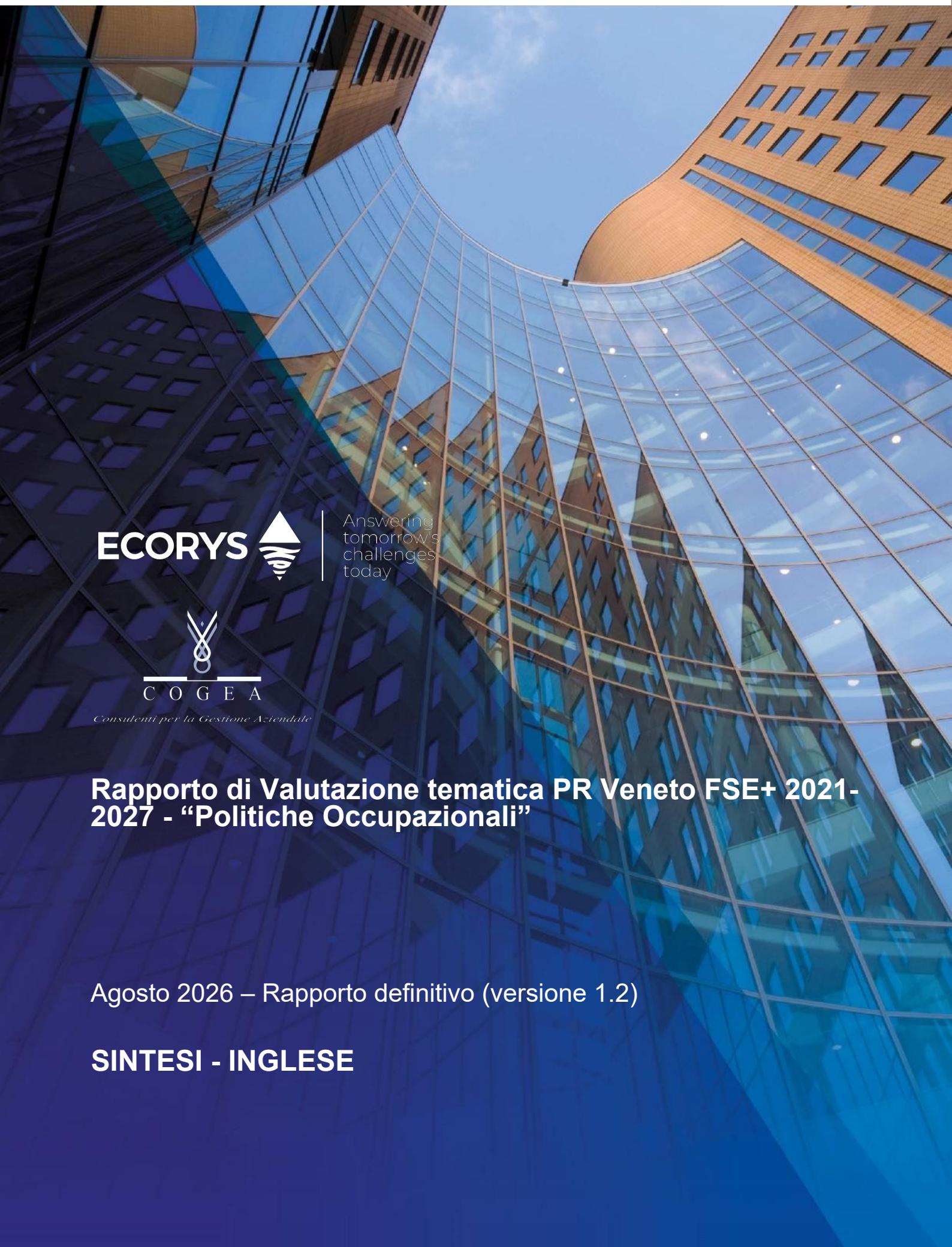


Rapporto di Valutazione tematica PR Veneto FSE+ 2021-2027 - “Politiche Occupazionali”

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SINTESI - INGLESE

Executive summary (English)

Objectives and evaluation questions

This report presents the findings of the thematic evaluation of the **Work Experience (WE)** measure funded under the **Veneto ESF+ Regional Programme 2021–2027**, with reference to the three regional implementation procedures that have progressively shaped the instrument: DGR 1321/2022 – "*NEXT GENERATION WE": Pathways for Skills Development and Labour Market Integration*; DGR 1304/2023 – "*FORTI: FORmation and Traineeship"* Short Work Experience; DGR 1190/2024 – *Work Experience: "A Tailor-Made Experience*".

The evaluation had three main objectives: to assess the extent to which the measure responds to regional labour market needs and the needs of potential beneficiaries; to understand the mechanisms through which Work Experience measures, and particularly the workplace-based component, contribute to improving employability and employment outcomes; and to estimate the medium- to long-term employment impacts of the intervention.

The evaluation framework is based on the criteria of **relevance**, **effectiveness** and **coherence**, and is structured around the following **six evaluation questions**.

Relevance

(1) Are the intervention logic and design of the Work Experience pathways relevant, in the sense that they respond to the needs of the regional labour market and potential beneficiaries?

Effectiveness / Efficiency

(2) Who are the beneficiaries of Work Experiences and what are their characteristics?

(3) How do Work Experience beneficiaries differ from the ones of other ESF+-funded active labour market policies?

(4) Has the workplace-based traineeship generated tangible added value for beneficiaries in terms of labour market integration and employment opportunities?

(5) What results and impacts have been achieved in terms of employment outcomes? Do these differ across the various target groups reached?

Coherence

(6) How are Work Experiences complementary to other ESF+ interventions and to the NRRP-funded GOL Programme?

Methodology

The evaluation combined different types of analysis. Documentary analysis of regional calls for proposals, other implementation documents and the relevant literature allowed us to reconstruct the logic underpinning this type of intervention and identify the main mechanisms through which the measure is expected to improve employability and employment outcomes.

The quantitative analysis of monitoring data and administrative records from Public Employment Services (PES) relating to Work Experience beneficiaries enabled the mapping of the different types of pathways and the characteristics of beneficiaries and, most importantly, the implementation of a counterfactual analysis aimed at estimating the effect of participation in the measure on employment outcomes, up to 36 months after entry into the measure. The analysis applied a **Difference-in-Differences approach combined with Propensity Score Matching**.

The quantitative evidence was complemented by several field research activities:

- interviews with implementing bodies, aimed at exploring key aspects of the design and implementation of Work Experience pathways;
- a survey of beneficiaries who completed the workplace-based traineeship, aimed at assessing the added value of the work-based learning experience and collecting evidence on perceived outcomes;

- a simplified survey of beneficiaries who did not undertake a traineeship, aimed at understanding the reasons for non-participation and gathering feedback on their overall experience;
- a survey of host companies, aimed at capturing employers' perspectives on the implementation and results of the measure.

Main evaluation findings

Relevance

Work Experience pathways are found to be **broadly consistent with the needs of the Veneto regional labour market and the needs of unemployed individuals**.

By combining guidance, training and traineeships, integrated Work Experience pathways provide a response to the **structural challenges** that persist in a labour market characterised by low unemployment: the presence of a pool of unemployed individuals facing difficulties in labour market integration and the mismatch between labour demand and supply. Integrated pathways such as Work Experiences act through several mechanisms capable of addressing these challenges: human capital development, improved matching between employers and workers, mutual screening, strengthened employability and personal empowerment.

Direct surveys (beneficiaries, participants and companies) confirm that Work Experiences have been able to respond both to the needs for labour market integration and professional development (**beneficiaries**) and for recruitment facilitation processes and the identification of potential workers (**employers/companies**).

The evolution of the instrument across the three regional implementation procedures is also relevant, with a progressive increase in the **flexibility** of pathway design introduced through DGR 1190/2024. This has made it possible to offer a wider variety of pathways, better aligned with the diverse needs of different target groups.

Effectiveness

Work Experiences have reached a **large and heterogeneous population of unemployed individuals**.

Among the approximately 7,500 beneficiaries enrolled in projects active at the end of 2025, women account for the majority (57% of participants), foreign nationals are significantly represented, in line with their share of regional unemployment, and young people also represent a large proportion of beneficiaries (42% of all beneficiaries are under 30), alongside a substantial number of adults. Educational attainment is highly heterogeneous, including participants with low levels of qualification, upper secondary graduates and university graduates. Finally, more than 50% of beneficiaries are long-term unemployed, highlighting the measure's ability to reach individuals facing greater difficulties in returning to employment.

The heterogeneity of the target groups reached by Work Experiences requires the capacity to design diversified integrated pathways capable of responding to different needs. The evolution of the regional instrument towards greater flexibility moves further in this direction.

Evidence collected through the direct surveys indicates overall that **the workplace experience represents an important qualifying element** and a key source of added value within Work Experiences.

The **beneficiaries** largely recognise that Work Experience pathways have facilitated the development of both technical and transversal skills and improved their employability (for example, through a greater ability to navigate the labour market, increased activation, greater self-confidence, and so on). Overall satisfaction levels are high, both with the experience as a whole and with specific aspects of workplace integration and the quality of mentoring.

For **companies**, the traineeship is considered not only a training instrument but also an effective period of mutual assessment before a possible recruitment (indeed, 78% of companies report that their main motivation is to identify potential workers). This confirms the important matching function

performed by the instrument. Most companies consider the trainee selection process effective overall and judge the trainee profile to be consistent with their needs.

While the workplace experience represents an important source of added value, there is also a **large share of beneficiaries who do not actually participate in a traineeship**, accounting for almost 40% of the total. Field research has shown that the reasons are diverse and require qualification. In slightly more than one third of cases, non-participation is due to beneficiaries having already found employment and therefore voluntarily leaving the pathway. In almost half of cases, the main reason is the inability to identify a host company, followed by other factors such as personal, family and logistical barriers. These cases require attention and future improvement measures. It should nevertheless be noted that beneficiaries who did not undertake a traineeship also recognise benefits arising from the training received, particularly in terms of skills acquired. Moreover, from the perspective of employment outcomes, the absence of a traineeship does not completely undermine the effectiveness of Work Experience pathways (see below).

The surveys also indicate that **the added value of the experience depends on the quality of its implementation**, in terms of appropriate and coherent matching between the beneficiary and the company, the genuine training content of the workplace experience, consistency between the training activities preceding the traineeship and labour market needs, and the quality and continuity of mentoring. Conversely, experiences limited to repetitive or marginal tasks tend to reduce learning potential.

Finally, the available data reveal **positive evidence regarding the employment effectiveness of the measure**. A substantial proportion of beneficiaries are employed in the months following completion of the pathway, and employment tends to become more stable over time. Counterfactual analyses indicate that Work Experiences generate a significant improvement in employment outcomes compared with what would have occurred in the absence of the intervention, and the results are statistically significant. Positive effects are observed both in terms of employment probability and work intensity (days worked within a quarter). Differences emerge across beneficiary groups, but only in terms of the magnitude of the effects, as positive impacts are found across most target groups. It is also worth noting that **undertaking a traineeship does not appear to generate additional net impacts**. Compared with the control group, Work Experience pathways are effective in improving employment outcomes both with and without a traineeship.

Coherence

The **differences between Work Experiences and the GOL Programme concern less the profile of beneficiaries than the function performed by the two measures**.

The GOL Programme performs a general access, assessment and initial support function for unemployed individuals through Public Employment Services, whereas Work Experiences represent a more specialised and vocationally oriented measure aimed at supporting labour market integration. The distinctive feature of Work Experiences lies in the integration of training, guidance and workplace experience, with the traineeship representing the key qualifying element of the intervention.

This interpretation is also confirmed by interviews with implementing bodies, which highlight that although some operational overlaps and challenges have occurred between the two instruments, these remain limited overall and stem from various factors: difficulties for beneficiaries in distinguishing between similar opportunities; the risk of implicit competition between measures during outreach and recruitment activities; the greater attractiveness of more accessible or immediate pathways; and the need for better coordination among Public Employment Services, implementing bodies and companies in designing individual pathways.

Lessons Learned and Recommendations

The evaluation confirms the soundness of the Work Experience model and suggests several **directions for its further development**.

First, the findings highlight the importance of preserving the integrated nature of the measure by maintaining the close connection between guidance, training and traineeships, while consolidating the personalised approach introduced through the most recent implementation procedure.

Second, the quality of implementation appears to be as important as the design of the measure itself. The added value of Work Experiences depends on the quality of matching between beneficiaries and companies, the vocational content of the traineeship and the active involvement of employers.

Finally, the evaluation suggests further strengthening integration with the regional active labour market policy system by improving profiling and guidance tools.

The main recommendations therefore concern: consolidating the personalised model introduced through DGR 1190/2024; strengthening employer involvement in the design of pathways; monitoring, including through specific indicators where appropriate, the quality of traineeships, matching processes and workplace learning; and improving profiling and integration between Work Experiences and other regional active labour market policies, for example through a more active role for Public Employment Services.



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