



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

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Evaluation Report on the Integration of ESI Funds

Dissemination Synthesis

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Foreword and objectives of the in-depth evaluation

The strategic guidelines for the implementation of the Europe 2020 strategies are identified in the 2014-2020 Italy Partnership Agreement, which constitutes the reference framework for the ERDF, ESF, EMFF and EAFRD programming and which, *"in confirming the unity of the development policies, both Community and national, explicitly recognises the need to enhance the complementarities among the different financial sources and instruments, also in the logic of "specialising" their relative use"* (Section 2.1). The Partnership Agreement defines, at a strategic level, mechanisms for participation and integration between the Funds. These are general guidelines that also invite the RDPs themselves - such as the Liguria RDP 2014-2022 - to refer to them, according to their own specificities. The complementarity and coherence of the Funds must be guaranteed by the MAs that have the task of structuring and finalising the coordination between the Funds for the integration of the 2014-2020 programming.

It is therefore an integration desired when drawing up the Partnership Agreement, in terms of strategy and achievement of the specific objectives of the different Programmes, at the same time guaranteeing the principles of effectiveness and efficiency referred to in the Community and national documents in order to contribute to the achievement of the Europe 2020 objectives. This interaction is also aimed at ensuring the periodical verification of the administrative capacity and at activating the necessary measures to increase the competences of the different administrative levels involved in the implementation process of the Regional Programmes.

Integration between rural development policy and other policies (such as cohesion policy) is a priority for the most effective **pursuit of development in rural areas**, to be achieved through the **complementarity and coherence of actions co-financed by the EAFRD with those co-financed by the ERDF, ESF and EMFF funds**.

With the 2014-2020 programming cycle, the EC has therefore provided for greater strategic integration in the articulation of objectives among the various structural and investment funds (SIE funds). In line with this regional orientation, the **RDP Liguria 2014-2022** (Chap. 14) implements this approach by comprehensively describing the synergies and demarcation lines between the SIE funds, in the areas most relevant to the rural development strategy.

The evaluation focus **aims** to analyse and evaluate specific areas of integration/complementarity - with particular reference to the two funds EAFRD and ERDF:

- **National Strategy for Inner Areas (NSIA).**
- **Access to ICT and improvement of service infrastructures for the population and businesses, in particular for ultra-broadband in application of the Digital Agenda for Europe;**
- **Promotion of innovation;**
- **The integration of the interventions promoted by the Liguria RDP with other initiatives financed by the European Union.**

1 Analysis of specific areas of implementation of integration between Funds in the Liguria region

1.1 National Strategy Inner Areas

The **National Strategy for Inner Areas (NSIA)** represents an innovative national policy, included for the first time in the programming cycles of the ESI funds in the seven-year period 2014-2020, which aims to counter the marginalisation and depopulation phenomena typical of inland areas. This policy can be defined as place-based, an approach that identifies territorial characteristics, local institutions and public policies as key elements to develop and stimulate development capacities. In this sense, NSIA aims to build a new integrated governance mode capable of responding to the major geographical and demographic disadvantages that characterise inland areas.

These territories are defined according to certain of their characteristics:

- a) are **significantly distant from the main centres of supply of essential services** (education, health and mobility);
- b) have **important environmental resources** (water resources, agricultural systems, forests, natural and human landscapes) **and cultural resources** (archaeological assets, historical settlements, abbeys, small museums, craft centres);
- (c) are a **profoundly diverse territory, the** outcome of the dynamics of the various and differentiated natural systems and of the peculiar and secular processes of humanisation.

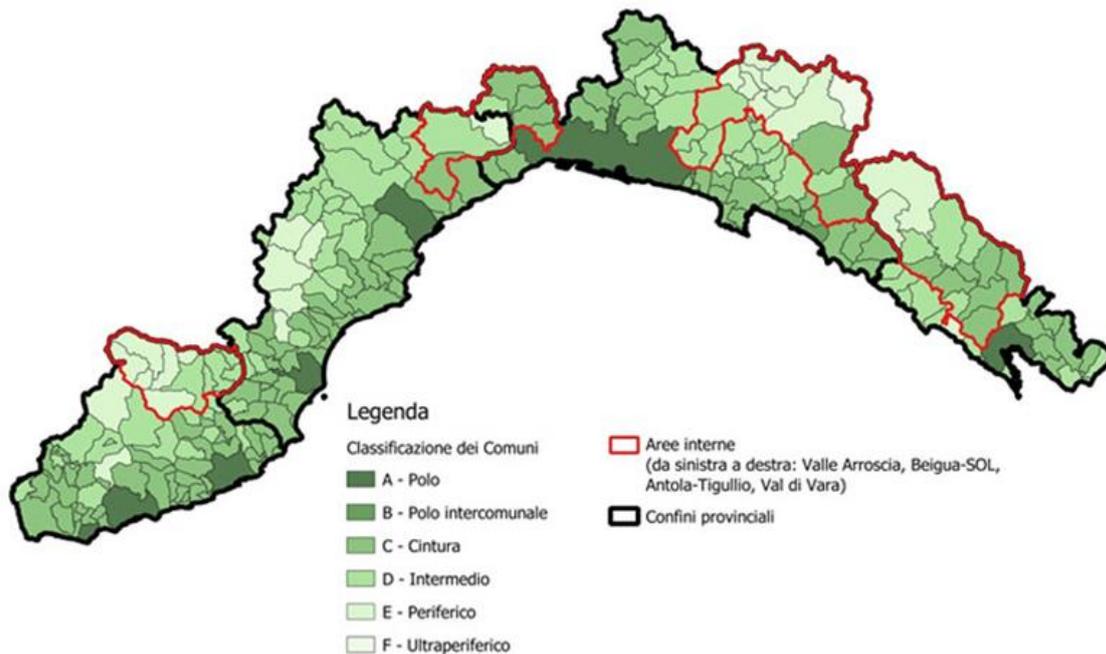
In the PA, it is clear that in order to counter and reverse depopulation phenomena in these areas, it was decided to act through the intervention of the ESI funds that initiate local development projects (supplemented by a national intervention financed by the 2014 Stability Law) aimed at ensuring that the communities involved improve essential services, such as education, health and mobility, necessary to ensure life opportunities such as to maintain and attract a population capable of presiding over the territory. In these areas, improving the organisation and use of these services is a precondition for the development and start-up of new economic activities and is a determining factor for the actual success of local development projects supported by the policies of the ESI funds programming. National resources are in fact mainly used to break down the structural limits that characterise these areas. This is where the place-based nature of the NSIA comes in, which aims to provide the geographical space, understood as an inland area, with the necessary conditions to be able to start and consolidate development processes.

NSIA in Liguria

For the region of Liguria, four inland areas identified in agreement with the Department for Development and Economic Cohesion were approved by DGR No. 859/2014 '*Inland areas: modalities for the implementation of the national strategy in the Liguria programming*':

- **Antola and Tigullio Valleys**
- **Beigua - SOL**
- **Arroscia Valley**
- **Vara Valley**

Map 1 - Inland areas in Liguria



NSIA 's integrated approach has expression above all in the integration of ESI funds - and between these and national resources - in order to contribute to common objectives in the areas of services to the population (health, transport, schools) and economic development. In the Liguria region, 31.5 million euro have been set aside to contribute to the development of inland areas. 51% of the resources come from national funds and the remaining 49% from European funds. The ERDF is the ESI fund committing most of the resources, 8.5 million euro, while the EAFRD and ESF both account for 3.5 million euro.

Table 1 - Financial plan NSIA Liguria

Fund	Resources (€)
National Funds	16.000.000
ERDF CTE	5.000.000
ROP ERDF	3.500.000
EAFRD	3.500.000
ROP ESF	1.000.000
PON administrative capacity	2.500.000
Total	31.500.000

Source: RDP Liguria, v. 11.1

Following the indications of the PA, the Liguria Region has adopted the programming tool called ITI (Integrated Territorial Investment) to coordinate and guide the strategies of internal areas at a regional level. As can be seen from the table below, there are 9 actions identified within this tool in which the EAFRD is involved, divided into three main themes: **local development actions, schools and local business development**. These actions are not always developed with a multi-fund perspective, in fact, in four cases out of nine the EAFRD acts autonomously, while for the other actions there is an integration either with national resources or with ESI funds, mainly ERDF. The financial instruments available to Inland Areas (IA) can also operate in complementarity with respect to common objectives on the same territory without necessarily having to intervene *simultaneously* on the same intervention.

Despite the fact that ERDF, ESF, EAFRD and national resources carry out initiatives autonomously within the internal areas, this does not translate into a low level of integration because these interventions are part of a system that is developed over a delimited territory and with defined and shared objectives. Complementarity is one of the keys to the integration of the ESI funds; in fact, it should be considered that each fund has its own priorities and acts in certain areas, which do not always overlap with the others. The NSIA, also through the ITI Aree Interne Liguria, systematises the various funds acting in a coordinated manner on the Ligurian territory in order to achieve better results.

► **The Inner Areas Strategies**

The ITI is a tool used by the Region to align and guide each internal area with respect to actions and objectives. At the operational level, however, each area stipulates and signs a framework programme agreement and its own strategy. The process of strategy construction is a fundamental step in the implementation of the NSIA because it involves a large number of different subjects (local administrations, trade associations, universities, third sector bodies and many others) of the area of reference. The drafting of the strategy involves a careful analysis of the territorial context, also integrated thanks to the various actors involved, which allows the identification of the key interventions to be implemented in that territory.

► **The implementation modalities of the Internal Areas Strategy for the ESI funds**

As far as the **EAFRD is concerned**, regions can intervene in inland areas using two different approaches:

- by issuing central calls for tenders with specific measures and/or combinations of measures;
- using the Leader approach (in both mono-fund and multi-fund forms).

As suggested by the report "*The contribution of the 2014-2020 Rural Development Plans to the National Strategy of Inland Areas*" published by CREA in 2019, the Liguria Region uses the second approach: the EAFRD funds dedicated to NSIA are in fact channelled through the LAGs. The proximity of this decentralised structure to the territory of the IAs and to the actors involved in the NSIA makes it strategic at the operational level.

The five LAGs in Liguria all cover at least one IA in the region. The Genoa LAG is the only one to cover the territory of two IAs: Antola Tigullio (3 municipalities out of 16) and Beigua Sol (5 municipalities out of 8). The LAG Provincia della Spezia includes the entire Vara Valley area, made up of 13 municipalities, thus recording a complete territorial overlap with regard to the aforementioned IA, which occupies 64% of the LAG's total territory. Riviera dei Fiori presents a similar situation with Arroscia Valley: in this case, the Unione dei Comuni della Alta Valle Arroscia is part of the LAG partnership. Valli Savonesi includes the remaining 3 municipalities (the other 5 are within the Genovese area) that make up the IA Beigua Sol. Finally, the LAG Verdemare Liguria includes 13 of the 16 municipalities of the IA Antola Tigullio. The latter area, just like Beigua Sol, is divided between two LAGs, the Verdemare and the Genovese. This territorial overlap acts as a stimulus to increase dialogue and coordination between neighbouring LAGs, an element that is often underestimated. In this perspective, the possibility/need for cooperation between LAGs to achieve common objectives could be a positive aspect induced by NSIA.

Table 2 - LAGs and AIs

LAG	Internal Area
Genovese	Antola Tigullio and Beigua Sol
Province of La Spezia	Vara Valley
Flower Riviera	Arroscia Valley
Savona Valleys	Beigua Sol
Verdemare Liguria	Antola Tigullio

LAGs thus fit into the strategy of their respective IA to achieve the results to which the EAFRD itself aims to contribute.

► **The actions of the Liguria ROP ERDF under the NSIA**

As far as the ERDF is concerned, the management of the resources to be dedicated to NSIA is centralised and calls for tenders are issued at regional level. Following an interlocution with the contacts of the monitoring structure of the Liguria ERDF TA (see Chapter 1), the IA was able to carry out a brief analysis on the progress of the interventions and ERDF resources disbursed within the NSIA. As of June 2022, a call dedicated exclusively to the AIs Antola Tigullio and Beigua and Unione Sol for the **energy efficiency of public buildings was published**¹, which has committed about €11.2 million, and a total of liquidated resources amounting to just under €100,000. At the time of drafting this report, a second call dedicated to small municipalities has also been published, for which three municipalities in the above AIs have applied and received a grant: two municipalities in Beigua Sol and one in Vara Valley. The regional structure is planning to issue a further call dedicated exclusively (using eligibility criteria) to the Vara and Arroscia Valley IAs².

Table 3 - ERDF contribution for NSIA

Announcement	Eligible Cost	Admitted commitments	Permitted payments
Action 4.1.1 - Energy Efficiency of Public Authorities Inland Areas ANTOLA AND TIGULLIO AND BEIGUA VALLEYS	1.257.410	124.893	71.149
Action 4.1.1 - Energy Efficiency of Small Public Authorities	517.661	456.085	401.160
Total	1.775.071	580.978	472.309

Source: Regional monitoring data - ERDF

1.1.1 Concluding remarks

In the current programming framework, the dialogue between NSIA and RDP has not always been straightforward, being affected by an extremely diversified situation at regional level. In fact, the integration of the EAFRD within the NSIA has not taken place according to a unified approach, but has followed very varied implementation methods according to regional contexts. Moreover, in general, the reference in the implementation phase to generic calls for proposals, not targeted to the intervention needs of the areas, has often led to a mismatch between the territories' requests and the programme's ability to provide adequate responses.

¹ On [this](https://opencoesione.gov.it/it/progetti/?q=&area=LIG_A12&selected_facets=is_publicato:1&selected_facets=is_publicato:2) point see https://opencoesione.gov.it/it/progetti/?q=&area=LIG_A12&selected_facets=is_publicato:1&selected_facets=is_publicato:2

² The discussion with the ERDF monitoring structure also revealed that a call dedicated to the IA Beigua Sol concerning ERDF TO 2 - *Digitisation and administrative capacity*, on which monitoring is not yet available as an official ranking list has not yet been released.

In conclusion, it can be said that the NSIA is a tool that found its first application in the 2014-2020 ESI fund programming cycle and that, despite some initial setbacks, is capable of stimulating a dialogue necessary for inclusive and effective planning. The stimulus to coordination and cooperation between neighbouring municipalities and entities (public and/or private) working in the same territory is an important element to ensure interventions that meet the real needs of stakeholders. Moreover, NSIA is the instrument through which the ESI funds have the possibility to work synergistically, beyond their thematic differences, because they are applied to a place-based policy. The complementarity of the funds is ensured by the programming instruments adopted, ITI and CLLD (see Chapter 2), and by the unified implementation instrument (a single PA for each selected area). This chapter has mainly analysed the role of the LAGs within the NSIA and their potential to play a key role especially in Regions, such as Liguria, that leave the implementation of the operational phase of the EAFRD to them. However, through discussions with the various stakeholders, some elements that could potentially be improved have emerged, such as the timing between the drafting of the IA strategy and that of the LAG. Another central point in integration remains the issue of territorial overlap: the greater the overlap, the greater the strategic alignment.

1.2 ICT Access: Interventions for the Deployment of Ultra Broadband in the Liguria Region

The availability of a high-speed broadband Internet connection and access to digital service infrastructures are two key elements of a modern single market. The **Digital Agenda for Europe** priority initiative falls under the 'Smart Growth' pillar of the Europe 2020 strategy as it aims to boost the European economy and support citizens and businesses to make the most of digital technologies.

The "**Italian Strategy for Ultralarge Bandwidth**" approved by the Government on 3 March 2015, envisages the application of a set of complementary instruments aimed at achieving the set objectives. The first implementation phase of the Strategy, launched in 2016, is aimed at intervening in all white areas with market failure (the so-called C and D areas), through resources coming from the regional European programming with funds from the Development and Cohesion Fund (FSC), the Regional Operational Programmes (ROP ERDF), the National Operational Programme for Enterprise and Competitiveness 2014-2020 (PON ERDF) and from the European Agricultural Fund for Rural Development, through the Rural Development Programmes (RDP EAFRD).

Under TO 2 - *Improving access to, use and quality of information and communication technologies*, both the EAFRD and the ERDF intervene. The EAFRD intervenes only with respect to the expected result R.A.2.1 "*Reducing digital divides in territories and spreading broadband and ultrabroadband connectivity (European Digital Agenda)*" through the types of operations envisaged in **Priority 6**. These operations are aimed at fostering the accessibility, use and quality of information and communication technologies (ICT) in rural areas. In current rural programming, there is in fact a specific **Focus Area, AF 6C "Promoting accessibility, use and quality of information and communication technologies (ICT) in rural areas"**, which responds to these needs and to the specific requirement *F19 - Improving the quality, accessibility and use of ICT in rural areas*, present in the regional context and identified through

the preliminary SWOT analysis. The Measure contributing to this RF in the RDP Liguria 2014-2022 is **MS 7.03 - Broadband Infrastructures**.

The **ERDF ROP**, on the other hand, in the 2014-2020 period envisages, through the **investment priority of OT2 'Improving access to, use and quality of information and communication technologies'**, the extension of broadband deployment, the development of high-speed networks and the deployment of services for local authorities, citizens and the economy, and intervenes in a complementary manner in areas where the EAFRD does not intervene.

The way in which the ERDF, EAFRD and SCF are integrated in the case of 'Access to ICT' is therefore through the implementation of a single contract, financed by both funds, for the improvement of broadband infrastructure.

Table 4 - Resources for Ultra Broadband Plan - as at 31.12.2021

Fund	Resources (€)	Municipalities
ROP ERDF	19.500.000 ³	114
EAFRD	13.081.653	90
SCF	3.500.000	31
Totale	36.081.653	235

Source: Liguria BUL Technical Plan - For the Deployment of Ultra Broadband (revision 3)

The table below shows the IOUs bound by municipality by PT.

Table 5 - BUL Technical Plan Liguria

Fund	BUL Plan					Residual UI
	Municipalities	Estimated Population	Total IU per floor	of which UI over 100	of which UI over 30	
EAFRD	21	82.664	80.258	62.504	17.754	9.587
ERDF	43	151.309	143.524	111.111	32.413	12.985
SCF	7	19.961	19.741	13.921	5.820	1.386
Total	71	253.934	243.523	187.536	55.987	23.958

Source: BUL Liguria Technical Plan - rev. 3

► Analysis of the state of implementation: progress of ULTRA BROADBAND works in the Region Liguria

The report by Infratel Italia S.p.A., as at 30 April 2022, shows a rather articulated state of implementation of the ULTRA BROADBAND project in Liguria.

As mentioned above, the interventions in the territory have been divided according to their intended use, with worksites engaged in the creation of fibre optic cabling - FTTH (the

¹⁹ Nella nuova revisione del Piano Tecnico BUL Liguria, in discussione e non ancora approvata definitivamente dalla Regione, le risorse FESR saranno ridotte a 10.000.000 euro.

"backbones") and other worksites engaged in the creation of connectivity provided in wireless mode - FWA (started earlier and therefore at a more advanced stage than those for fibre).

As of 30 April 2022, out of the total number of execution orders (POs) issued in Liguria, 167 in Fibre and 104 in Wireless, 142 and 103 construction sites had been opened, respectively.

According to the latest updates, the progress of works within the Region is following a fairly positive trend: as can be seen from the figure below, **Liguria ranks 13th among Italian regions with 78% of the municipalities with open worksites (FTTH fibre).**

Detailed data with a breakdown of interventions by European fund can be found by cross-referencing the data of the Liguria BUL Technical Plan with the databases downloadable from the Infratel Italia website.

Table 6 - Marketable Real Estate Units of BUL Liguria as at 30 April 2022 by ESI Fund

Access	Marketable municipalities*	Total marketable IOUs	Of which IOUs in EAFRD-financed municipalities	Of which IOUs in ERDF-funded municipalities	Of which IOUs in FSC-funded municipalities
FTTH (UI over 100)	27	10.568	3.061	7.057	-
FWA (UI over 30)	54	19.446	4.975	12.293	1.548
		Totale	30.014	8.036	20.430

* for some municipalities, both fibre-connected and FWA-connected UIs are marketable

Source: Infratel - Progress Report as at 30 April and Regional Monitoring File - BUL Liguria Technical Plan rev 3

As the table shows, most of the completed work on connectivity has been in FWA infrastructure. Of the marketable IOUs (over 100), 27% of the total are in municipalities in rural areas financed with EAFRD funds. Of the total marketable IOUs (8,036) falling within the 71 municipalities whose infrastructure installation is financed with MS 7.03 funds, 38% are in FTTH architecture.

1.2.1 Concluding remarks

The complementarity modalities between the RDP, ERDF and SCF therefore envisage the replication of the integration model already adopted for the 2007-2013 **programming period, i.e. the implementation of a single contract, for all the Funds involved, for the improvement of broadband infrastructures.** In particular, the ERDF and EAFRD allocate a considerable share of resources to achieving complete coverage of the digital divide: the operation of the RDP is obviously limited to rural areas with market failures, while the ERDF ROP completes the work by supporting the deployment of services carried by the broadband network. This helps to make services available to citizens, including those living in rural areas.

In continuity, therefore, with what was achieved in the 2007-2013 programming period, interventions in rural areas are also carried out in the 2014-2020 period in close connection between what is financed under MS 7.3 of the RDP FEASR, and what is financed by Action 2.1.1 of the ROP ERDF.

Complementarity is therefore ensured between the Funds through different and autonomous initiatives, aimed at pursuing the same purpose. A purpose that is expressed in different output indicators: while the RDP aims with MS 7.3 at reaching a certain percentage of the rural population that benefits from new or improved services and

infrastructures (ICT), the ERDF also operates in the municipalities of rural areas by carrying out interventions in close connection and complementarity with what is financed under the RDP 2014-2020. In these areas, action 2.1.1 contributes to the coverage of 100% of the territory with a connection capacity of at least 30 Mbps, respecting the principle of technological neutrality. The ERDF also intervenes to ensure coverage of at least 100 Mbps in productive areas in all cases where coverage is not guaranteed by private operators. The action therefore has a twofold objective of improving the conditions for access to the ultra broadband network in critical areas (coverage and market conditions) on the one hand, and on the other hand developing the ICT supply by creating the conditions for the emergence of new businesses in the region.

1.3 Promoting Innovation

In the programming of the European funds 2014-2020, the EC has found that synergies and integrations between different Union funding lines multiply investments in research and innovation activities and their impact by supporting innovative ideas. Interventions governed by the different funding instruments of the Structural Funds in the areas of research, innovation and competitiveness.

For this reason, the Evaluator, in agreement with the MA, wanted to focus on some specific interventions - of particular interest also for rural development - that do not fall under the discipline of punctual strategies/instruments of integration between the ESI funds, but converge in a less circumscribed way to the achievement of **common objectives**. In this sense, integration is not understood in the strict sense, but with a higher connotation: it is a **complementarity of instruments/interventions aimed at the achievement of common development targets in terms of innovation**, implemented through different actions that can also act on common ground.

► **Smart Specialisation Strategy**

Innovation is the linchpin of the European Strategy, and the General Regulation of the Structural Funds for Cohesion Policy 2014-2020 places **innovation and research as a pillar of regional development** and includes among the ex-ante conditionalities the drafting of a Smart Specialisation *Strategy* that applies, as far as **ERDF is concerned**, to two thematic objectives, namely "*Strengthening research, technological development and innovation*" and "*Enhancing access to, use and quality of ICT*". The same conditionality applies to **EAFRD** Priority 1 "*Promoting knowledge transfer and innovation in agriculture, forestry and rural areas*".

In the field of Innovation, the EAFRD, the ERDF and the ESF, in fact, operate in perfect complementarity, the demarcation is ensured through different and autonomous initiatives, addressed to the pursuit of the same goal or rather objective: **OT1 - Strengthening research, development and innovation** of the PA.

Under this thematic objective, both the EAFRD and the ERDF intervene. The EAFRD intervenes towards the expected result R.A.1.2 "*Strengthening the regional and national innovation system and increasing collaboration between businesses and research structures and their reinforcement*" **through the types of operations foreseen in Priority 1**. These operations are aimed at combining agriculture/forestry with innovation/research on the one

hand, and improving environmental management and performance on the other. In particular, with regard to innovation, the EAFRD operates in complementarity with the other funds, across OT1, through the **funding of the European Innovation Partnership (EIP) Operational Groups** - MS 16.1 - on agricultural productivity and sustainability. The EAFRD contributes to strengthening the links between agriculture, food production, forestry and the research and innovation sector, as well as knowledge transfer and investment in new technologies, production processes and marketing.

The **ERDF** intervenes in a complementary manner with different types of operations not financed by the EAFRD. The ERDF **contributes to strengthening research and innovation infrastructures** and capacities to develop and promote centres of excellence and business investment in the sector, as well as **fostering the creation of links between businesses, research and development centres and the higher education sector, with the aim of increasing investment in specific areas.**

The Liguria ROP ERDF, which operates in sectors other than agricultural and forestry production, supports innovation with significant resources (with about €75,000,000, or 19% of the total). The priority targets for the ERDF ROP concern sustainable development, health and welfare, and the use of ICT. Chapter 14 of the Liguria RDP (ver. 11.1) points out that the areas for achieving complementarity between the two instruments (RDP and ROP ERDF) in the field of innovation are:

- industrial technologies (chemical, biological, mechanical, electronic) 'upstream' and 'downstream' of agricultural and forestry production;
- biotechnology applicable to all stages of agricultural and forestry production;
- innovative chemical, pharmaceutical or cosmetic uses of agricultural and forestry products and by-products;
- energy production from agricultural and forestry biomass.

In order to achieve these objectives, the establishment and development of **poles and networks** is promoted, **which include agricultural and forestry enterprises and research centres with competence in these matters** and all public and private entities whose purpose is the implementation of programmes for innovation and technology transfer to the production system operating in the most important sectors, including health, industry, tourism, **agriculture**, environment, energy, logistics and transport.

► **Innovation in the Operational Groups of the European Partnership for Innovation (EIP) of the RDP and in the Actions of the Liguria ERDF ROP**

In the context of the **EAFRD RDP**, the **successful implementation of the EIP-AGRI** at the regional level requires the identification of the criticalities and needs of the regional innovation system of the agricultural, agrifood and forestry sectors, also with a view to a "*smart specialisation strategy*".

The Smart Specialisation strategy is aimed at the system of small and medium-sized agricultural and agrifood enterprises that need to intensify investment in research and development in a territorial dimension, especially aimed at developing the *green economy*, enhancing the landscape and improving efficiency in the use of resources. Within the framework of rural development programming, the **Operational Groups (OGs) of the EIP**,

made up of the actors of the **innovation network** (researchers, enterprises and their forms of aggregation, consultants, trainers, SMEs, etc.) can represent the actors capable of fostering a greater connection between research and business activity and the **dissemination of innovations**. **Innovation**, promoted by OGs, is aimed at achieving company-specific results, through the development and transfer of research results, the implementation of new ideas, the testing and adaptation of existing techniques, processes, technologies, services and practices, which meet the objectives of the EIP.

SM	Planned Public Expenditure (A)	Public expenditure incurred (B)	Spending capacity (B/A)	N. Projects started
16.1	6.576.998,60	213.514,35	3,2%	15

Source: regional monitoring files - draft AAR 2021

The **15 Ligurian Operational Groups** set up under Measure 16.1 comprise a total of 72 partners, the majority of which are agricultural enterprises (47.2%) and research organisations (34.7%).

Most of the projects financed under MS 16.1 included investments aimed at introducing innovations in the areas of: precision agriculture, nursery farming, biodiversity, disease and pest control, and farm management (each accounting for 13% of the regional total). Most of the financed OGs operate in the Floriculture (53%) and Olive-growing (13%) sectors.

With regard to the ROP ERDF Liguria 2014-2020, there are important initiatives for **research and innovation actions to be implemented according to the Smart Specialisation Strategy approach**. As is known, this European Fund is open to various productive sectors of the Italian economy and the strategic value of the agrifood sector is not excluded.

In the Liguria ERDF ROP, one of the main interventions contributing to the achievement of the S3 Innovation Objectives (see table above) is Action 1.2.4 - '*Support for the implementation of complex research and development projects on a few relevant thematic areas and the application of technological solutions functional to the realisation of S3 strategies*', where the Liguria Region has allocated 10 million euro aimed at micro, small, medium and large enterprises in single or associated form belonging, at the time of application, to the 5 Research and Innovation Poles of the Liguria Region.

The action supports, in these areas, projects aimed at the introduction of innovations, also through aggregated forms, aimed in particular at the development of new products, the improvement of production processes, the development of new technologies and realised in **cooperation with research structures of universities, research bodies and organisations**. Research projects can be submitted by Technological Poles and Districts and are aimed at the realisation of new technological results to be disseminated to regional enterprises and exploited in economic terms on the market.

1.3.1 Concluding remarks

The 2014-2020 programming focuses on the economic and social development of territories driven by innovation and managed through a new model of *multi-level and multi-stakeholder governance*, the smart specialisation strategy with the aim of identifying investment priorities

in research, development and innovation that complement a territory's resources and production capacities to build comparative advantages and sustainable growth paths in the medium and long term. The General Regulation laying down common provisions on the EES Funds (EU Reg. 1303/2013) entrusts smart specialisation strategies with the function of prerequisite (*ex-ante* conditionality) for the use of available resources to strengthen research, technological development and innovation. Innovation that can be achieved by funding specific public-private cooperation actions.

The Structural Funds, therefore, also within S3, provide interventions that in a complementary way are aimed at implementing projects to achieve common goals.

Complementarity with the ERDF mainly relates to TO1: With regard to research and development, the ERDF provides support for business networks, clustering and networking with research and innovation organisations in order to support companies in developing more innovative products, processes and services.

In the EAFRD area, however, despite the fact that the RDP contains a series of measures and lines of intervention that are clearly oriented towards supporting the introduction and dissemination of innovation in the regional agricultural and agrifood system, the contribution offered by this programme to the implementation of the *regional strategy for smart specialisation* appears difficult to assess, especially because the programme and implementation documents of the Programme do not contain stringent references to the S3 and the priority areas of intervention identified at the regional level, even though the RDP obviously addresses the agrifood sector.

From a reconnaissance of the programmed interventions, therefore, Measure 16 can offer the most significant contribution to innovation and, therefore, albeit indirectly, to the implementation of S3, because it finances investments aimed at the introduction of product and process innovations and intervenes in the organisation of work and in the increase of entrepreneurs' technical knowledge. In particular, the EAFRD operates in complementarity with the other funds, covering the whole of OT1, through the **financing of the Operational Groups of the European Innovation Partnership (EIP)** - MS 16.1.

1.4 The integration of the interventions promoted by the Liguria RDP with other initiatives financed by the European Union

With regard to the integration of the Liguria RDP with other initiatives financed by ESI funds, it should be noted that some projects financed through the **INTERREG EUROPA** interregional cooperation programme carried out under the '*European territorial cooperation*' objective, **and co-financed by the European Regional Development Fund (ERDF), have common objectives and synergies with the interventions proposed by the RDP.**

In particular, within the 2014-2020 **Italy-France Maritime CP** we highlight:

- **The Cambio Via** project aims at promoting an economic model for rural areas based on its social and environmental values; enhancing traditional products, places of production and related itineraries, in order to promote their positioning in the markets; building virtuous relations and networks with urbanised areas and discerning consumers; offering reasons for tourist attraction and naturalistic and cultural

enjoyment. The objective is to revitalise local communities from a cultural, economic and social point of view, supporting awareness paths that guarantee the ecosystem value of quality local services and products. The partnership, led by the Liguria Region, is among the most qualified to face territorial challenges as it includes subjects (Sardinia, Tuscany and Collectivité territoriale de Corse Regions) relevant for the territorial governance of cross-border areas.

- The integrated thematic strategic project **MED-Star** - Strategies and measures for fire risk mitigation in the Mediterranean area, aims at contributing to the improvement of the capacity of the public institutions involved to jointly prevent and manage the growing fire risk resulting from climate change, in areas with a high anthropic presence and of relevant naturalistic interest, also through appropriate adaptation actions. Closely linked to the MED-Star strategic project are four simple projects that envisage pilot actions and investments in infrastructures for fire risk prediction and management:
 - **MED-Forests**
 - **INTERMED**
 - **MEDCOOPFIRE**
 - **MED PSS**

The Integrated Thematic Project (PITEM) **Biodiv'Alp** - Protecting and Enhancing Alpine Biodiversity and Ecosystems through Cross-Border Ecological Partnership and Networking was created within the **ALCOTRA** (Latin Alps - Cross-Border Cooperation) **CP**, for the specific objective 3.2 - biodiversity, improving habitat and species management in the cross-border area. A project dedicated to the protection, management, conservation and enhancement of Alpine biodiversity. The operational implementation of these objectives is achieved by means of five concrete projects dealing respectively with the improvement of knowledge, the management of biodiversity reservoirs, the prefiguration of a transalpine ecological connectivity strategy and the socio-economic valorisation of biodiversity and ecosystems.

1.4.1 Concluding remarks

Projects financed through the INTERREG EUROPE interregional cooperation programme make it possible to go beyond traditional approaches and take advantage of an opportunity for the exchange of good practice between different institutions, with the involvement of non-profit organisations, public-law corporations and enterprises.

By providing co-funding for local, regional and national governmental public bodies, other public law bodies (e.g. universities, regional development agencies, business support organisations) and private non-profit organisations, the programme promotes networking and encourages the exchange of experience on different topics, thus creating good regional practice with a European dimension.

Although no 'investments' are financed, participation in territorial cooperation projects can complement structural funds by enhancing and financing communication actions, exchange of experience, training, etc.

As far as LIFE projects are concerned, these have developed numerous good practices in Italy, as well as innovative techniques, methods and approaches to support the improvement

of the climate and environmental performance of production activities, including many specific 'green solutions' for the agricultural, food and forestry sector and for rural areas.

In particular, the activities conducted on wolves have made it possible to support the construction of RDP measures already in the 2014/2020 programming period. Of particular interest is the link between the possibility of financing preventive structures and agri-environmental commitments related to the eco-sustainable management of pastures by livestock farmers.

The integration between the LIFE WOLFALPS project and the actions promoted by the RDP can promote local development in which the element of potential conflict on the territory between the productive world and the environmental world becomes a resource for attracting tourism and enhancing the territory's products.