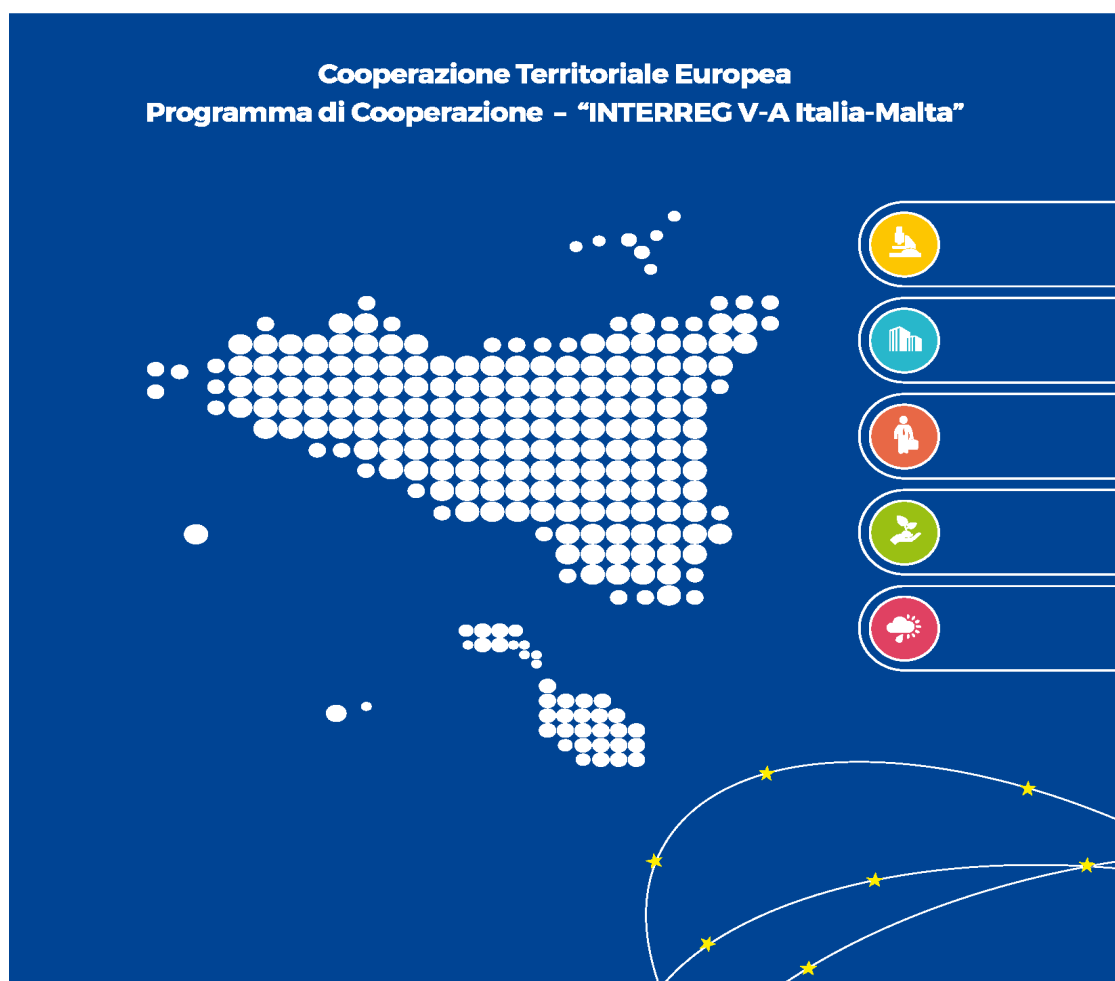


## PUBLIC SUMMARY – ANNUAL IMPLEMENTATION REPORT 2020

(under Article 50, paragraph 9, of Regulation (EU) 1303/2013)



In 2020, the action of the MA and MNCA with the support of the JS supported the programme axes implementation in the face of the complex situation caused by the Covid-19 pandemic.

## 1. Physical and financial implementation of axes

Regarding the implementation of the projects financed under the **Public Notice 01/2016**, during the 2020 year, the Managing Authority and the Maltese National Coordinating Authority, in order to ensure sound and efficient financial management of the programme, have undertaken corrective actions to ensure specific measures providing exceptional flexibility in the use of ESI funds in response to the COVID-19 outbreak, taking into account the EC clarifications within the e-wiki platform.

Indications were provided to the beneficiaries for the continuation and conclusion of activities in the restrictions phase caused by the emergency. Specifically, the following 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 of exceeding the threshold of 40% of the expenditure item "personnel costs" for each beneficiary provided that the overall percentage of the expenditure item "staff costs" at project level did not exceed 40% of the direct costs of the whole project, 4) possibility of proposing to the MA additional "COVID-oriented" activities for measures to contrast, contain and adapt to the COVID-19 epidemic by projects focusing on the themes of "quality of life and health of citizens".

Within the framework of the above-mentioned procedure, *covid-oriented* actions were also presented and approved by the ITAMA project for the development of a Web App managing students' school access basing on their symptoms and an e-learning platform with educational content; by MEDIWARN for the improvement of biosensors supporting medical and nursing staff to provide better care to patients affected by Covid-19; by ENISIE for the provision of innovative support services to enterprises facing difficulty due to the pandemic; by SIMIT THARSY for the implementation of civil protection measures to counter, contain and adapt to the epidemic consequences.

With reference to the **Public Notice 2/2019**, the evaluation of the projects was completed during 2020. From the results of the evaluation of the projects under the Notice 2/2019, the MA and the MNCA have agreed to submit to the Monitoring Committee an amendment to the financial tables of the programme in accordance with the provisions of the Regulation (EU) 2020/460, in order to finance an additional project proposal under the IP 8.e of the SO 2.2.

The final evaluation list of the project proposals for the SO 2.2, 3.1, 3.2 of the Notice 2/2019 was definitively approved by the MC on 03/09/2010, ratified by the MA with DDG no. 584 of 29/09/2010 and notified to the beneficiaries on 15/10/2010.

Within the framework of the Public Notice 02/2019, as of 31/12/2020 a total of 9 projects have been financed as follows: no. 2 projects under the IP 8.e-SO 2.2; no. 6 projects under the IP 6.d-SO 3.1; no. 1 project under the IP 5.b-SO 3.2. The total amount that can be financed for the above-mentioned 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 by the beneficiaries.

During 2020, the Managing Authority and the Maltese National Coordinating Authority agreed to submit to the Monitoring Committee the **re-modulation of the programme** pursuant to art. 30 and par. 5 of Annex II of the Regulation (EU) no. 1303/2013. Consistent with the revision of the financial framework for each Axis, the amendment has re-determined the target of the result and output indicators, the latter associated with the SOs affected by the proposed amendment of the

financial plan. The proposal was approved by the MC on 23/12/2020 and submitted to the EC via SFC2014 on the same date.

The programme implementation, management, monitoring and surveillance ensured, at the date of 31/12/2020, the achievement of the N+3 disbursement target through the submission of a payment request of € 11,486,334.51 (ERDF) against an expected disbursement target of € 11,026,482.23.

## **2. Evaluation of the Programme**

On the basis of art. 114 of Reg. (EU) no. 1303/2013, the MA has drawn up the plan and, on the basis of its contents, on 16 January 2020 (prot. 536) commissioned the Nucleo di Valutazione e Verifica degli Investimenti Pubblici (NVVIP) of the Sicilian Region, an independent technical structure, to carry out the implementation assessment (Part II). The report was released in June 2020.

The II phase of the implementation assessment offers an update of the first report with reference to the aspects related to the organisation and functionality of the structures responsible for the implementation of the Programme as well as to the adequacy of the procedures adopted for the selection of the operations and on the other hand an overview related to the capacity of the Programme to achieve the expected results within the 2023 year. Furthermore, the report analyses the effects of the enlargement of the cooperation area, the integration degree with other EU instruments and the first evidence of the communication strategy effectiveness.

The effectiveness and efficiency of the application and selection processes assessment highlighted a comparatively positive and partially improved pattern in the evolution between the first Public Notice of 2016 and the one of 2019.

In terms of information and communication activities, several activities have been carried out to ensure the Programme's actions required visibility and, above all, to meet the communication obligations towards the beneficiaries provided for by the EU regulations. In this sense, concerning both Public Notice 1/2016 and Public Notice 2/2019, several promotional events have been realised on the entire cooperation area territory.

With regard to the provision of projects selection documentation, during the evolution pattern between the first and second Notices, appropriate simplification measures have been introduced, partly facilitating the participation of potential beneficiaries and partly contributing to streamlining the proposal evaluation process.

Concerning the implementation tools effectiveness, the financial allocation of the Public Notice 1/2016 shows a patchy pattern, with SOs that have met with a high level of territorial feedback and SOs with a lower response. The lower feedback from the SO of Axis 2 is consistent with the lower participation of certain types of beneficiaries who should have been interested in this type of action. This is an innovative area for the Programme's experience, which - on the contrary - in the core areas of innovation and environmental protection, has received significant participation from the territory.

The management structure of the programme MA was affected by exogenous processes that weakened its overall administrative capacity and required adopting temporary solutions to compensate for the limited human resources available to manage and control the selected operations.

Various solutions have been adopted in implementing the Programme to reduce the administrative burdens for applicants and beneficiaries.

Concerning the capacity of the Programme to achieve the expected results, the implementation state shows a differentiated picture of the indicators foreseen by the CP, which in some cases appear to have already been achieved, while in others they are still far from the predefined target. Furthermore, in the scenario of the COVID 19 emergency, the implementation of the CP is affected by the elements of uncertainty and risk factors that involve the entire programming cycle of the SEI Funds.

Concerning the Programme strategy in coordination with other EU instruments, the degree of integration of the Programme with other EU instruments appears modest.