



Just Transition Platform – Project fiche:

THE GREEN&BLUE ECONOMY PROGRAMME: HELPING JOBSEEKERS FIND THE RIGHT JOB IN EMERGING SECTORS

This document is part of a series presenting information and lessons learned on policy approaches at national, regional or local level supporting a just transition to a climate-neutral economy. The Just Transition Platform (JTP) assists EU Member States and regions to unlock the support in this transition. Visit the JTP website: https://ec.europa.eu/regional_policy/funding/just-transition-fund/just-transition-platform_en

Member State:

Italy

Region:

Sardinia

Sector:

Green and Blue Economy

Total project budget (€):

EUR 11 666 857.00

Financing conditions (co-financing rate in %):

N/A

Sources of funding (in €):

N/A

EU funding:

European Social Fund (2014–2020) / European Social Fund+ (2021–2027): The implementation of Sardinia's regional operational programme (POR) 2014–2020 – which includes the Green and Blue Economy initiative – received financing from the European Social Funds 2014–2020 for a total of EUR 222 400 000.00.

National funding:

The implementation of Sardinia's POR 2014–2020 required matching contributions, namely EUR 222 400 000.00 from the national purse.

Regional funding:

N/A

Duration:

2014–2020

Responsible Managing Authority/Agency:

Regional labour market authority (*Assessorato Del Lavoro, Formazione Professionale, Cooperazione e Sicurezza Sociale*)

Summary

In April 2016, the Sardinian regional authority for labour and employment published an initiative for the development of the Green and Blue Economy, sectors that offer good growth prospects in the region. The project was meant to create job opportunities by designing and carrying out active labour market policies, namely formation courses to build the skills needed across the economy. The training curricula were proposed by private organisations and addressed two specific objectives: on the

one hand, fostering occupation especially for marginalised jobseekers and the long-term unemployed; on the other hand, reinforcing the productive system of the region by creating the pool of skills needed for firms to thrive, which included both vocational ones and entrepreneurial/managerial ones. The initiative occurred within the context of the POR 2014–2020, which was financed for 50 % through the European Social Fund (ESF).

Type of activities:

Through the activation of a series of public tenders, the regional labour authority financed several courses in fields designated as deserving of public funding insofar as pertinent to Sardinia's Smart Specialisation Strategy (S3). These are specifically biomedicine, bioeconomy, ICT, agrifood, aerospace, sustainable tourism and cultural assets and intelligent networks for energy flow management. While the above-mentioned fields represented the key areas for growth, the groupings were to be considered only indicative, and each proposal for projects was evaluated on a case-by-case basis. In particular, two types of projects were eligible for funding. On the one hand, those aimed at fostering entrepreneurship and the set-up of new firms in the Green and Blue Economy domain. On the other hand, training for the development and certification of skills needed within the Green and Blue Economy.

Goals and approach:

The goals of the Green and Blue Economy can be traced back to two specific actions in the POR. First, Objective 8.6: favour long-lasting occupation growth, addressing jobseekers facing particularly dire circumstances. Second, Objective 10.4: to foster the skills of the labour force, also facilitating interregional, national, and transnational mobility and favouring work placements.

The regional authority for labour set out to accomplish these objectives via the public financing of initiatives to favour a prosperous Green and Blue Economy. For proposals to be eligible, they had to be put forward by accredited educational providers in partnership with groups representing local interests, in the spirit of community-led local development.

Important outputs, results or achievements:

The initiative was set to target up to 10 000 people. While the operational programme clearly defined the output indicators to monitor the project's effectiveness – i.e. the number of participants to the courses that were either in employment or started a business after six months from completion – and the objective to be attained – i.e. set percentage increases over the baseline values of the indicators as measured in 2014 – a formal evaluation has yet to be published. On a more qualitative basis, it was stated by the director of the programme that the initiative represents the best example of ESF-funded policies in the region of Sardinia for the period 2014–2020.¹

¹ <https://ec.europa.eu/esf/main.jsp?catId=46&langId=en&projectId=3637>

Scalability² and transferability³:

The initiative is highly transferable. The only pre-requisites are the availability of accredited educational providers and engagement from local actors, both of which either feature or can be stimulated in a number of EU regions. It is also important to have a clear understanding of the areas where training could lead to the greater benefits, as prescribed by the S3 philosophy. Furthermore, this type of projects fits in perfectly with the *raison d'être* of the European Social Funds (and in the later European Social Fund+), so it is therefore conceivable that other Member States will successfully apply for such funding opportunities.

Concerning scalability, it should be noted that a positive experience in Sardinia would deserve replication across a number of regions in Italy, especially in the south of the country. The field of sustainable tourism represents indeed one of the comparative advantages of the area, which should be strengthened through purposeful and bespoke training curricula.

Key success factors and lessons learnt:

The importance of capitalising on regional comparative advantages as prescribed by Smart Specialisation Strategies appears as one of the key takeaways from this experience. Another aspect worth emphasising is the inclusion of local actors for an effective mapping of the needs of the business community and consequently of the tailoring of training curricula.

Key challenges:

Sardinia is faced with a few structural challenges with regards to employment. First and foremost, Sardinia has historically faced higher unemployment rates compared to the national average in Italy. The situation is even more precarious when one focuses on youth unemployment. Second, the region has a poorly diversified economy, exhibiting an economic gearing that relies mostly on tourism, agriculture and low value-added manufacturing. Therefore, the project's focus areas can contribute to bring benefits to the region's economy.

Tools for supporting economic diversification and reskilling/ upskilling via projects:

- providing workforce and start-up with training and upskilling programmes;
- ensuring well targeted financing and investment;
- capitalising on unique regional strengths for innovation;
- supporting green skills and jobs through training and upskilling.

Central framework conditions⁴:

It is generally the case that Mediterranean regions perform worse than the rest of the EU for what concerns GDP per capita, employment and innovation. The composition of economic sectors in Mediterranean regions, particularly a higher reliance on agriculture and tourism, can influence their performance. These sectors can be more susceptible to external shocks, seasonality, and global market dynamics, making them vulnerable during economic downturns or crises. Sardinia is no exception. Its economy is still largely traditional and slow in both the adoption of innovative process and in terms of research and innovation outputs. The region is in fact facing low levels of private investment (at 17 % of the EU average), which limits its productive

potential. The business fabric is dominated by SMEs, with firms below 50 employees accounting for 99.5 % of the corporate population. Coupled with infrastructure in need of improvements, all of the above contribute to a difficult economic outlook which guarantees very few employment opportunities and pushes many inhabitants to migrate. However, the setting up of business clusters devoted to the Green and Blue Economy appear to be a way out of this development trap.

² Scalability entails that a policy approach can be adapted to a bigger scale than just the local context.

³ Transferability entails that a policy approach can be applicable to a similar setting and replicated.

⁴ Framework conditions encompass the institutional, informational and socio-economic factors that determine a given environment (contextual information), e.g. market conditions, access to finance, tax regulation, infrastructure and support.

Outlook:

After the 2014–2020 programming period, the ESF evolved into the European Social Fund+, which governs EU structural investments in the fields of employment and social inclusion from 2021 to 2027. While the core principles remain unchanged, the ESF+ extends its scope to cover a wider range of social policies. In Sardinia,

this translates into an even stronger emphasis on employment, formation, social inclusion, and youth employment, which get allocated respectively 32.5 %, 24.5 %, 27 % and 16 % of the overall budget of EUR 744 million.

Partners & contacts:

Regional Operational Programme management authority
(Regione Sardegna)

Website/Social media:

<https://www.sardegna lavoro.it/>

Sources:

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