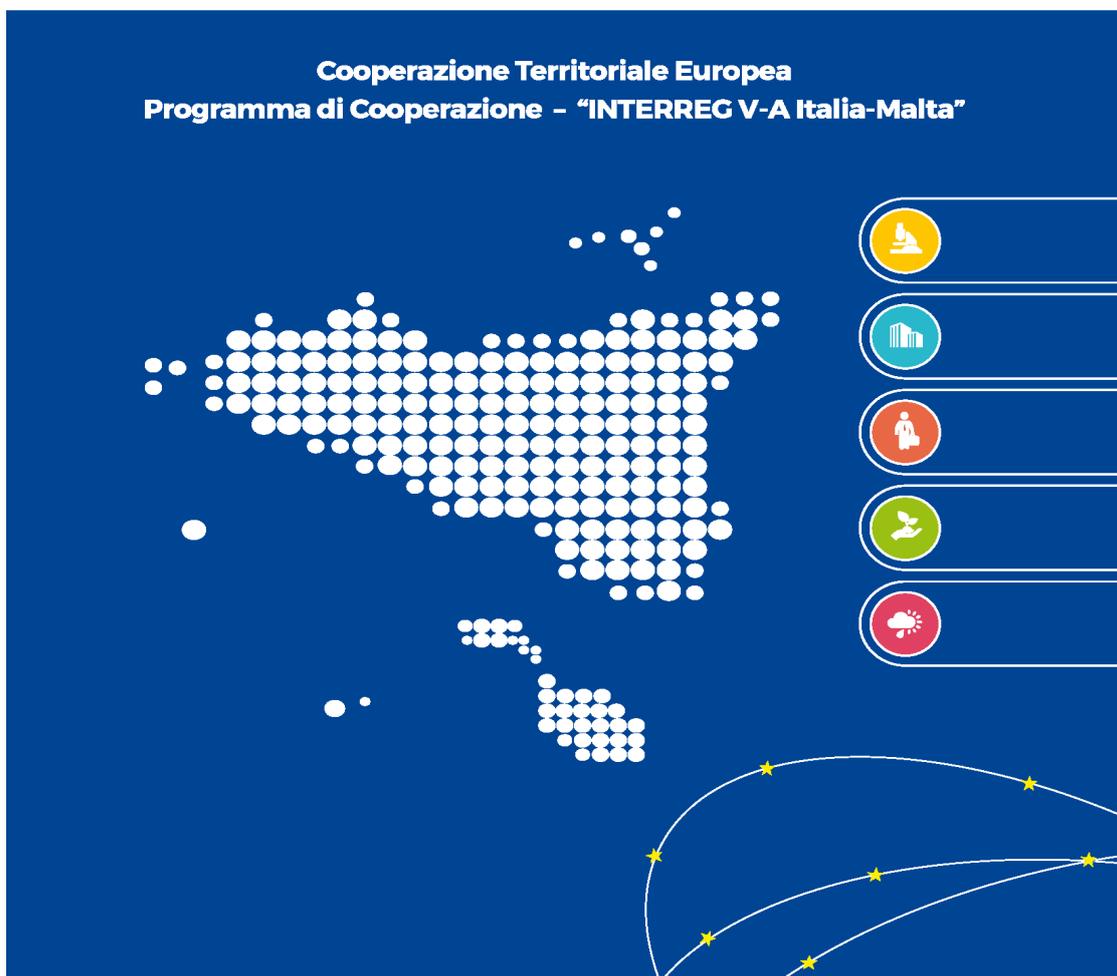


Model Report for the implementation of the European territorial cooperation objective



Summary

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PART A - DATA REQUIRED YEARLY ('LIGHT REPORTS') (Article 50(2) of Regulation (EU) No 1303/2013)

1. IDENTIFICATION OF THE ANNUAL/FINAL IMPLEMENTATION REPORT

Cci	2014TC16RFCB037
Title	INTERREG V-A ITALIA-MALTA cross-border cooperation programme
Version	2020
Year of reporting	2020
Approval date of the annual report by the Monitoring Committee	Approved with written procedure of the Monitoring Committee launched the 21st of May 2021 and concluded the 31st of May 2021 (ref. n. 7087)

2. OVERVIEW OF THE IMPLEMENTATION OF THE COOPERATION PROGRAMME (Article 50(2) of Regulation (EU) No 1303/2013 and Article 14(3)(a) of Regulation (EU) No 1299/2013)

Key information on the implementation of the cooperation programme for the year concerned, including on financial -- instruments, with relation to the financial and indicator data.

<p>In 2020, the action of the Managing Authority and the Malta National Coordination Authority with the support of the Joint Secretariat supported the implementation of the program's axes. In particular:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The completion of the evaluation procedure of the project proposals submitted under Public Notice 2/2019 • Support actions for sound implementation, management, monitoring and surveillance of the program <p>With reference to the <u>evaluation of Public Notice 2/2019</u>, the Executive Committee, after the completion of the activities carried out by the Joint Secretariat, on 6/5/2020 approved the following documents: a) 3 quality check lists of project proposals related to SO 2.2, b) 8 quality check lists of project proposals related to SO 3.1, c) 3 quality check lists of project proposals related to SO 3.2 ; 4) Ranking lists of projects eligible to the evaluation phase for SO 2.2, 3.1 and 3.2.</p> <p>Afterwards, the MA notified the potential lead partners of the evaluation grids of each project with the status of "eligible under condition" and "project rejected". In the first case, the potential lead partners were asked to send the new revised AF to the MA by 18/5/20. In the second case, potential lead partners were asked to submit any counter-deductions within 15 days.</p> <p>Following the new examination carried out by the JS, the ExC met on 29/5 and 4/6/2020 to evaluate the counter-deductions and changes to the AFs. The ExC approved the modified AFs with the exception of n. 6 projects for which the MA was authorized by the ExC to request an additional revision of the AFs. The ExC also approved the reply note to the counter-deductions received.</p> <p>Following a further examination carried out by the JS, the ExC met on 30/07/2020 and approved both the revised AFs and the definitive ranking lists of the OS 2.2, 3.1, 3.2 for the subsequent transmission to the Monitoring Committee.</p> <p>From the outcomes of the evaluation of the projects under the Public Notice 2/2019, the MA and the MNCA shared to submit to the MC a modification of the financial tables of the programme according to the provisions of Reg. (EU) 2020/460 in order to finance a further project proposal</p>
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based on PI 8.e-OS 2.2.

The final ranking lists of project proposals under SO 2.2, 3.1, 3.2 of Public Notice 2/2019 was definitively approved by the MC on 3/9/2020, ratified by the MA with Decree n. 584 of 29/9/2020 and notified to the beneficiaries on 15/10/2020.

Overall, in the frame of the Public Notice 02/2019, a number of 9 projects have been financed on 31/12/2020, namely: no. 2 projects based on IP 8.e-OS 2.2; n. 6 projects based on IP 6.d-OS 3.1; n. 1 project based on PI 5.b-OS 3.2. The eligible amount for the aforementioned projects is € 15,571,074.49 of which € 14,236,026.96 ERDF, € 2,512,240 national co-financing and € 200,290.48 additional co-financing provided by the beneficiaries.

With reference to the operations under the Public Notice 01/2016, in 2020 the MA and the MNCA have undertaken corrective actions to ensure a sound and efficient financial management of the programme through specific measures aimed at providing exceptional flexibility in the use of ESI funds in response to the COVID-19 epidemic, taking into account the clarifications of the EC within the e-wiki platform.

With Circular 1/2020 (ref. no. 5208 of 5/5/2020) the beneficiaries were provided with indications for the continuation and conclusion of the activities in the phase linked to the restrictions caused by the emergency. More specifically, the following issues were regulated: 1) possibility of requesting the extension of the conclusion date of the activities, 2) use of any savings deriving from activities that could not be carried out due to COVID-19, 3) possibility for projects with a vocation to the issues of "quality of life and health of citizens" to propose additional "COVID-oriented" activities for measures to combat, contain and adapt to the COVID-19 pandemic.

Following further requests for assistance, the Managing Authority has notified all beneficiaries the Circular 2/2020 (ref. n. 6378 of 28/5/2020). This document made it possible to exceed the 40% threshold of the "staff costs" line item for each project's beneficiary provided that the overall percentage of the "staff costs" line item did not exceed 40% of the direct costs of the whole project.

In consideration of these flexibility measures, the Managing Authority received n. 13 revised proposals on 15 approved projects that were approved by the ExC on 30/7/2020.

As part of the procedure described above, the covid-oriented actions by the ITAMA project were also presented and approved for the development of a Web App for managing school admissions based on the symptoms of students and an e-learning platform with educational content; by MEDIWARN project for the improvement of biosensors that support medical and nursing staff to provide better care to patients affected by Covid-19; by ENISIE project for the provision of innovative support services to micro and SMEs in difficulty due to the pandemic; by SIMIT THARSY project for the implementation of civil protection measures to contrast, contain and adapt to the consequences of the epidemic.

In September 2020, the MA received the document summarizing the results of the desk review on the programme by the European Court of Auditors regarding how the challenges of the cross-border regions are addressed in the program (ref. no. 19CH2009 - PF-11500). In response to the above, in October, the MA sent the document with the position of the Member State for each of the issues observed.

In December, the MA and the MNCA agreed to submit to the MC the revision of the Programme pursuant to art. 30 and par. 5 of All II of Reg. (EU) No. 1303/2013. Coherently with the revision of the financial framework for each Axis, the modification re-determined the target of the result and output indicators, the latter associated with the SOs affected by the proposed modification of the financial plan. The proposal was approved by the MC on 23/12/2020 and sent to the EC via SFC2014 on the same date.

Overall, the Program implementation, management, monitoring and surveillance activities ensured the achievement of the expenditure target N+3; as at 31/12/2020 a total of € 11,486,334.51 ERDF claims have been submitted vis-à-vis the disbursement target of € 11,026,482.23.



3. IMPLEMENTATION OF THE PRIORITY AXIS (Article 50(2) of Regulation (EU) No 1303/2013)

3.1 Overview of the implementation

ID	Asse prioritario Priority Axis	Key information on priority axis implementation with reference to key development, to significant problems and to the adopted actions to target these problems
Axis I	Promoting sustainable and intelligent growth through research and innovation	<p>Axis 1 was the subject of the proposed financial modification of the programme sent to the EC on 23/12/2020. This change was determined by the need for a partial revision of the strategic structure of the axis. The verification of the implementation status of OS 1.1 highlighted the need to evaluate the reallocation of financial resources from Axis 1 to Axes 2 and 3, at the light of the current performance and relative absorption capacity.</p> <p>The reasons for the transfer of resources concerned: A) absence of project proposals submitted under SO 1.1 in the frame of the Public Notice 02/2019; B) the COVID-19 epidemic.</p> <p>With reference to point A), it should be noted that as part of the "targeted call" no. 02/2019 for Axis 1-SO 1.1-IP 1b no project proposals have been submitted in relation to <i>Action C - Interventions aimed at financing exchanges and mobility of researchers</i> for which ERDF resources amounting to € 3,400,000 had been allocated.</p> <p>With reference to point B), it is highlighted that in February, during the evaluation of the Public Notice 02/2019, the COVID-19 pandemic broke out. This situation has led to a severe crisis in the socio-economic context of the cross-border area.</p> <p>In order to mitigate the socio-economic impacts originating as a result of the pandemic, the MC on 03/09/2020 approved the proposal of the MA and the MNCA aimed at scrolling of the ranking list of the Public Notice n. 02/2019 on specific objective 2.2 "Promote the mobility of workers in the cross-border area through the creation of networks".</p>
Axis II	Promoting the competitiveness of the cross-border area	<p>Axis 2 was the subject of the proposed modification of the programme sent to the EC on 23/12/2020. The amendment provided for an increase in the financial resources of the Axis determined by the need to fund all projects positively selected under <i>Action B - Interventions aimed at financing cross-border mobility through the provision of a voucher</i> in the frame of the Public Notice 2/2019 - SO 2.2 "Promote the mobility of workers in the cross-border area through the creation of networks".</p> <p>This resulted in the shift of the common output indicator CO043 Number of participants in cross-border mobility initiatives from Axis 1 to Axis 2 – SO 2.2.</p> <p>With regard to SO 2.1 "Promote the creation and strengthening of enterprises in the intervention sectors of the cross-border area", the same has undergone a reprogramming of the resources originally allocated, also contributing to increase the financial allocation of the SO 2.2 for financing project proposals submitted under Public Notice 2/2019.</p> <p>Finally, the financing of the COVID-oriented actions of the ENISIE project under SO 2.1 determined the</p>

		inclusion of the <i>CV24 Number of SMEs receiving non-financial support (advice, etc.) indicator in the COVID-19 response</i> within the set of indicators of the SO 2.1.
Axis III	Resource Environment and Efficient Use	<p>Axis 3 was the subject of the proposed modification of the programme sent to the EC on 23/12/2020. The revision affected IP 5b - SO 3.2 " <i>To promote systemic actions and technologies able to mitigate the climate change effects and the natural and anthropic risks with a particular reference to the catastrophic from the maritime risks</i> ". In particular, a shift of resources from Axis 1 to Axis 3 has been envisaged in order to allow the financing of a further project under <i>Action A - Interventions to mitigate the effects of climate change of Notice 2/2019</i> . This project, in fact, turned out to have the condition of "eligible but not fundable project due to lack of financial resources" within the ranking of the SO. 3.2 – Public Notice n 2/2019.</p> <p>The need to allocate additional resources to the SO 3.2 was also necessary following the financing of the covid-oriented actions.</p> <p>With regard to the result indicators, it was proposed to aggregate under a single indicator "Sites and protected areas that develop joint actions for the protection of biodiversity" the indicators 3.1a Sites and marine protected areas that develop joint actions for the protection of biodiversity and 3.1 b Sites and protected land areas that develop joint actions for the protection of biodiversity.</p> <p>This in consideration of the fact that, during the implementation of the programme, it was often difficult to quantify the area concerned by distinguishing the marine areas from the terrestrial ones in portions of the surface in which they sometimes overlapped each other since Sicily and Malta they are two islands.</p>
Axis IV	Technical support	<p>During the month of January 2020, the company responsible for the management and monitoring information system of the program communicated the impossibility of being able to continue with the fulfillment of contractual obligations starting from 1/2/2020, effectively abandoning without just cause the execution of the contract.</p> <p>The MA has therefore started the administrative procedures for the urgent identification of a new economic operator. At the same time, the MC approved the modification of the technical assistance plan within which the financial allocation of the "Management and Control System" line item related to the expenses for adaptation activities, evolution and maintenance of the Ulysses information system was increased. At the conclusion of the tender award procedures, on 31/12/2020 the MA signed the contract with the new supplier.</p> <p>Regarding monitoring activities, the Managing Authority concluded a procedure for setting up a long list of external experts to support the First Level Control unit. These external controllers will be employed in the activities related to Public Notice 02/2019. This is in order not to overwhelm the current internal controllers engaged in control of the operations financed under the Public Notice 01/2016.</p> <p>In 2020 the task force for the preparation of the Italy Malta 21-27 programme was set up and approved its rules of procedures. The draft of the territorial analysis and the methodology for involving the</p>

		partnership were presented. The operative procedures for drafting the Environmental Report were also discussed. Finally, the candidacy of the Sicilian Region as Managing Authority of the Italy Malta 2021-2027 programme was approved.
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3.2 Common and programme specific indicators (Article 50(2) of Regulation (EU) No 1303/2013)

Data for common and programme-specific indicators by investment priority transmitted using the tables 1 to 2 below

Table 1
Result indicators (for priority axis and specific goal); also applies to the Technical Support priority axis.

Automatically from the SFC						ANNUAL VALUE									Observations (if necessary)	
ID	Indicator	Measurement Unit	Baseline Value	Year of Reference	Target Value (2023)	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021	2022		2023
1.1	Enterprises which adopt technologies and innovative service created and / or enhanced at cross-border level	ΔN	15	2013	100	-	-	-	-	-	13	15				
2.1a	Enterprises which engage in cross-border commercial activities	ΔN	15.247	2013	12	-	-	-	-	-	-	-				
2.1b	New employees of active enterprises in intervention fields: safeguarding the environment and the quality of life and citizens' health	ΔN	736.760	2013	20	-	-	-	-	-	-	-				
2.2	Workers participating in cross-border mobility initiatives	Δ	40	2013	100	-	-	-	-	-	-	20				
3.1a	Protected marine sites and areas that develop joint actions for the biodiversity protection	ΔKmq	200	2013	100	-	-	-	-	-	-	-				
3.1b	Protected terrestrial sites and areas that develop joint actions for the biodiversity protection	ΔKmq	300	2013	150	-	-	-	-	-	-	-				
3.2	Area monitored by cross-border technological system	ΔKmq	47.500	2013	23,750	-	-	-	-	-	-	55				
4.1	To guarantee support actions for the implementation of the programme, improving the efficiency, the effectiveness of the management, and the monitoring of the same															

Table 2
Common and Programme specific output indicators (by priority axis, investment priority); applies also to technical assistance priority axes

Axis/IP	ID	Indicator (name of indicator)	Measurement Unit	Target value (1) (2023)	CUMULATIVE VALUE										Observations (if necessary)
					2014	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021	2022	2023	
Axis 1 – 1.b	CO01	Number of enterprises receiving support	Businesses	100	0	0	0	0	10	13	28				
Axis 1 – 1.b	CO04	Number of enterprises receiving non-financial support	Businesses	100	0	0	0	0	10	18	28				
Axis 1 – 1.b	CO43	Number of participants in cross-border mobility initiatives	People	200	0	0	0	0	0	0	0				
Axis 1 – 1.b	1.1.3	Spin-offs generate through research activities	Number	10	0	0	0	0	0	0	0				
Axis 2 – 3.a	CO01	Number of enterprises receiving support	Businesses	21	0	0	0	0	0	11	11				
Axis 2 – 3.a	CO03	Number of enterprises receiving financial support other than grants	Businesses	6	0	0	0	0	2	2	2				
Axis 2 – 3.a	CO04	Enterprises receiving non-financial support	Businesses	15	0	0	0	0	0	0	9				
Axis 2 – 3.a	2.1.3	Networks of cross-border services created for new or existing enterprises	Number	3	0	0	0	0	0	1	1				
Axis 2 – 8.e	2.2.1	Activated operative cross-border networks which support the demand and supply of labour	Number	2	0	0	0	0	0	1	1				
Axis 2 – 8.e	2.2.2	Enterprises (micro, small, and medium) that activated stages	Number	50	0	0	0	0	10	10	10				
Axis 2 – 8.e	2.2.3	Protocols and / or institutional agreement which promote mobility of persons in a cross-border context	Number	3	0	0	0	0	0	0	3				
Axis 3 – 6.d	3.1.1	Recovery and evaluation interventions of the zones of the Natura 2000 networks	Number	10	0	0	0	0	2	2	2				
Axis 3 – 6.d	CO023	Surface area of habitats supported in order to attain a better conservation status	Hectares	20	0	0	0	0	0	0	0				

Axis/IP	ID	Indicator (name of indicator)	Measurement Unit	Target value (1) (2023)	CUMULATIVE VALUE										Observations (if necessary)
					2014	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021	2022	2023	
Axis 3 – 6.d	3.1.3	Awareness campaigns for the proper enjoyment of protected areas	Number	4	0	0	0	0	1	1	1				
Axis 3 – 5.b	3.2.1	Surface covered by pilot measures for the mitigation of the effects of climate change	Square meters	375,000,000	0	0	0	0	83000000	1.083.000000	1.083.000.000				
Axis 3 – 5.b	3.2.2	Surface covered by ICT instrumentation for the monitoring of the risks of the area	Square meters	3,750,000,000	0	0	0	0	0	0	1.100.000.000				
Axis 4	4.1.1	Implementation analysis documents and reports (Final execution report, evaluation reports, reports and notes on the state of implementation and planning)	N.	10	0	0	0	0	0	5	6				
Axis 4	4.1.2	Accompanying structures created (Joint Secretariat + Contact point)	N.	2	0	0	0	1	1	1	1				
Axis 4	4.1.3	Number of workers whose salary is co-financed by Technical Assistance	N.	6	0	0	0	3	3	4	4				
Axis 4	4.1.4	Audit of management and control system and operations	N.	18	0	0	0	0	0	8	16				
Axis 4	4.1.5	Monitoring and supporting activities for potential beneficiaries and stakeholders (information workshop training and exchange of experiences, manuals, guidelines, etc.)	N.	25	0	0	7	13	24	49	66				
Selected operations [forecast provided]	a														

Axis/IP	ID	Indicator (name of indicator)	Measurement Unit	Target value (1) (2023)	CUMUL ATIVE VALUE									Observations (if necessary)	
					2014	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021	2022		2023
by beneficiaries]															
Fully implemented operations [actual achievement]	Na														
<i>(1) the final targets for the Technical Assistance Priority Axis are optional.</i>															

3.3 Milestones and targets defined in the Performance Framework (Article 50(2) of Regulation (EU) No 1303/2013) — submitted in Annual Implementation Reports from 2017 onwards

Reporting on financial indicators, key implementation steps, output and result indicators to act as milestones and targets for the performance framework (submitted starting with the report in 2017).

Table 3

Information on the milestones and targets defined in the Performance Framework

Priority Axis	Indicator Type (Key implementation step, financial, output or, where appropriate result indicator)	ID	Indicator or key implementation step	Measurement unit, where appropriate	Milestone for 2018	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021	2022	2023	Observations (if necessary)	
Axis I	Output indicator		Number of enterprises receiving non-financial support	Enterprise	10	100	0	0	0	0	10	18	28				
	Financial indicator		Expense declared to the EC	Euro	2.637.129	15.512.531	0	0	0	0	801.410,39	1.836.589,40	4.129.181,94				
Axis II	Output indicator		Number of enterprises receiving financial support other than grants	Enterprise	1	6	0	0	0	0	2	2	2				
	Output indicator		Enterprises (micro, small and medium) that activated traineeships	Number	10	50	0	0	0	0	10	10	10				
	Financial indicator		Expense declared to the EC	Euro	1.318.565	8.790.434	0	0	0	0	82.923,25	737.244,45	1.259.233,65				
Axis	Output		Recovery and	Number	3	10	0	0	0	0	2	2	2				

Priority Axis	Indicator Type (Key implementation step, financial, output or, where appropriate result indicator)	ID	Indicator or key implementation step	Measurement unit, where appropriate	Milestone for 2018	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021	2022	2023	Observations (if necessary)
III	indicator	evaluation interventions of the zones of the Natura 2000 network														
	Output indicator	Awareness campaigns for the proper enjoyment of protected areas	Number	1	4	0	0	0	0	1	1	1				
	Output indicator	Area covered by pilot measures for the mitigation of the effects of climate change	Square meters	112.500.000	375.000.000	0	0	0	0	83000000	1.083.000.000	1.083.000.000				
	Financial indicators	Expense declared to the EC	Euro	3.581.408	23.876.060	0	0	0	0	1.037.085,68	2.066.751,33	4.931.394,81				

** Member States submit cumulative values for output indicators. Values for financial indicators are cumulative. Values for the key implementation steps are cumulative if the key implementation steps are expressed by a number or percentage. If the achievement is defined in a qualitative way, the table should indicate whether they are completed or not*

3.4 Financial data (Article 50(2) of Regulation (EU) No 1303/2013)

Table 4

Financial information at priority axis and programme level

as set out in Table 1 of Annex II to Commission Implementing Regulation (EU) No 1011/2014 (1) [Model for transmission of financial data] (2) and table 16 of model for cooperation programmes under the European territorial cooperation goal.^{1,2}

Priority Axis	Fund	Category of region	Basis for the calculation of Union support	Total Funding	Co-financing rate	Total eligible cost of operations selected for support (EUR)	Proportion of the total allocation covered with selected operations (%)	Public eligible cost of operations selected for support (EUR)	Total eligible expenditure declared by beneficiaries to the managing authority (EUR)	Proportion of the total allocation covered by eligible expenditure declared by beneficiaries (%)	Number of operations selected	Total eligible expenditure paid to beneficiaries and certified to the Commission on 31/12/2020
1	ERDF	Less developed	Public	14.375.484	85%	10.895.648,23	75,79%	10.498.506,31	4.907.580,06	34,14%	6	4.907.580,06
2	ERDF	Less developed	Public	9.927.482	85%	10.200.035,73	102,75%	9.375.027,16	1.517.394,37	15,28%	5	1.517.394,37
3	ERDF	Less developed	Public	23.876.060	85%	23.955.537,34	100,33%	23.955.537,34	5.801.640,95	24,30%	13	5.801.640,95
4	ERDF	Less developed	Public	3.529.412	85%	2.729.969,77	77,35%	2.729.969,77	1.372.381,31	38,88%	11	1.372.381,31
Total				51.708.438		47.781.191,07	92,41%	46.559.040,58	13.598.996,69	26,30%	35	13.598.996,69

(1) GU L 286 of 30.9.2014, pg. 1.

(2) Structured data required for the report on YEI which is to be submitted in April 2015 in accordance with Article 19(3) and Annex II of Regulation (EU) No 1304/2013.

(1) OJ L 286 of 30.9.2014, p. 1.

(2) Structured data required for the IOG report to be submitted in April 2015 under Article 19, paragraph 3, and Annex II of Regulation (EU) No 1304/2013.

Where applicable, the use of any contribution from third countries participating in the cooperation programme should be provided (for example IPA and ENI, Norway, Switzerland).

Not applicable

Table 5

Breakdown of the cumulative financial data by category of intervention (Article 112(1) and (2) of Regulation (EU) No 1303/2013 and Article 5 of Regulation (EU) No 1304/2013)

(as set out in Table 2 of Annex II to Commission Implementing Regulation (EU) No 1011/2014 [Model for transmission of financial data] and tables 6-9 of Model for cooperation programmes)

Priority Axis	Characteristics of spending		Intervention dimension codes							Financial data			
	Fund	Category of regions	1 Field of intervention	2 Funding forms	3 Territorial Size	4 Territorial disbursement mechanisms	5 "Thematic objective" size ERDF/Cohesion Fund	Economic size	Location	Total eligible cost of operations selected for support (EUR)	Public eligible cost of operations selected for support (EUR)	Total eligible expenditure declared by beneficiaries to the managing authority	Number of operations selected
1	ERDF	Less developed	62	Grant to a lost fund	not applicable	not applicable	1. Strengthening research, technological development and innovation	24	IT	8.480.600,12	8.214.280,95	3.272.556,71	5
1	ERDF	Less developed	63	Grant to a lost fund	not applicable	not applicable	1. Strengthening research, technological development and innovation	24	IT	2.415.048,11	2.284.225,36	1.635.023,35.631	1
1	ERDF	Less developed	64	Grant to a lost fund	not applicable	not applicable	1. Strengthening research, technological development and innovation	24	IT	0,00	0,00	0,00	0
1	ERDF	Less developed	67	Grant to a lost fund	not applicable	not applicable	1. Strengthening research, technological development and innovation	24	IT	0,00	0,00	0,00	0
2	ERDF	Less developed	82	Grant to a lost fund	not applicable	not applicable	3. Promoting the competitiveness of agricultural SMEs	24	IT	3.869.120,70	3.624.791,68	1.240.196,21	2
2	ERDF	Less developed	102	Grant to a lost fund	not applicable	not applicable	8. Promoting sustainable and quality employment and supporting worker mobility	24	IT	6.330.915,03	5.750.235,48	277.198,16	3
3	ERDF	Less developed	85	Grant to a lost fund	not applicable	not applicable	5. Promoting adaptation to climate change, prevention and risk management	24	IT	7.549.770,93	7.549.770,93	1.054.299,22	5
3	ERDF	Less developed	86	Grant to a lost fund	not applicable	not applicable	5. Promoting adaptation to climate change, prevention and risk management	24	IT	5.564.421,21	5.564.421,21	530.277,63	3
3	ERDF	Less developed	87	Grant to a lost fund	not applicable	not applicable	6. Preserving and protecting the environment and promoting the efficient	24	IT	5.023.703,21	5.023.703,21	1.742.655,36	3

							use of resources						
3	ERDF	Less developed	88	Grant to a lost fund	not applicable	not applicable	6. Preserving and protecting the environment and promoting the efficient use of resources	24	IT	5.817.642	5.817.642	2.474.408,74	2
4	ERDF	Less developed	121	Grant to a lost fund	not applicable	not applicable	Na	24	IT	2.689.482,85	2.689.482,85	1.356.278,53	9
4	ERDF	Less developed	122	Grant to a lost fund	not applicable	not applicable	Na	24	IT	0	0	0	0
4	ERDF	Less developed	123	Grant to a lost fund	not applicable	not applicable	Na	24	IT	40.486.92	40.486.92	16.102,78	2
Total										47.781.191,07	46.559.040,58	13.588.966,69	35

Table 6

Cumulative cost of all or part of an operation implemented outside the Union part of the programme area

1	2	3	4	5
	The amount of ERDF support (*) envisaged to be used for all or part of an operation implemented outside the Union part of the programme area based on selected operations (EUR)	Share of the total financial allocation to all or part of an operation located outside the Union part of the programme area (%) (column 2/total amount allocated to the support from the ERDF at programme level *100)	Eligible expenditure of ERDF support incurred in all or part of an operation implemented outside the Union part of the programme area declared by the beneficiary to the managing authority (EUR)	Share of the total financial allocation to all or part of an operation located outside the Union part of the programme area (%) (column 4/total amount allocated to the support from the ERDF at programme level *100)
All or part of an operation outside the Union part of the programme area (1)	not applicable	not applicable	not applicable	not applicable

4. SYNTHESIS OF THE EVALUATIONS (Article 50(2) of Regulation (EU) No 1303/2013)

Synthesis of the findings of all evaluations of the programme that have become available during the previous financial year, including the title and reference period of the evaluation reports used.

Following art. 114 of the Reg (EU) No. 1303/2013, the MA drew up the plan and, based on its contents, on 16 January 2020 commissioned the Sicilian Region Public Investment Assessment and Verification Centre (NVVIP - Nucleo di Valutazione e Verifica degli Investimenti Pubblici), a technical structure to support the "phases of planning, evaluation, implementation and verification of plans, programmes and intervention policies promoted and implemented by each individual administration" (institutional law No. 144/1999), functionally placed within the Programming Department, to carry out the implementation evaluation (II part). Report was

delivered in June 2020.

The second phase of the implementation assessment allowed an update of the first report with reference to the aspects related to the organization and functionality of the structures responsible for implementing the Programme as well as the adequacy of the procedures adopted for the selection of operations and, on the other hand, an overview related to the ability of the programme to achieve the expected results by the year 2023.

In addition, the report examined the effects of the enlargement of the cooperation area, the degree of integration with other Union instruments and the first evidence on the effectiveness of the communication strategy.

The evaluation of the effectiveness and efficiency of the submission and selection processes of applications highlighted a relatively positive and partially better picture in the evolution between the first Public Notice of 2016 and the 2019 one.

In terms of information and communication activities, the programme continues to suffer from the delays accumulated in the implementation of its Communication Plan. However, some activities carried out "in economy" have been put in place, aimed at ensuring the necessary visibility to the actions of the programme and above all to satisfy the communication obligations towards the beneficiaries provided for by the EU regulations. In this sense, both in relation to Public Notice 1/2016 and Public Notice 2/2019, several promotional events/information seminars were held on the territories of the entire cooperation area. For the launch of the second Public Notice, there is both an increase in the number of promotional events and the adoption of a more targeted promotion strategy to encourage the participation of specific types of beneficiaries according to the different SOs. The evaluator pointed out that the effort made by the Programme structures and in particular the supporting role offered by the JS in the phases of promotion and support for stakeholder participation received an overall very positive evaluation from the subjects who took part in the survey carried out.

In relation to the preparation of the documents for the selection of projects, in the evolution between the first and the second Public Notice, appropriate simplification measures have been introduced which in part facilitate the participation of potential beneficiaries and in part contribute to streamline the evaluation process of the proposals. With the adoption of a targeted call approach, a more direct link has been created between the programme strategy and the actions that will hopefully be implemented by the proponents. In this sense, the targeted call should be able to guarantee a more stringent consistency with the expected results of the programme.

In relation to the critical issues of the application process, the survey conducted among the actual and potential beneficiaries of the programme did not highlight any particular weaknesses. In general, satisfaction is high both with respect to the support received from the structures of the programme.

As regards projects' evaluation times, the selection of the operations of Public Notice 1/2016 required a total of 236 working days, with an average time for the examination of each single operation of 0.4 working days for the eligibility phase and 1.9 for the merit evaluation phase. The selection activity of Public Notice 2/2019 at the time of drafting the report was still in progress, however the evaluator estimated that the timing of the evaluation process is more compact than the first call. A partial reduction in the overall time of the selection procedures can be pursued, in the opinion of the evaluator by rationalizing the organization of the work of the Steering Committee.

With respect to the effectiveness of the implementation tools, the financial absorption of Public Notice 1/2016 returns a patchy picture with SO that received a good level of response from the territory and SO with weaker absorption. The weak absorption of the SOs in Axis 2 is coherent with the lower participation of some types of beneficiaries who tend to have been interested in this type of action. I deals with an innovative area of intervention with respect to the tradition of the programme which instead recorded a significant response rate from the territory in the core areas of innovation and environmental protection.

In the context of Notice 2/2019 there is a greater balance between the types of candidate

beneficiaries, thanks also to the robust participation of associated partners.

In the selection of projects, the procedures explicitly take into account horizontal principles. The set of criteria provides in fact a specific criterion for the evaluation of horizontal priorities (equal opportunities, non-discrimination and sustainable development).

The management structures of the MA of the programme have been affected by external processes that have weakened its administrative capacity overall and that have required the adoption of temporary solutions aimed at compensating for the limited amount of human resources responsible for the management and control of selected operations. Finally, the analysis of the management systems shows the qualified technical and operational support guaranteed by the JS which represents the key structure for the implementation of the programme and for the improvement of processes.

In implementing the programme, different solutions have been adopted to reduce the administrative burden placed on beneficiaries. The actions implemented by the Managing Authority involved the activities of submitting proposals, control and reporting activities and monitoring activities. In particular, efforts have been made to simplify the AFs, the electronic transmission of information of the beneficiaries, the adoption of the simplified cost options and the definition of manuals and support templates.

With reference instead to the mechanisms for involving the partnership and stakeholders, it emerged that the procedures adopted by the MA are in line with those adopted at European level by other cooperation programmes and in compliance with the provisions contained in the European code of conduct on partnership for the ESI funds.

In the analysis of the efficiency of the decision-making mechanisms, a division of responsibilities emerged between the Joint Secretariat, the Steering Committee and the Supervisory Committee which could be reformulated in order to simplify the procedures and appropriately focus the activities of these bodies.

In relation to the ability of the programme to achieve the expected results, the state of implementation highlights a differentiated picture in relation to the indicators envisaged by the CP which in some cases appear to have already been achieved while in others they still appear distant from the predefined target. In addition, in the COVID 19 emergency scenario, the implementation of the CP is affected by elements of uncertainty and risk factors that involve the entire programming cycle of the ESI Funds.

For the purposes of assessing the ability of the CP to achieve the results expected by 2023, it should however be considered that there is an evident quantitative and temporal misalignment between the values of the financial indicators and the resources already allocated within the first round eligible projects. Thus, the PC can achieve the final expenditure targets and results if the financial efficiency in the allocation of resources corresponds to the same efficiency in the physical and procedural progress.

With respect to the programme strategy in terms of coordination with other EU instruments, the degree of integration of the programme with other Union instruments such as the mainstream programmes of the Sicilian Region and the Maltese State or with directly managed programmes such as HORIZON 2020, COSME, Life 2014-2020, Erasmus-for-all or even with the cooperation programmes that insist on the same area is somewhat differentiated, but overall rather modest.

Only with respect to the OP ENI Italy Tunisia it is possible to observe an appreciable sharing of the strategic approach even though there are no formal coordination mechanisms at the level of, for example, notices for the selection of projects. Compared to mainstream programmes, and especially to the ERDF, there is generally a coherence of the strategic framework that derives from the common regulatory framework with a more accentuated coordination with respect to innovation issues thanks to the strategic framework offered by the Strategies for Smart Specialization.

As regards the preliminary dissemination of the programme actions in the new cooperation space, the participation in the programme by Enna and Messina territories is substantially in line

with that of the remaining Sicilian provinces.

Finally, the analysis of the effectiveness of the communication strategy has shown that for some of the indicators of achievement it is possible to appreciate an overall positive progress and therefore there are no particular critical issues in relation to the achievement of the targets at the end of the programme.

5. ISSUES AFFECTING THE PERFORMANCE OF THE PROGRAMME AND MEASURES TAKEN (article 50(2) of Regulation (EU) No 1303/2013)

a) Issues which affect the performance of the programme and the measures taken

With regard to aspects that affect programme results, it should be noted that during the year 2020, the program authorities continued to ensure the acceleration of all the main administrative procedures that had been initiated late and/or had shown slowdowns during the previous years of program implementation.

For the Sicilian area the crisis resulted in a real final blow inflicted on an economy already in great difficulty. The sectors subject to suspension/closure during the lockdown period accounted for 22% on the formation of added value, but the slowdown affected the entire economy of the area.

Based on the first economic released data, it should be noted that in the first half of 2020, production activity underwent a significant contraction due to the spread of the pandemic.

Businesses faced a drastic drop in domestic demand which led to a marked reduction in expected revenues, especially in the private non-financial services sector. Therefore, the pandemic crisis particularly hit Sicily in a phase of substantial stagnation.

Compared to other European Regions the medium long-term analysis shows a disappointing regional economic performance, especially because of productivity and employment dynamics, also in the periods before and after the double recession that took place between 2008 and 2014.

Referring to the financial status of the cross-border area territorial authorities, significant critical situations are highlighted, especially on the Sicilian side.

In fact, in Sicily the local authorities financial condition is characterized by the presence of high deficits mainly due to provisions for the past State advances and the presence of high receivables that are doubtful and difficult to collect.

One third of the regional population lives in municipalities that have either failed or adopted financial rebalancing plans.

As a result of the government measures taken by the Italian and Maltese States in recent months in order to deal with the health emergency, the resources available to the health systems have increased and they have been used to expand the provision of both intensive care beds and staff.

The programme Authorities through their profuse action tried to ensure a constant action of assistance to all beneficiaries of the call 01/2016 in order to ensure the stability of the projects from a programmatic point of view and expected results. In fact, the closure activities due to the first lock down imposed by the containment measures of COVID-19 led to disruptive effects in the management and implementation processes of many financed projects whose activities concerned the development of actions in the medical-health field, in civil protection sectors, in the development of sea monitoring campaigns, in the sowing of endemic plants in certain areas of the NATURA 2000 network.

In addition, COVID-oriented actions have been financed within 4 project of call 01/2016, already mentioned in previous sections.

With reference to the call 02/2019, the JS and the Executive Committee took care to provide adequate instructions for the revision of the submitted AF (since they are eligible for funding under conditions) in order to adapt the planned project actions to the pandemic moment (replacement of all events in attendance: seminars, events, dissemination actions, kick-off meetings, etc.). Furthermore, taking into account that within the call 02/2019 no project proposals were submitted under Axis I - which concerned the funding of "mobility of researchers within the area for the development of an innovative project at SMEs" - the programme authorities, in agreement with the MC, decided to proceed with the scrolling of the ranking of operations that were validly included within the ranking in Axis II - which concerned the financing of mobility of young workers within the area for the carrying out an internship for professional integration.

Therefore, through the modification of the program in line with the provisions of Regulation (EU) 2020/460 approved on 3/09/2020, it was possible to proceed with the financing of an additional project under SO 2.2 of the program for activation of n. 100 mobility of workers (identified among weak and unemployed groups) within the cooperation area to carry out a job placement internship in companies (micro, small and medium) operating in the sectors of the program strategy (safeguarding environment and quality of life and health of citizens). In a very difficult moment in the economy of the cross-border area afflicted by the socio-economic crisis caused by the COVID-19 pandemic, the final recipients of this intervention will receive a job mobility voucher quantified at Euro 12,000 for 6 months to be paid by the programme resources. Therefore, as of 31/12/2020 the programme authorities allowed to finance a total of 200 worker mobility under Axis II of the programme.

In light of the above, it can be stated that the programme at this stage will be able to guarantee the expected results, also taking into account the non-substantial changes introduced with the request sent to the EC in December 2020 in line with the articles 30 and 96 of Regulation (EU) No. 1303/2013.

(b) OPTIONAL FOR LIGHT REPORTS, otherwise it will be included in point 9.1 (Article 50(4) of Regulation (EU) No 1303/2013)

An assessment of whether progress made towards targets is sufficient to ensure their fulfilment, indicating any remedial actions taken or planned, where appropriate.

6. CITIZEN'S SUMMARY (Article 50(9) of Regulation (EU) No 1303/2013)

A citizen's summary of the contents of the annual and the final implementation reports shall be made public and uploaded as a separate file in the form of annex to the annual and the final implementation report

A summary for the general public is attached.

7. REPORT ON THE IMPLEMENTATION OF FINANCIAL INSTRUMENTS (Article 46 of Regulation (EU) No 1303/2013)

The Program does not cater provide for the activation of financial instruments

8. WHERE APPROPRIATE, PROGRESS IN PREPARATION AND IMPLEMENTATION OF MAJOR PROJECTS AND JOINT ACTION PLANS (Article 101(h) and Article 111(3) of Regulation (EU) No 1303/2013 and Article 14(3)(b) of Regulation (EU) No 1299/2013)

8.1 Major projects

**Table 7
Major projects**

Project	CCI	Status of MP 1. completed 2. approved 3. submitted 4. planned for notification/ submission to Commission	Total investments	Total eligible costs	Planned notification/submission date (if applicable) (year, quarter)	Date of tacit agreement/ approval by Commission (if applicable)	Planned start of implementation (year, quarter)	Planned completion date (year, quarter)	Priority Axis/ Investment priorities	Current state of realisation – financial progress (% of expenditure certified to Commission compared to total eligible cost)	Current state of realisation – physical progress Main implementation stage of the project 1.completed/in operation; 2.advanced construction; 3. construction; 4.procurement ; 5. design	Main Outputs	Date of signature of first works contract (1) (if applicable)	Observations (if necessary)

(1) In the case of operations implemented under PPP structures the signing of the PPP contract between the public body and the private sector body (Article 102(3) of Regulation (EU) No 1303/2013)

Significant problems encountered in implementing major projects and measures taken to overcome them.

Not applicable

Any change planned in the list of major projects in the cooperation programme

Not applicable

8.2 Joint action plans

Progress in the implementation of different stages of joint action plans.

Not applicable

Table 8
Joint action plans

Title of the JAP	CCI	Stage of implementation of JAP 1. completed 2. > 50 % implemented 3 Star ted 4. approved 5. submitted 6. planned	Total eligible costs	Total public support	OP contr i -bution to JAP	Pr ior ity axis	Type of JAP 1. nor mal 2. pilot 3. YEI	[Planned] submission to the Commis - sion	[Planned] star t of implemen - tation	[Planned] completion	Main outputs and results]	Total eligible expenditure cer tifi ed to the Commis - sion	Obser va - tions (if necessar y)

Significant problems encountered and measures taken to overcome them.

Not applicable

**PART B - REPORTING SUBMITTED IN YEARS 2017, 2019 AND FINAL
IMPLEMENTATION REPORT (Article 50(4) of Regulation (EU) No 1303/2013 and
Article 14(4) of Regulation (EU) No 1299/2013)**

**9. ASSESSMENT OF THE IMPLEMENTATION OF THE COOPERATION PROGRAMME
(Article 50(4) of Regulation (EU) No 1303/2013 and Article 14(4) of Regulation (EU)
No 1299/2013)**

9.1 Information in Part A and achieving the objectives of the programme (Article 50(4) of Regulation (EU) No 1303/2013)

FOR EACH PRIORITY AXIS — Assessment of the information provided above and progress towards achieving the objectives of the programme, including the contribution of the ERDF to changes in the value of result indicators, when evidence is available from evaluations

NOT APPLICABLE

9.2 Specific actions taken to promote equality between men and women and to promote non-discrimination, in particular accessibility for persons with disabilities, and the arrangements implemented to ensure the integration of the gender perspective in the cooperation programme and operations (Article 50(4) of Regulation (EU) No 1303/2013 and Article 14(4), subparagraph 2, (d) of Regulation (EU) No 1299/2013)

An assessment of the implementation of specific actions to take into account the principles set out in Article 7 of Regulation (EU) No 1303/2013 on promotion of equality between men and women and non-discrimination, including, where relevant, depending on the content and objectives of the cooperation programme, an overview of specific actions taken to promote equality between men and women and to promote non-discrimination, including accessibility for persons with disabilities, and the arrangements implemented to ensure the integration of the gender perspective in the cooperation programme and operations

NOT APPLICABLE

9.3 Sustainable development (Article 50(4) of Regulation (EU) No 1303/2013 and Article 14(4), subpara-graph 2, (e) of Regulation (EU) No 1299/2013)

An assessment of the implementation of actions to take into account the principles set out in Article 8 of Regulation (EU) No 1303/2013 on sustainable development, including, where relevant, depending on the content and objectives of the cooperation programme, an overview of the actions taken to promote sustainable development in accordance with that Article

NOT APPLICABLE

9.4 Reporting on support used for climate change objectives (Article 50(4) of Regulation (EU) No 1303/2013)

Figures calculated automatically by the SFC2014 based on categorisation data.

Optional: clarification on the given values — <3500>

9.5 Role of partners in the implementation of the cooperation programme (Article 50(4) of Regulation (EU) No 1303/2013 and Article 14(4), subparagraph 1, (c) of Regulation (EU) No 1299/2013)

Assessment of the implementation of actions to take into account the role of partners referred to in Article 5 of Regulation (EU) No 1303/2013, including involvement of the partners in the implementation, monitoring and evaluation of the cooperation programme

NOT APPLICABLE

10. OBLIGATORY INFORMATION AND ASSESSMENT ACCORDING TO ARTICLE 14(4), SUBPARAGRAPH 1 (a) AND (b), OF REGULATION (EU) No 1299/2013

10.1 Progress in implementation of the evaluation plan and the follow-up given to the findings of evaluations

NOT APPLICABLE

10.2 The results of the information and publicity measures of the Funds carried out under the communication strategy

NOT APPLICABLE

11. ADDITIONAL INFORMATION WHICH MAY BE ADDED DEPENDING ON THE CONTENT AND OBJECTIVES OF THE COOPERATION PROGRAMME (Article 14(4), subparagraph 2 (a), (b), (c) and (f), of Regulation (EU) No 1299/2013)

11.1 Progress in implementation of the integrated approach to territorial development, including sustainable urban development, and community-led local development under the cooperation programme

NOT APPLICABLE

11.2 Progress in implementation of actions to reinforce the capacity of authorities and beneficiaries to administer and to use the ERDF.

NOT APPLICABLE

11.3 Contribution to macro-regional and sea basin strategies (where appropriate)

NOT APPLICABLE

11.4 Progress in the implementation of actions in the field of social innovation

NOT APPLICABLE

**12. FINANCIAL INFORMATION AT PRIORITY AXIS AND PROGRAMME LEVEL
(Articles 21(2) and 22(7) of Regulation (EU)No 1303/2013)**

For the purpose of assessing progress towards the achievement of milestones and targets set for financial indicators in the years 2018 and 2023, table 4 of Part A of this Annex shall have the following two additional columns:

13	14
Data for the purpose of the performance review and performance framework	
Only for report submitted in 2019: Total eligible expenditure incurred and paid by beneficiaries and certified to the Commission by 31/12/2018 Article 21(2) of Regulation (EU) No 1303/2013	Only for final implementation report: Total eligible expenditure incurred and paid by beneficiaries by 31/12/2023 and certified to the Commission Article 22(7) of Regulation (EU) No 1303/2013

**PART C - REPORTING SUBMITTED IN YEAR 2019 AND FINAL IMPLEMENTATION
REPORT (Article 50(5) of Regulation (EU)No 1303/2013)**

13. SMART, SUSTAINABLE AND INCLUSIVE GROWTH

Information and assessment of the programme contribution to achieving the Union strategy for smart, sustainable and inclusive growth.

NOT APPLICABLE

**14. ISSUES AFFECTING THE PERFORMANCE OF THE PROGRAMME AND
MEASURES TAKEN — PERFORMANCE FRAMEWORK (Article 50(2) of Regulation
(EU) No 1303/2013)**

Where the assessment of progress made with regard to the milestones and targets set out in the performance framework demonstrates that certain milestones and targets have not been achieved, Member States should outline the underlying reasons for failure to achieve these milestones in the report of 2019 (for milestones) and in the final implementation report (for targets).

NOT APPLICABLE