



Regional Operational Programme (ESF ROP) 2014-2020

Co-financed
by the European Social Fund (ESF)

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Employment Social inclusion
Training Growth Innovation

April 2015

The 2014-2020 ESF ROP: strategy

The Lombardy Region's 2014 - 2020 Regional Operational Programme (ROP) under the European Social Fund (ESF) makes available nearly one billion euros (€970,474,516) to support **social investment** in individual capacity-building with a view to the region's economic growth by focusing on the **competitiveness of its human capital**, on high levels of employment and on stronger social cohesion. The ESF ROP promotes an **inclusive model of growth** in keeping with the targets of the Europe 2020 strategy and the scope of the Lombardy regional government's policies for education and training, employment, fostering social inclusion and fighting poverty.

BUILDING THE PROGRAMME: STAGES AND PARTICIPANTS

Setting its own sights on the Europe 2020 strategy targets, the ESF ROP is intended to help boost the impetus and effectiveness of the Region's education, training, employment and social inclusion arrangements so as to tackle the tricky challenge of combining growth with a solidarity that concentrates on job creation and poverty reduction. The ROP strategy of targets, results and actions has been put together bearing in mind the policy guidelines for 2014-2020 at European and national level (viz, in addition to the Europe 2020 strategy, the Common Strategic Framework for Cohesion Policy, the European Commission services' Position Paper for Italy, the Partnership Agreement for Italy 2014 and Italy's own National Reform Programme) and the main regional needs as revealed by **analysis and assessment of the situation and through continuous dialogue with employers' and workers' organizations, local government and public bodies and the key players within the region**. This makes it possible to respond to the real requirements of Lombardy's social and economic situation by correctly interpreting both its opportunities and its weaknesses, and to find a strategy which concentrates on policies to combat the adverse effects of the economic crisis in terms of heightened risks of unemployment or short-time working and more widespread poverty and social exclusion.

Action areas

The priority axes of the strategy are focused on four Thematic Objectives (TOs) targeted in the priority action areas of the ESF ROP:

- TO 8 "Promoting high quality sustainable employment and supporting labour mobility"
- TO 9 "Promoting social inclusion; combating poverty and all forms of discrimination"
- TO 10 "Investing in education, vocational training, skills and lifelong learning"
- TO 11 "Enhancing the institutional capacity of public authorities/parties concerned and efficiency in government"

The ROP is accordingly designed to build a highly competitive knowledge-based economy by creating skilled, financially stable jobs against a backdrop of strong social cohesion.

THE MAIN CHALLENGES

The strategy of the ESF ROP is to concentrate investment on four strategic objectives:

- **to promote employment and support labour mobility** by means of policies to kick-start employment growth with an approach which covers all target groups, in synergy with interventions under the “Youth Guarantee” National Operational Programme
- **to promote social inclusion** through interventions supporting active inclusion especially in the labour market, and enhancing access to high quality services, promoting a joined-up approach to policy on employment and industrial relations so as to respond to people’s needs in an active, coherent and properly targeted manner, paying special attention to the those who are disabled, disadvantaged or otherwise at risk of being marginalized
- **to invest in human capital** through measures designed to cut school drop-out rates and improve the quality of education, vocational training, continuous retraining and further education, as a factor of strategic importance to Lombardy’s competitiveness, paying attention to young people
- to bring about the conditions that will **enhance the overall quality and efficiency of government** and of those involved in the effective carrying out of public policy, and promote the efficient and effective management of EU resources

Employment

The strategy of the ESF ROP for better job prospects has the following aims:

- **to boost employment**, especially of **women and the young**
- **to bear down on long-term unemployment** by promoting greater adaptability to the new circumstances in the economy and the jobs market and by updating skills throughout working life
- **to encourage steady employment and the redeployment of workers affected by the economic crisis**, by providing personalized services tailored to employers’ requirements

The ROP is intended to help generate a greater impact for existing policies to create jobs, foster labour demand and enhance workers’ qualifications and abilities. The interventions to promote employment are designed to counter the adverse effects of the economic crisis by providing particular support to the more vulnerable categories: young people, women, the long-term unemployed

and employees of failing businesses. Measures for young people are based on “active policy” principles and on various forms of co-operation with employers’ and workers’ organizations and with the nonprofit sector, promoting synergies between measures to promote inclusion in education and measures to ensure access to the jobs market. Young people’s employment is also being promoted through fruitful school/work alliances in a policy for young people which should achieve ongoing improvements in the future.

Social inclusion and the fight against poverty

The ESF ROP’s strategy for dealing with the new forms of marginalization and poverty has the following aims:

- **to promote active inclusion**, paying special attention to enhancing the employability of the highly disadvantaged or disabled and those in precarious circumstances – people at risk of falling into poverty or extreme marginalization
- **to encourage access to high quality sustainable services** in health and social care, as a factor that complements and amplifies the effects of active inclusion
- **to help prevent and mitigate extreme marginalization**, through rapid intervention to reduce the risk of sliding further into poverty

The ROP strategy takes account of the fact that poverty has grown in recent years from a fairly rare condition to something which threatens a considerable portion of the population across Europe, throughout Italy, and here in Lombardy. The social categories most exposed to the risk of poverty are children, young people, single-parent families or those with extra dependents, migrants, ethnic minorities and the disabled. The ESF ROP promotes social innovation and improvements in the quality of personal services with a view to ensuring that people who are disadvantaged or at risk of poverty are realistically included not only in the labour market but also in society at large.

Education and training

The ESF ROP’s strategy in support of investment in human capital has the following goals:

- to reduce the **school drop-out rate**
- to support the gaining of **vocational qualifications** necessary for successfully entering the jobs market
- **to enhance the range and quality of training** provided, so as to upgrade the skill level of the labour force

The ESF ROP contributes its own reinforcement to the regional government's education and vocational training policies: it promotes effective, high quality training courses that give young people the skills and qualifications needed to smooth their path into the labour market, in line with the EU's flagship initiative "Youth on the Move" and the Position Paper for Italy.

These interventions are intended to promote lifelong learning, increasing the opportunities for continuous improvement of vocational skills, especially for the more vulnerable in society. In line with the recommendations of another flagship initiative "An agenda for new skills and jobs", the ROP is meant to boost people's confidence in their own ability to tackle the challenges of employment in today's world and tomorrow's, as well as making Lombardy more competitive and so promoting its economic growth.

The ROP strategy also encourages the promotion and recognition of new forms of vocational qualification catering for the evolution of individual's needs and the way these are distributed over the region.

Institutional and administrative capacity-building

The ESF ROP's strategy in support of improved public services has the following goals:

- improving the management of the relations among institutions and between them and their various stakeholders **by developing Open Data and Open Government policies** for sharing and combining data and information and making them generally available in ever simpler and more accessible ways
- inventing and strengthening new ways to structure the region's **education and training networks**
- introducing control, validation and assessment tools to raise **the quality of services** provided
- coping with challenges efficiently and effectively by implementing **innovative policies**, not least in the light of institutional reform

By means of measures to strengthen the quality, effectiveness and efficiency of government, the ESF ROP aims to bring about improvements in the planning and running of public services, with e-government initiatives, experimental working patterns based on exploiting partnerships and subsidiarities, and upgrading the capabilities of all concerned with education and training, employment, industrial relations and social policy.

The Single Employment Allocation (DUL)

In continuity with the earlier programme (2007-2013), the main instrument used by the Lombardy regional government for allocating loans under the programme is the Single Employment Allocation (*Dote Unica Lavoro*, DUL). This is designed as a **single comprehensive tool for implementing employment policies**, simplified and results-oriented in terms of getting people into work, which works through a system of accredited operators subject to controls and assessments, and promotes networking among the accredited institutions.

The Single Employment Allocation is a means of responding to people's needs at various stages of their working lives by offering an integrated range of services tailored to the individual. The Allocation can be applied to individual interventions, in relation to the objectives of regional training and employment policy in its various implementing provisions.

By means of a combination of variables (age, gender, employment status and level of education) the beneficiaries are allocated to different assistance bands according to the difficulty of getting them into the labour market; they choose their particular measures on the basis of their own needs from a comprehensive range of training and employment services, incentives and other personalized interventions.

Integrating ESF and ERDF

In a break with the past, the Lombardy regional government has decided to base the construction and implementation of the ESF ROP strategy on the key principle of **integration with the 2014-2020 ROP of the ERDF** (European Regional Development Fund) by setting up a single Executive Authority to ensure that the two programmes, being constructed in parallel to ensure maximum impact in the Region, complement each other across the board.

Furthermore the scope of the ESF ROP includes measures which will combine with and reinforce those of the ERDF ROP's **Sustainable Urban Development Policy**, which supports urban regeneration projects and concentrates on social housing in a number of council house estates in the Milan Metropolitan Area where there is considerable social and economic deprivation.

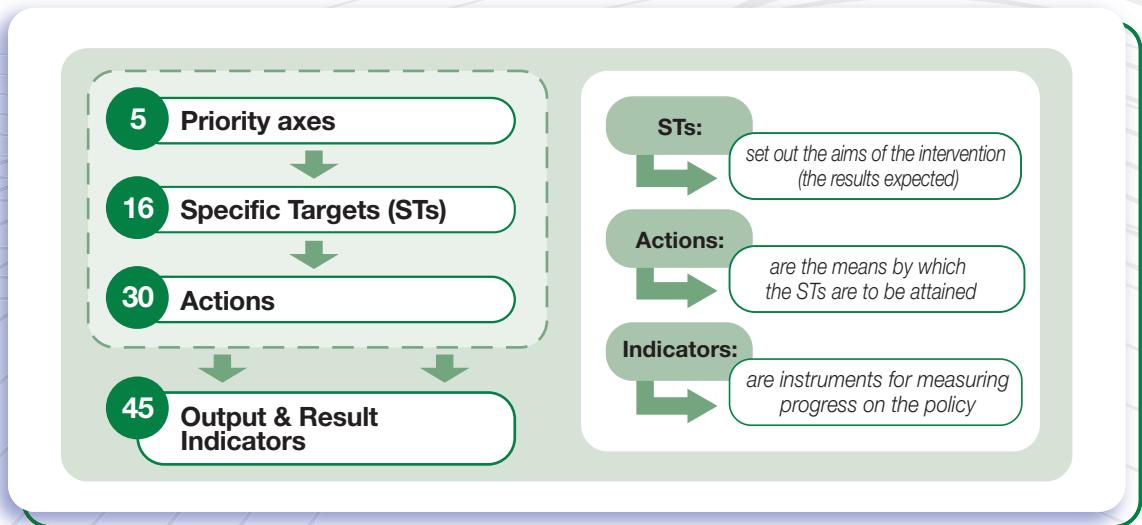
The ESF ROP will dovetail with the "**Strategy for Hinterland Areas**" – also set out in the ERDF ROP – which features a large-scale approach to local development for areas suffering from demographic crisis, geographical isolation and poor public services (health, education and transport).

About the European Social Fund (ESF)

The European Social Fund (ESF) is a **financial instrument** jointly funded ("co-financed") by the European Union and individual member states, **which supports employment, helps people to find better jobs and works for fairer working opportunities for all**. Creating new and better jobs and achieving an inclusive society are the core elements of the Europe 2020 strategy for smart, sustainable and inclusive growth. The massive investment deployed through the European Social Fund is designed to mitigate the effects of the economic crisis and to invest in the human capital of the European Union; in particular it addresses the situation of those who have greater difficulty in finding a place in the labour market and in society.

Structure of the 2014-2020 ESF ROP

The strategic articulation of the ESF ROP concentrates on five main mutually consistent and integrated **priority axes**. Each of these has its **specific targets** (STs), with the outcomes expected for each ST, and the **actions** to be co-financed by the Programme are related to these STs. The degree to which the specific targets are attained and the corresponding actions implemented is measured using a set of output and result indicators.



Priority axes

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**Priority axis I
Employment**
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**Priority axis II
Social inclusion and the fight against poverty**
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**Priority axis III
Education and training**
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**Priority axis IV
Institutional and administrative capacity-building**
- 
**Priority axis V
Technical support**



Priority axis I Employment

Funds allocated: **euro 358,000,000 (36.89% of total ROP resources)**

To counter the effects of the economic crisis, above all in terms of high levels of unemployment and of young people Not in Employment, Education or Training (NEET), long-term unemployment and the need to redeploy employees of failing businesses and keep them in work, Priority axis I aims for a sustainable labour market through the strategic implementation of policies designed not only to combat unemployment but also to support re-skilling, up-skilling and labour mobility. Here the resources of the ESF help to implement personalized services with a powerful emphasis on getting people into jobs.

Specific targets and corresponding actions

1 Promote the employment of young people and reduce the number of NEETs, in synergy with the Youth Guarantee initiative (see para. 8.1) with the aim of fostering the creation of permanent work opportunities to counter casual employment

- active policy initiatives for the employment of young people, with special attention to those industries offering better growth prospects (8.1.1)
- advanced training and research career paths, promoting interventions that make it easier for graduates to start on sustainable, long-term, truly worthwhile careers and foster integration between the academic world and the Lombardy economy (8.1.4)

2 Promote women's employment (see para. 8.2) through greater female participation in the workforce, so helping to support household incomes. This contribution is essential at times of high unemployment, and also relieves some of the burden of an aging population

- active policy initiatives for the employment of women, with special attention to those industries offering better growth prospects (8.2.2)
- local information and outreach campaigns to raise and spread awareness of the main schemes available, so that women know about the principal career development tools at their disposal (8.2.6)

3 Encourage rehabilitation and employment of the long-term unemployed and those who find it harder to get jobs, and support people at risk of long-term unemployment (see para. 8.5), through interventions to develop adaptability to the new circumstances in the economy and the jobs market and to update skills throughout working life

- active policy initiatives to provide jobs for the long-term unemployed and those in precarious positions, with special attention to those industries offering better growth prospects (8.5.1)
- vocational retraining pathways to develop and upgrade vocational skills and capabilities, based on study of businesses' requirements for trained staff as seen from systematic surveys and/or expressed by employers (8.5.5)



4

Encourage steady employment and the redeployment of employees from failing businesses (see para. 8.6), by means of measures to upgrade and update individual workers' skills according to their personal characteristics: the aim is to create a more highly skilled workforce that can contribute to and cope with the technological and organizational changes increasingly affecting businesses

- integrated active and passive policy measures including re-skilling and secondment of staff from failing businesses in connection with company conversion and restructuring plans

Main beneficiaries

Accredited operators and institutions; businesses and business networks including nonprofit organizations; universities; training institutions; younger and older workers; the Regional Treasury; the social security institution INPS, etc.

Main recipients

Long-term unemployed or those at risk of long-term unemployment; young people aged 15-29 (continuing the Youth Guarantee scheme); unemployed/economically inactive women; workers in firms faced with the need to adapt to changes in society and the economy; employees of failing businesses and those who have dropped out of the jobs market or are on the point of doing so.



Priority axis II Social inclusion and the fight against poverty

Funds allocated: **euro 227,100,000 (23.40% of total ROP resources)**

Priority axis II is intended to enhance opportunities for the social integration and employment of people in difficult or disadvantaged circumstances, by promoting pathways to active inclusion designed to improve the employment prospects of the most disadvantaged, the disabled and people threatened by poverty and extreme marginalization. Aiming at joined-up and mutually complementary interventions for inclusion, this Priority supports action to improve access to good, sustainable healthcare and social care services in order to deal with situations of extreme marginalization, not least by deploying rapid intervention services to reduce the risk of sliding further into poverty.

Specifically, the aim is to promote social inclusion by concentrating mainly on a policy for active inclusion based on the region's Single Multidimensional Needs Assessment model and consisting of two pillars: the creation of inclusive labour markets and access to high quality services as a factor that complements and amplifies the effects of active inclusion, so as to respond to people's needs with coherent and targeted actions, paying special attention to the disabled, the disadvantaged and those at risk of marginalization.

Specific targets and corresponding actions

1 Poverty reduction, combating social exclusion and promoting social innovation (see para. 9.1), not least by making the best possible use of Third Sector organizations as actual "social managers" of council housing whose ongoing presence in the field as auxiliaries to public sector bodies can promote processes for council tenants' social inclusion by improving life skills and fostering stable, co-operative neighbourly relations

- support for people in temporary financial difficulties, by means including micro-credit and help that could be returned in the form of hours of community service (9.1.3)

2 Enhancing the employability and labour market participation of the most vulnerable people (see para. 9.2), so as to encourage the process of active inclusion, not least through assessments using a multidimensional approach to identify active ways in which they can be counselled, guided and supported in returning to school, work, training and society generally in a properly targeted and personalized manner

- multidisciplinary treatment interventions to promote the inclusion of the disabled in the world of employment, by working out individually tailored projects (9.2.1)
- multidisciplinary treatment interventions to promote the inclusion in the world of employment of the most vulnerable, those at risk of discrimination and clients of the social services (9.2.2)



3 Improving children's social care and education services and care services for people of limited independence, and strengthening the Region's healthcare and social care infrastructure and the range of health and social services provided (see para. 9.3), so as to ensure that bread-winners or potential bread-winners in households with members who need care or support get what they need without necessarily having to withdraw from (or not enter) the labour market; this applies especially to the women in such households

- implementing good social and educational services for infants, with a view to easing parents' work/life balance and encouraging households' access to the network of social and educational services; raising the quality of those services (9.3.3)
- implementing good services for people of limited independence, so as to encourage households' access to the network of healthcare and social care services and raise the quality of those services, as well as promoting regular employment in this sector (9.3.6)

4 Reducing the number of badly-housed families with acute social and/or economic problems (see para. 9.4), as a way of kick-starting a virtuous circle that would help them to become less prone to domestic problems, to re-think their patterns of consumption, and to find new ways of being productive and actively participating in the communities to which they belong

- services to help and guide those in social housing, as part of innovative social and housing experiments to try and meet the needs of specific target groups with severe social and economic problems (9.4.2)

5 Reducing extreme marginalization among homeless people, and measures to promote their economic and social inclusion (see para. 9.5), in urban situations featuring more extensive vulnerability and greater social insecurity due to a stagnant jobs market and/or difficult family or household circumstances

- funding of projects in the main urban neighbourhoods for targeted interventions to strengthen the network of services for rapid social intervention to help the homeless and support them on the path to independence (9.5.9)

Main beneficiaries

Local public institutions; accredited training and employment institutions; accredited institutions managing healthcare and social care service units; social enterprises and Third Sector organizations registered with the regional government; the Regional Treasury, etc.

Main recipients

Problem households, disabled people at severe risk of social exclusion, people living on their own or without an established home, the chronically sick, severely or very severely disabled and unable to care for themselves; young people in fragile family circumstances, vulnerable people



Priority axis III Education and training

Funds allocated: **euro 332,500,000 (34.26% of total ROP resources)**

Priority axis III is a contribution to the Lombardy regional government's strategy of investing in human capital, not least to help prevent social exclusion and work with other such programmes to put together a determined effort to lower the school drop-out rate and the numbers failing to complete training, to provide incentives for excellence and motivate talent both at school and on starting a life of work. To trace out this road map encouraging successful training and raising the level of the education system, the Priority also supports interventions to improve the provision of technical and vocational education and training.

Specifically, the ESF ROP aims to support measures designed to lower school drop-out rates and by means of education, vocational training, continuous retraining and further education to promote the development of human capital as a factor of strategic importance to Lombardy's competitiveness, with special attention to the rising generation.

The Lombardy regional government takes the view that a good education system is one of the most important factors contributing to everyone's personal and cultural development. Raising the level of personal capabilities, including those of people already in the labour market, helps individuals not only to establish themselves in the job market, but also to avoid any form of social marginalization. This in turn helps to mitigate the impact of the economic crisis on employment as well as more long-term challenges such as globalization, for instance, or the need to constantly develop new technologies and consolidate a shared system of values.

Specific targets and corresponding actions

1 **Reduce the drop-out rate from training and education** (see para. 10.1), by – among other things – consolidating the Permanent Education & Training system (leFP) as a comprehensive, high quality training pathway especially for those young people most at risk of dropping out of school, constructing tailor-made ways forward around the basic idea that the individual is central to the exercise and that each learner's potential should accordingly be maximized and valued

- implementing leFP pathways which match the region's main avenues of economic and business development, in a way that makes those pathways more attractive and counters early dropping out from training or school, through innovative and diversified interventions across the region to provide training that matches the needs of the region's economy (10.1.7)

2 **Boost workforce skills and make it easier for workers to get their first and subsequent jobs** (see para. 10.4)

- training initiatives that effectively relate to the requirements for getting first and subsequent jobs, directed primarily at the target groups where they will have most impact, as well as initiatives for specialist training and business skills (10.4.1)
- action to update skills (including IT skills) throughout the workforce, not least using innovative methods that match the region's main lines of economic development (10.4.2)



- 3 **Improving the quality of technical and vocational education and training provided**, so that they effectively meet the needs of the local economy (see para. 10.6) and foster rapid engagement in the world of work at a high level and also enhance the expertise available within local networks such as Vocational Technical Centres (PTPs), providing effective and efficient collaboration between the education system and the economy
- interventions to raise the level of initial technical/vocational education and training and of the Advanced Technical Institutes (ITS), with particular regard to weaker learners; system-wide measures for the development and coordination of the ITS and PTPs (10.6.1)
 - training to professional standards in keeping with the needs of the local economy, in particular strengthening the ITS and PTPs in ways closely related to that economy's expressed needs (10.6.2)

Main beneficiaries

Training and education organizations; accredited institutions; universities and equivalent institutions; research organizations; businesses; Advanced Technical Institutes and Vocational Technical Centres

Main recipients

Students and their families; adult jobseekers (unemployed or economically inactive); workers between jobs or looking for redeployment; workers (employed or self-employed) setting up micro-enterprises; members of co-operatives, graduate and postgraduate students, etc...



Priority axis IV Institutional and administrative capacity-building

Funds allocated: **euro 20,000,000 (2.06% of total ROP resources)**

The interventions promoted under Priority axis IV are intended to develop the conditions for improving the performance of government as a whole and of the entire chain of players involved in the successful implementation of public policy. The interventions are designed in particular to consolidate the necessary conditions for sharing, integrating and making generally available the data held by government so that it can be used both by institutions responsible for regional programmes and plans and by executive bodies, with special attention to the practical needs of the region's institutions. Computerization, staff training in the various areas of work, and the improvement of organizational processes are some of the levers of change in public administration.

Attention will be paid to those requirements concerning personal safety and civil protection, and to innovation in the running of those services which have the greatest impact throughout Lombardy.

Priority axis IV is designed to foster change within government by working on the quality and capabilities of the institutions involved in managing European funds, raising the level of qualification of the staff and the quality of organization, and strengthening relations among institutions.

As in the earlier planning period, the ROP also supports interventions to improve the efficiency of the legal system and the management of culture so as to make the most of the region's public and private assets, not least by generating digital versions and then making them available in public and school libraries.

Specific targets and corresponding actions

1 Increase transparency and interoperability, and access to government-held data (see para. 11.1)

- interventions aimed at the development of the skills needed to ensure the quality, accessibility, availability, release and re-use of government-held data (11.1.1)
- Open Government projects to foster transparency, collaboration and participation through the involvement of people/stakeholders and initiatives for the re-use of government-held data, citizen participation, and monitoring by society at large (11.1.2)
- improvements in organizational processes for better integration and interoperability of statistical and administrative knowledge bases, first and foremost in the areas of education, labour, social security and social services, the voluntary sector, internal and external affairs and public administration (11.1.3)

2 Improving government services (see para. 11.3)

- specifying disciplinary standards for quality of service and the development of high quality systems; monitoring and assessment of service provision and standards (11.3.2)
- capacity-building and empowerment measures for institutions, operators and stakeholders including the staff involved in the various public systems: education, training, labour and employment services and social policy, as well as the staff of health services, local government and public bodies, customs and the police (11.3.3)
- measures to develop and network institutions, promoting the involvement of the various stakeholders, with particular reference to the social services, employment services, healthcare services and academic/training institutions (11.3.6)



3 Improving the efficiency and quality of the service provided by the legal system (see. 11.4)

- Measures to improve the efficiency and quality of the service provided by the courts through the use of new technology, organizational support for computerization and networking of their offices (11.4.1)

Main beneficiaries

Public organizations including local government and public bodies; accredited organizations; outside companies; universities, etc.

Main recipients

Individual citizens; stakeholders; businesses; trade & industry associations; support managers; court offices; co-operatives; local public institutions; local government and other public authorities; registered regional voluntary sector organizations; schools and academic institutions; cultural institutes and venues; training organizations and other accredited organizations, including independent schools and academic institutions; universities; ITS; employees of the Lombardy regional government and its extended ecosystem; social and healthcare services; local police; civil protection organizations, including voluntary organizations; the national civil service offices in the Region (Prefettura); national police; carabinieri, economic and social partners, etc.



Priority axis V Technical support

Funds allocated: **euro 32,874,516 (3.39% of total ROP resources)**

Improving the administrative capacity of the various bodies involved in implementing and running the Programme is fundamental to achieving the results and attaining the targets set. Priority axis V funds technical assistance interventions in support of the activities of managing, monitoring, assessment, information/communication and control of the ROP so as to ensure that it is effectively and efficiently implemented.

Specific targets and corresponding actions

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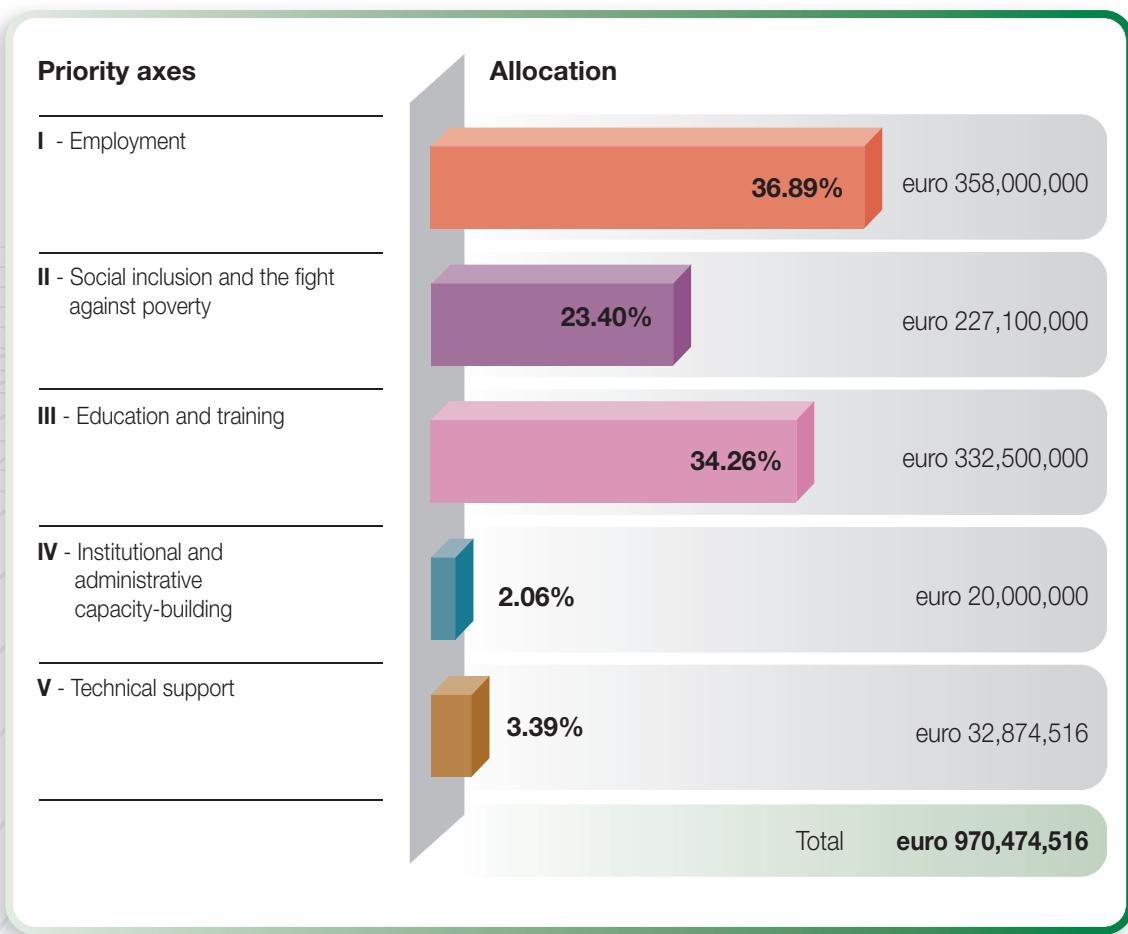
Support the implementation of the ROP in its main stages: planning, execution, surveillance and control (see para. V. 1)

- planning, execution, surveillance and control (Action V. 1.1)
- setting up recruitment arrangements to reinforce the staff engaged in planning and managing the interventions, having first specified exact criteria for implementation (see para. V.1.2)
- assessment and research (see para. V.1.3)
- information and communication (see para. V.1.4)

Main beneficiaries

Executive authorities and control bodies involved in implementing and running the Programme

The 2014-2020 ESF ROP: Financial Plan



The Programme has allocated funds of €970,474,516 in total, 50% from the ESF and 50% co-financed (35% by the Italian government and 15% by the Lombardy regional government).

Executive Authority, 2014-2020 ESF and ERDF

Lombardy Region

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