

Rapporto di Valutazione annuale 2026
Programma FSE+ 2021-2027 Regione Veneto

Maggio 2026 – Rapporto finale

SINTESI - INGLESE

Executive summary (English)

Objectives and evaluation questions

The present Annual Evaluation Report (AER) of the Veneto ESF+ Regional Programme 2021–2027 is part of the activities foreseen under the Unified Evaluation Plan and the Integrated Evaluation Design. The purpose of the AER is to analyse the **implementation of the Programme** over time, by monitoring the use of resources, the progress of interventions, and the achievement of expected results. The analysis also extends to implementation processes in order to identify success factors and critical issues, with the aim of providing evaluative evidence and lessons learned to continuously optimise the effectiveness of the Programme.

This annual evaluation refers to the state of implementation of the Programme as of 31 December 2025. The scope of the evaluation covers all five Priorities and the full set of Specific Objectives (SOs) provided for under the ESF+ Programme.

The evaluation framework is based on the criteria of **relevance**, **coherence** and, above all, **effectiveness**, and is structured around the eight evaluation questions presented below.

Relevance:

- (1) Are the Programme's strategic choices still relevant, in the sense that they respond to the needs of the socio-economic context and of potential beneficiaries?

Effectiveness/Efficiency:

- (2) What is the level of progress in the implementation of operations across the different Priorities and Specific Objectives?
- (3) What is the level of progress in the implementation of operations of strategic importance within the Programme?
- (4) What is the actual capacity to commit and use Programme resources across the different Priorities and Specific Objectives?
- (5) What is the level of achievement of output and result indicator targets?
- (6) What critical issues have emerged in terms of physical, procedural and financial progress?
- (7) Has the Programme governance system ensured an effective and efficient implementation process?

Coherence:

- (8) Are the interventions complementary to other interventions financed through different funding sources?

Methodology

From a methodological perspective, the analysis is based on an **integrated approach** combining desk-based analysis and field research, applying the principle of triangulation of sources to ensure the robustness and objectivity of the evaluative evidence.

The analytical process initially included an **assessment of the evolution of the regional socio-economic context**, based on official statistics, in order to identify external enabling or constraining factors influencing the Programme's strategic approach. In parallel, a comprehensive cross-cutting **documentary analysis** was carried out, integrating both strategic and implementation documentation, which proved essential for reconstructing the intervention logic.

In addition, various types of documentation collected in the field were considered, relating to the projects analysed in the five case studies. These activities were complemented by a **quantitative analysis of regional monitoring data updated to 31 December 2025**, which made it possible to measure financial and physical progress (output and result indicators) at the level of Priorities and Specific Objectives. This analysis also included benchmarking against national and European programmes through the Cohesion Open Data platform.

Among the **field research activities**, particular importance was given to the involvement of the Structures Responsible for Implementation (SRAs) and the Managing Authority (MA). Information gathered through interviews with these actors made it possible to analyse from an internal perspective the strategy underpinning the interventions, the effectiveness of implementation processes, and the robustness of regional governance.

These findings were further complemented by field consultations conducted within the **five thematic case studies**, involving a range of beneficiaries in order to collect direct perspectives on the effectiveness of the interventions analysed.

More specifically, the following five interventions were examined in depth:

- Priority 1 – SO 4.3 (1.c): "P.A.R.I. Progetti e Azioni di Rete Innovativi per la parità e l'equilibrio di genere" (DGR 1522/2022)
- Priority 2 – SO 4.6 (2.f): "Guidance/Orientation" measure (DGR 685/2023)
- Priority 2 – SO 4.6 (2.f): Youth language certification measure - "MOVE" (DGR 600/2023, DGR 467/2024 e DGR 681/2025)
- Priority 3 – SO 4.12 (3.l): "New inter-institutional systems and multidisciplinary teams to prevent family social exclusion" - "INSIEME" (DGR 69/2023)
- Priority 4 – SO 4.1 (4.a): "Giovani Energie" (DGR 729/2023 e DGR 307/2025)

Conclusions and Lessons Learned

The conclusions and lessons learned from the evaluation concern: the alignment between ESF+ Programme (PR) interventions and labour market needs as well as the target groups reached by the Programme (**relevance**); the assessment of the **effectiveness and added value** of ESF+ interventions; and the **integration, coherence and complementarity** of ESF+ interventions with those financed by the ERDF and other national instruments and funds.

Relevance – Labour market needs and target groups reached by the Programme

Conclusions: The strategic choices of the Veneto ESF+ Regional Programme (PR) 2021–2027 are found to be **fully consistent and relevant with respect to the needs of the territory**, although they require a continuous capacity to adapt to recent macroeconomic developments. Following a strong post-pandemic recovery, which saw GDP return to 2019 levels already in 2022, the regional labour market has recorded outstanding performance, with the unemployment rate falling to historic lows (3%) in 2024, well below both the national and EU averages.

Despite this overall positive context, the analysis highlights the presence of several structural challenges, including demographic ageing, a persistent gender gap, and a skills mismatch. This is further exacerbated by the fact that nearly half of job vacancies are difficult to fill (e.g. profiles compatible with green jobs). From a social inclusion perspective, although the situation is more favourable than the national average, the risk of poverty remains significant (above 10%), and social needs are becoming increasingly complex and multidimensional.

Lessons learned: In this context, it becomes even more important to shift from an approach focused solely on combating social exclusion towards a preventive logic, by strengthening the integration between labour market policies, education systems, and social services. It is also a priority to enhance outreach strategies aimed at reaching the most vulnerable and labour market–distant groups, such as NEETs and inactive women, through personalised approaches that take into account logistical and cultural barriers, as highlighted by field interviews.

Effectiveness–Efficiency – Progress, Governance and Results achieved

Conclusions: The analysis of implementation as of December 2025 **shows a Programme in a phase of full maturity**, demonstrating a strong capacity to translate planning into concrete interventions across all Priorities. From a financial perspective, **71% of the total allocation has been activated** (approximately EUR 730 million); **eligible costs in selected projects account for 63% of the allocation, while certified expenditure stands at 23%.** These results are broadly in

line with those achieved in the previous programming period at the same stage and with the levels of progress observed in programmes of more developed European regions.

Performance has also been driven by **Operations of Strategic Importance (OSIs)**, which account for 44% of the allocated resources and show a higher spending capacity than other operations (43% compared to 25%), confirming the soundness of the regional strategy to prioritise complex, structural interventions from the outset of the programming cycle. Priority 4 (Youth Employment) shows the highest performance in terms of commitments and expenditure. Some measures under Priorities 2 and 3 have experienced expected delays, mainly due to the complexity of designing experimental measures or the need to avoid temporal overlaps with the NRRP.

In terms of **physical progress, the Programme has reached a total of 320,602 participants**, nearly 55% of whom are women. In particular, the regional strategy has demonstrated a strong capacity to reach young people and minors, who account for almost half of all beneficiaries.

From an **effectiveness perspective**, results are encouraging. Under Priority 1 (Employment), the employment rate six months after participation stands at 40%, fully meeting the 2029 target at this stage. Performance is also excellent under Priority 4 (Youth Employment), where 91% of participants obtained a qualification at the end of the intervention, significantly exceeding the target of 68%. In some areas, such as school guidance, participation levels have already surpassed the final target.

The governance system of the Veneto ESF+ Programme proves to be effective, based on a clear functional separation between the Managing Authority (MA), the Accounting Authority and the Audit Authority, ensuring transparency, independence and sound control systems. Key features of this programming cycle include, first, the integration of the Social Services Directorate among the Structures Responsible for Implementation (SRAs), alongside the Labour and Education and Training Directorates, strengthening the multidisciplinary approach to addressing complex situations. Second, administrative simplification has been achieved through the widespread use of Simplified Cost Options (SCOs), which has reduced the administrative burden for beneficiaries, facilitated the participation of less structured third-sector organisations, and improved overall implementation efficiency.

Evidence from the case studies highlights particularly significant results. The P.A.R.I. measure has strengthened territorial networks for gender equality, involving over 32,000 participants; the INSIEME measure has enabled the establishment of 21 multidisciplinary teams to tackle educational and family poverty. Giovani Energie has proven effective in re-engaging NEETs and minors at risk of early school leaving, through a proximity-based approach grounded in local outreach and non-conventional communication tools. In the field of education and training, the Orientamento initiative has reached 49,228 participants, with a significant impact in strengthening the educational community and preventing early school leaving through 17 consolidated territorial networks. Similarly, the MOVE initiative has involved 5,817 students in transnational mobility pathways, contributing to the development of linguistic and transversal skills required by the European labour market.

Overall, the added value of ESF+ clearly emerges in supporting innovative social interventions through a unified governance framework and adequate resources to address emerging and complex needs.

Lessons learned: Looking ahead, it is recommended to capitalise on these experiences along three main directions. First, further strengthening integrated and multidisciplinary approaches in the social domain, with a stronger focus on preventing social disadvantage affecting vulnerable individuals and families. Second, consolidating territorial networks and enhancing outreach strategies to better reach the most vulnerable groups (NEETs and vulnerable families), building on the experiences tested in several measures. Third, continuing to support the already efficient Programme management, for example by completing the ongoing digitalisation process and considering the adoption of guidelines and coordination protocols to consolidate experimental intervention models.

Coherence – Complementarity with Other Instruments and National Funds

Conclusions: In terms of complementarity, the 2021–2027 programming period has seen a **strengthened integrated approach to EU funds**, with consolidated synergies developed with the

Veneto ERDF (European Regional Development Fund) and the NRRP, particularly through interaction with the GOL Programme.

More specifically, **integration with the ERDF** is evident both at the strategic level, thanks to a unified governance framework, and at the operational level, through the launch of multi-fund calls enabling the joint financing of training activities (ESF+) and investments in technological equipment (ERDF). This integration has proven particularly effective in the field of vocational education and training (VET – IeFP), where ERDF resources support the upgrading of training facilities, while ESF+ resources finance training delivery, thereby enhancing attractiveness and maintaining enrolment levels despite adverse demographic trends linked to declining school-age cohorts.

By contrast, the **interaction between the ESF+ Programme and NRRP** measures has been more complex, particularly in the field of active labour market policies. Despite a targeting strategy aimed at reserving ESF+ interventions for the most vulnerable groups or unmet needs, implementation has revealed partial displacement effects due to competition between instruments targeting the same beneficiary pool in a context of low unemployment. However, very positive results have emerged from integration with the NRRP Dual System, where the Veneto Region has implemented coordinated calls that expanded the pool of young beneficiaries, following management models positively assessed during European Commission audits.

Lessons learned: the interviewed beneficiaries highlighted the need for a more systematic mapping of potential overlaps between measures implemented through different funds and programmes. Looking ahead, this also underscores the importance of strengthening territorial networks and Social Territorial Areas (ATS) as key coordination nodes capable of planning labour, social and health policies in a complementary way, thereby overcoming the fragmentation of responses to complex social needs.



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