests and initiatives fully captures the meaning of the LEADER added value that aims on the one hand to increase social capital and on the other hand to enhance results and impacts. The LAG's ability to transfer to beneficiaries the knowledge that they are operating within a broader and more coordinated strategy that includes different types of actors should be considered an important first step in creating added value.

LAGs tried to pursue this approach through the tools they had at their disposal. There were those who stimulated networking through the modification of eligibility criteria, those who rewarded integrated planning with specific selection criteria, those who promoted cooperation and partnerships as the first step in implementing the actual project, and those who decided to focus on animation to spread a collaborative spirit at the territorial level. Whatever approach was taken by each LAG, these seem to be rather satisfied with their work at the moment and any feedback should be verified later through consultations of the territory.

With a view to the start of the next programming period, the IA sought to stimulate the LAGs what, if any, elements should be enhanced and strengthened. The responses provided by each LAG can be noted below. The elements to be reported are mainly two, on the one hand the LAGs highlight the positive effect of their work dictated both by a physical proximity and by a

special attention with respect to the territory of reference, while on the other hand they underline the difficulties encountered at the bureaucratic/administrative level. For the latter issue, the LAGs hope for an easing in the next programming period, including through more agile application systems and quicker preliminary investigations. As already reported, the LAGs seem to claim their role at the local level, and for this reason they aim, in the next programming period, to strengthen the level of involvement of the territory and to increase, in the manner allowed at the central level, the difference between LEADER activities and those of regional calls.

Valli Savonesi

Public-private cooperation and synergy are elements to be further enhanced and strengthened. The integrated project approach, procedural management and excessive bureaucratization, however, should be revised for faster and more effective project implementation. Better distinguishability of LEADER activities from those developed by the (former) RDP. The LAG partner should turn to this resource to develop initiatives that it could not develop by joining the regional programming calls.

Verdemare

There is no denying the close relationship that the LAG has built with the territory, which enables it to anticipate and better respond to the needs of the economic fabric, directing the resources available to the SSL toward projects commensurate with local specificities, including and not only in terms of economic size. This is undoubtedly the LAG's winning feature.

Riviera dei fiori

A possible corrective action to this approach could be the more widespread adoption of systems/methods of application submission and related processing, which use the simplified cost options (CSOs) developed by RRN-ISMEA for some RDP calls for 2014-2020 programming

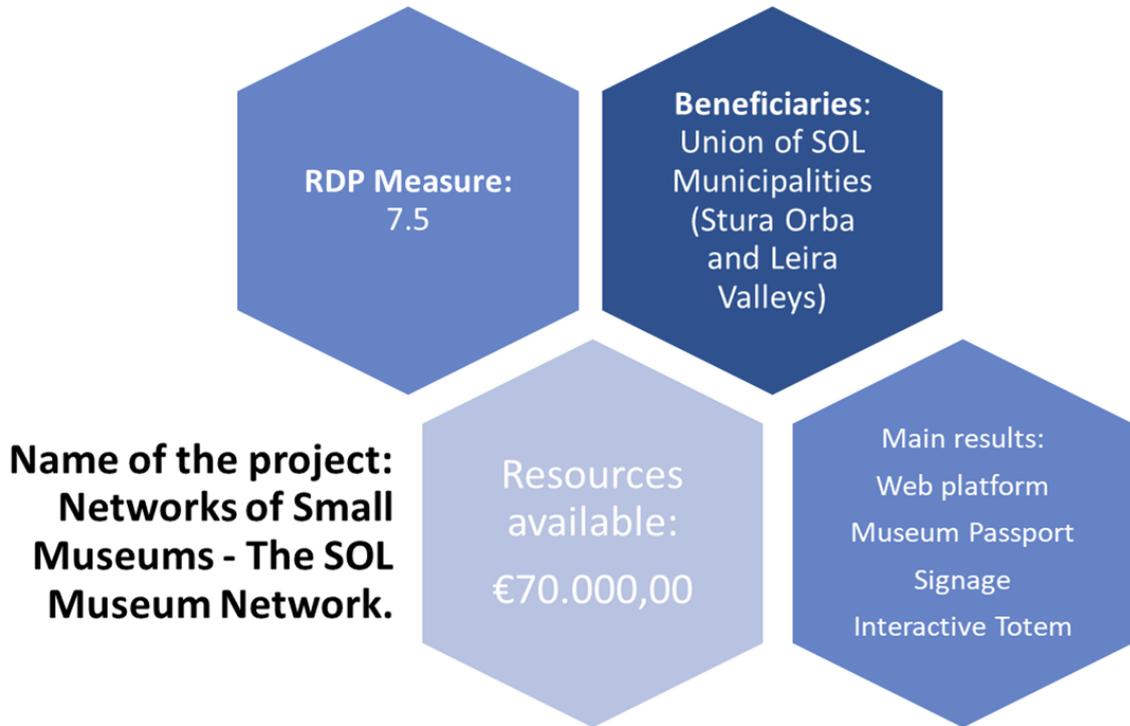
Genovese

Fundamental to the next programming is to stimulate even more territories so that they create networks between public and private stakeholders so that they can carry out activities in synergy. It is important that the interventions implemented are sustainable and lasting over time.

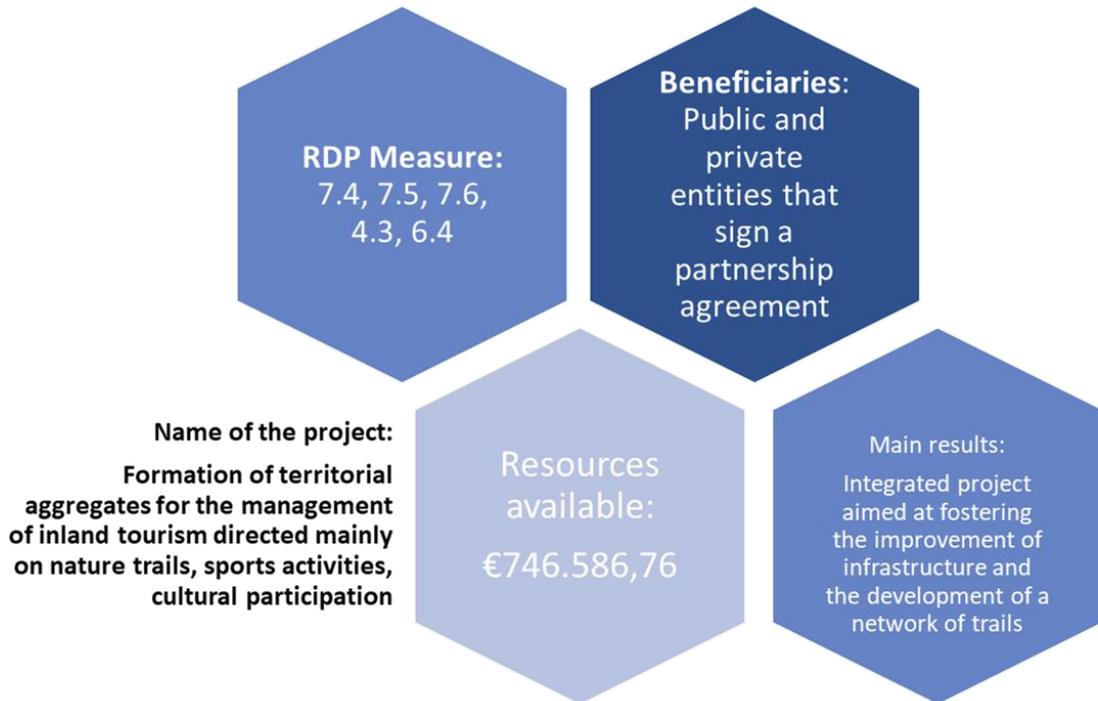
The projects identified by the LAGs

The self-assessment form asked to identify a project or initiative that best represented the LAG's activities. The IA provided a form to be filled out to facilitate the collection of information. These projects may, following verification with the MA, be the subject of further study as part of the integration of the catalog of good practices that is updated every two years.

GAL Genovese



GAL Riviera dei Fiori



GAL Valli Savonesi

RDP Measure:
7.5, 6.4

Beneficiaries:
Public bodies
and
micro/small
enterprises

Name of the project:
OUTDOOR Project

Resources
available:
€4.051.882

Main results:
Identification of a lead
partner
Adjustment of the hiking
network
Multifunctional
equipped areas
Improving
accommodation
facilities

GAL Verdemare

RDP Measure:
7.5

Beneficiaries:
Local authorities,
sports and
tourism
promotion
associations

Name of the project:
**Sustainable tourism -
development of a unique
area with an outdoor
vocation**

Resources
available:
€1.384.581

Main results:
Development of trail
network
Construction of
equipped centers for
outdoor sports and
cross-country ski trails
Territorial agreement
Single district

Conclusion and next steps

In 2023, the single-topic approach to self-assessment was consolidated with fair results. The choice of this approach, which aims to focus LAGs' attention only on one form and not on multiple themes, stems from the results that emerged in LAGs' first (2021) and second (2022) experience with self-assessment. It was noted that dealing with multiple themes often comes at the expense of the quality of (self-)evaluation responses. For this reason, for 2023 it was chosen, in agreement with the MA, to focus on only one theme, which also turns out to be of particular interest in a middle period between the *old* and *new* programming.

The expedients taken by the IA to improve the LAGs' attempt was quite satisfactory, by slightly modifying the structure of the form these LAGs answered a series of sub-questions that allowed for a better argumentation of the overall judgment. An additional expedient was to include an additional section in which the LAG had to present a project representative of its work. This also made it easier for LAGs to avoid the vagueness and self-referentiality that has often characterized self-assessment to date.

As for the next steps, we are traveling on two parallel tracks. On the one hand, self-assessment will continue over the years by continuously learning from past experiences; this last experience has certainly consolidated the use of a single-issue approach, which is capable of improving the quality of the response and thus the effectiveness of the tool. On the other hand, the projects presented by the LAGs may possibly be the subject of further study both within the catalog of good practices that the Region updates every two years and in order to analyze the issue of added value in greater depth.