



Unione europea
Fondo sociale europeo



MINISTERO DEL LAVORO
E DELLE POLITICHE SOCIALI

Ufficio Centrale per l'Orientamento e
la Formazione Professionale dei Lavoratori



ISFOL

National ESF Evaluation Unit

The Midterm Evaluation of 2000-2006 Objective 3 Community Support Framework in Italy

Executive Summary

Draft

**November
2003**

National ESF Evaluation Unit

The Midterm Evaluation of 2000-2006 Objective 3 Community Support Framework in Italy

Executive Summary

Draft

November 2003

INDEX

INTRODUCTION	6
FIRST PART: GENERAL ASPECTS	9
1.1. Analysis of the demographic, economic and regulatory context	9
1.2. Relevancy of the Objective 3 Community Support Framework strategy	12
SECOND PART: THE EVALUATION OF THE OBJECTIVE 3 COMMUNITY SUPPORT FRAMEWORK. AN OVERVIEW	14
2.1. Analysis of the implementing programme	14
2.2. Implementation of the Objective 3 Community Support Framework	18
THIRD PART: THE EVALUATION OF THE COMMUNITY SUPPORT FRAMEWORK BY POLICY FIELD/PRIORITY/ MEASURE	22
3.1. Priority A – Development and promotion of active labour market policies to combat and prevent unemployment, prevent long-term unemployment of men and women, help reintegrate the unemployed in the labour market and support the job placement of young people and male and female returners	22
3.2. Measure A1: organisation of employment services	24
3.3. Measure A2: integration and reintegration in the labour market of young people and adults under the preventive approach	25
3.4. Measure A3: integration and reintegration in the labour market of men and women outside the market for over six or twelve months	27
3.5. Priority B – Measure B1: integration or reintegration in the labour market of disadvantaged groups	30
3.6. Priority C: promotion and improvement of vocational training, education and guidance within the framework of a lifelong learning policy to facilitate and improve access to and integration in the labour market, improving and sustaining employability and promoting occupational mobility	32
3.7. Measure C1: adjustment of the vocational training and educational system	33
3.8. Measure C2: school and training dropout prevention	35
3.9. Measure C3: higher training	36

3.10. Measure C4: lifelong training	37
3.11. Priority D: promotion of a competent, qualified and adaptable labour force, of innovation and of adaptability in the organisation of work, of the development of the entrepreneurial spirit, of conditions that help to create jobs as well as the training and strengthening of human potential in research, science and technology	39
3.12. Measure D1: development of continuing training, labour-market flexibility and competitiveness of public and private enterprises, with priority for SMEs	41
3.13. Measure D2: adjustment of Public Administration responsibilities	42
3.14. Measure D3: development and consolidation of entrepreneurship with priority for new employment basins	44
3.15. Measure D4: enhancing human resources in the technological research and development sector	46
3.16. Priority E and gender mainstreaming - Measure E1 promotion of women's participation in the labour market	47
3.17. Priority F: accompaniment of the Community Support Framework and operational programmes	50
3.18. Measure F1: management, running, monitoring and supervision of expenditure	51
3.19. Measure F2: other technical assistance expenditure	52
FOURTH PART: THE POLICIES CO-FINANCED BY THE 2000-2006 EUROPEAN SOCIAL FUND	54
4.1. Analysis of the Community Support Framework by project typology	54
4.2. The Objective 3 Community Support Framework analysis from the viewpoint of the European Employment Strategy	57
FIFTH PART: THE EVALUATION OF SOME KEY THEMES	59
5.1. Local development	59
5.2. Information society	60
5.3. Quality of regional training systems	61
SIXTH PART: THE EVALUATION OF THE OBJECTIVE 3 COMMUNITY SUPPORT FRAMEWORK RESULTS AND IMPACTS	64
6.1. Evaluation of results: rates of coverage and rates of job placement	64
6.2. Employment impact of ESF training interventions on particular target categories	66

SEVENTH PART: CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS	70
7.1. Priority A	70
7.2. Priority B	74
7.3. Priority C	77
7.4. Priority D	81
7.5. Priority E and gender mainstreaming	84
7.6. Priority F	86
ACRONYMS	88
GLOSSARY	88

INTRODUCTION

The evaluation can be defined as an analytical tool for designing, programming-reprogramming and managing policies. The aim of the midterm evaluation is to check the progress and results of the policies set in place. It will also provide policy-makers and various stakeholders with continual information, analyses and opinions on the implementations, results and impacts, to back up the interim reprogramming of the activities.

Article 42 of Structural Funds regulation 1260 establishes that the intermediate evaluation should consider, on the basis of the ex-ante evaluation, the first results of the interventions, their pertinence and degree of achievement of the objectives. It also evaluates the use of the funds, as well as their supervision and implementation.

The Ministry of Labour and Social Policies and the European Commission has mandated ISFOL's National European Social Fund Evaluation Unit to carry out the midterm evaluation of Objective 3 Community Support Framework (CSF) in Italy.

Three years after the launch of the new Community programme, the Objective 3 CSF midterm evaluation report will prompt reflection on the part of all those involved in the interim reprogramming or anyway concerned with improving the quality and pertinence of the European Social Fund (ESF) programme.

In this new ESF programme period, alongside the regions, the provinces and municipalities are being increasingly required to implement ESF co-financed policies. New forms of institutional relationships and divisions of tasks and responsibilities are developing. This decision-making polycentrism is the fruit of a progressive devolution of responsibilities from the centre to the periphery, underway in Italy in recent years.

Following the recent regulatory amendments, the current State model can be described as multilevel governance. The autonomous local areas are all equally authorised to represent their own interests and to define a way of designing and managing the decentralised policies. This involves a myriad of public and private actors in a process of complex and on-going negotiation and interaction.

In the new 2000-2006 programme, the ESF is also expanding its areas of intervention, becoming the main instrument for supporting the European Employment Strategy (EES) and national employment action plans. Whereas, in its initial stage, the ESF was mainly used to combat the unemployment of particular target categories, it has now become the instrument for implementing a new labour-market participation model, where the entire population maintains and develops skills throughout their lives.

This change in perspective has meant passing from a target-oriented approach to a more policy-focused one, albeit there is a certain overlapping since there is no straightforward link between the ESF measures and the policy instruments.

The enlargement of the ESF areas of intervention does not only concern the EES but also embraces active labour policies as well as assistance to structures and systems such as those of education and training. This new ESF role reflects the perception that the efficiency of systems is becoming a key factor for tackling the increase in international competition triggered by the globalization of economies.

At the same time, the growing awareness in the Community that the definition of a new model of labour-market participation has to be accompanied by a redefinition of the social organisation has had an impact on the ESF programme of accompanying measures, including assistance to beneficiaries and their families.

The midterm evaluation of the ESF has therefore had to deal with the objectives of this rich programming framework and with their evolution after the definition of the new EES guidelines.

The variety of actors on the institutional scene, coupled with the extension of the ESF areas of intervention, has revealed the need for a more structured and pervasive evaluation system, in which not only the different stages of the evaluation would converge and interact but also the evaluations of the single Operational Programmes (OP) and of the CSF.

This report is divided into six parts by a fractal sectioning in which the same structure is repeated on different hierarchical levels, in a vertical sense from the programme to the measure, and in a horizontal sense that includes the analysis of the project typologies, cross-cutting themes and new EES objectives and priorities.

FIRST PART

GENERAL ASPECTS

1.1. Analysis of the demographic, economic and regulatory context

During the first three years of the 2000-2006 Objective 3 CSF programme, the Italian demographic and economic scenario has been characterised by positive signals from the labour market accompanied by a slowdown in economic growth.

This development is not limited to Italy, and the scenario of the entire European Union is in a state of flux. Hence, in the various European councils and on the initiative of the European Commission, not only have new guidelines been issued but the need for a new EES has been acknowledged. This strategy must be based on the three key themes of full employment, quality and productivity of labour, social cohesion and insertion.

These last three years have been characterised by a slowdown in economic growth together with a substantial increase in employment. Labour productivity also seems to be dropping, urging more regular investments in human capital and technology as well as a better organisation of labour.

Public expenditure destined for education in Italy remains low when compared with other European countries. Even expenditure on labour policies (both active and passive) on the GDP is lower than average. Italy not only occupies one of the lowest positions in the European ranking, but over the last decade it has tended to fall even further.

However, the good labour performance found in Objective 3 administrations in terms of rates of activity, employment and unemployment are reassuring, even when compared with the rest of Europe. What is worrying is the persisting divide between northern and southern Italy.

The analysis of the rates of activity, employment and unemployment for specific age classes demonstrates a continuing low participation in the labour and employment market and significant unemployment for young people aged between 15 and 24 years as well as for the over 64-year-olds, also in Objective 3 areas.

The activation and employment of older people, still lower than the objectives fixed in the Lisbon and Stockholm councils, constitutes a weak point, considering the ageing of the population in Italy and Europe coupled with a systematic reduction of fertility rates and an increase in life expectancy at birth. This lower rate of employment involves women to a considerable extent and mostly reflects the higher rates of female inactivity in older generations. Thus an increase in the rates of older people's participation also depends on an increase in female participation in the labour market.

A possible remedy for the demographic stagnation and ageing of the population could be found in the migration of foreigners to our country. However this implies a correct management of the incoming and outgoing flows of these immigrants.

Although it is difficult to obtain a precise estimate of the numbers of immigrants currently in Italy, they are mainly concentrated in Objective 3 areas. Immigrant workers also give a consistent, albeit probably underestimated, contribution to the Italian economic and production system. The recent legislation on immigration and labour has enabled many foreign workers to legalise their work positions, but it has also demonstrated that there is much more exploitation of foreign labour than previously thought, not only in the south but also in the centre-north.

Gender equality in the labour market still remains a distant target, albeit some steps forward have been taken in the Objective 3 administrations thanks to a greater growth in participation and employment of females than males in the period in question.

In the Objective 3 administrations, the greater propensity towards subordinate work as well as an increase in part-time work are due to

the female component. In Italy, the number of mothers employed is increasing as well as their level of education. They still tend to delay having their first child, probably because of the lack of child-care services which would help mothers to manage better their family and work.

Along with the evolution of the Italian economic and demographic scenario, the institutional and regulatory framework has also been changed by provisions promulgated after 2000 and therefore taking effect after the programming document was drafted.

The structure of the CSF does not enable specific and direct links between changes in the context/areas and target themes to be pinpointed. The processes underway in fact overarch all the ESF policies. However, bearing in mind the evolution of the economic, demographic and regulatory contexts, it is possible to deduce what CSF sectors of intervention will be the most affected.

The main objective of the reform of the educational system (involving all levels except university) is to create an increasingly strong link between education, training and the labour world. This is done not only by strengthening compulsory training and alternating pathways, but also by enhancing the training channel. The reform produces significant effects on the entire priority C and there is the declared intention to promote lifelong learning.

The extension of the right to education could have positive effects on individuals interested in extending their training pathway. The rise in demand should therefore go hand in hand with a strengthening of the higher vocational training supply, including the higher technical education and training (IFTS).

The reform of the labour market seems closely linked to the employability and adaptability objectives (priorities A and D) spelt out in the CSF.

Opening employment services to private actors – with universities and labour consultants playing an active role in matching labour demand

and supply – can provide a stimulus for creating a more effective system. The public services must be particularly qualified and able to compete and collaborate with the other actors operating on the market. Strengthening their managerial abilities is a key condition for tackling this change, through upgrading operators and achieving an integrated system of services to help match labour demand and supply.

The introduction of considerable flexibility in the new forms of labour and production means that workers are forced to change organizational contexts and the contents of their jobs more frequently. In this sense, training, guidance and counselling actions and the design of individual pathways could become the main tools for helping workers to tackle the changes and capitalise on the experience gained.

The new law on immigration and labour can have repercussions on some of the CSF actions, and in particular those addressed to social inclusion and to fostering participation in the labour market through active policy measures. Actions encouraging the social integration of immigrants include assistance in accessing services; support through guidance and skill analyses; accompanying measures for job placement; support for families to foster accompanying measures and job placement; support for training those working in disadvantaged conditions and in particular non-EU citizens; informing the population of opportunities. Immigrants will not be able to benefit from preventive and curative actions because the law does not contemplate the condition of unemployment for the non-EU citizen.

Besides the three major reforms examined, there are the *fondi interprofessionali* (multisectoral funds for financing continuing training) which will undoubtedly produce effects on priority D, whose actions must be coordinated with the new financial and regulatory arrangements.

1.2. Relevancy of the Objective 3 Community Support Framework strategy

It thus seems possible to affirm that Objective 3 CSF is still relevant in the current economic scenario. However, the changes underway in

the economic context and the evolution of Community guidelines suggest that employment should be fostered by increasing rates of activity and not only by reducing unemployment.

The CSF strategy also remains relevant with regards to the evolution of the regulatory context. It should be recalled that the CSF highlights the importance of the reforms to the educational, training and labour systems, of which the provisions analysed are just an initial expression. The effects of these reforms, albeit with a greater impact on some priority strategies than others, overarch all the ESF policies. Finally, these provisions are highly formalised but in some cases need further specifications.

With reference to the financial implementation, some measures considered strategic in the CSF - A2, C3 and D1 - are also those with a commitment capacity and implementation efficiency above the average value of the objective and respective priorities. In other words, from a viewpoint of the expenditure capacity, the programme confirms that the measures aimed at the preventive approach, at higher training and at continuing training are those which managed to implement effectively the programme objectives. Measures such as A3, B1 and C4 also record a good financial progress, albeit not playing an equally important role in Objective 3 CSF from the point of view of the financial programme. The financial progress of other measures - A1, C1, C2, D2, D3 and D4 – is instead not so good, which could mean that the supply system finds it difficult to implement what has been programmed, so that demand and supply do not match or there are problems in expressing the demand for interventions.

SECOND PART
THE EVALUATION OF THE OBJECTIVE 3 COMMUNITY SUPPORT
FRAMEWORK. AN OVERVIEW

2.1. Analysis of the implementing programme

During the first three years of implementation of the ESF programme, 579 public calls for proposals under Objective 3 regional and national OPs were surveyed. The ESF implementing programme was launched in the first half of 2000, and thus before the European Commission had formally approved the OPs, and particularly concerned the more consolidated intervention lines less affected by the innovations introduced in the 2000-2006 ESF programme.

There is a progression in the number of calls, with more calls issued in 2002 than during the two previous years, and there was a progressive shift of the programme implementation towards the delegated bodies. In Objective 3, the provinces issued over 60% of the total calls, whereas there are still very few calls issued by the intermediary bodies of global grants or by other actors.

There is no exclusive responsibility of the issuing agents for any of the measures. Thus responsibility sharing seems to be an established practice, with a widespread decentralization process for all the policies implemented through the OPs.

However, it is possible to highlight – in line with the functions transferred to the delegated agents – a greater concentration on a provincial level of measures targeted at persons (preventive and curative approach, disadvantaged groups, female participation in the labour market, continuing training, entrepreneurship, dropout prevention) and inside them on guidance and training activities (especially compulsory-training and post-compulsory and post-diploma training).

Instead, the managing authorities lay greater emphasis on the system measures, both on those with greater testing and modelling aspects (research and development, continuing training) and those of a regional character (higher training, particularly involving universities).

One of the most significant innovations encountered during the call for projects stage is the multi-measure and multi-deadline formula. Multi-measure calls represent around a third of the total and distinguish the implementing programme of the Objective 3 OPs. Thus for a part of this programme there are calls for proposals containing a variety of deadlines with financing available over several years, implying several selection procedures.

Over the three years in question, the measures proposed in the programming documents have all been launched. The greatest concentrations are to be found in the measures with a high proportion of actions aimed at persons, despite the recourse to direct commissions or direct managements and other national financing sources.

The analysis of the calls for proposals shows that training has a central role, also because it is a consolidated activity. However, there is a widespread presence of more innovative project typologies, such as guidance and integrated pathways for job placement, overarching all the measures.

Analysing the specific provisions contained in the calls for proposals, it can be seen that:

- the guidance activities have four main aims: supporting compulsory education and training and interventions for dropout prevention; counselling aimed at job placement for specific groups of users (unemployed, disadvantaged, women, disabled); generic information, reception, skill analysis and counselling activities without indication of recipients and linked to employment centres; support for school-work alternating pathways.
- there is a high degree of complex and integrated interventions in post-compulsory training and post-diploma training with link-ups to the labour world, or training of specialist figures;

- the continuing training is mainly aimed at acquiring new alphabets (informatics, languages, etc.) or skills in the welfare services;
- the training targeted at job placement has been used to programme a wide range of initiatives addressed to a variety of users, mainly for training in specific skills required by the labour market, with a particular emphasis on welfare;
- the post-graduate training is characterised by the promotion of job placement and self-employment, particularly in the technological innovation field and in link-ups with local firms;
- the initiatives for launching employment services mainly focus on testing prototypes and models for the overall functioning of employment centres and for the launch of specific service lines in favour of recipients;
- the framework of activities regarding the training system contains widespread testing of prototypes and models (new technologies and distance training, training models, organizational models, etc.).

The activities put out to tender cover almost all the project typologies defined during the classification¹. The activities absent or rarely found in the implementation programme are:

- some particular forms of work experience linked to national provisions and without a wider application;
- incentives prompted by national provisions, such as part-time work, job sharing or job rotation which should presumably be encouraged by the recent approval of the relevant regulatory provisions;
- training outside apprenticeships; the presence of sufficient resources and national programmes for needs (or anyway for the effective capacities of intervention on and interception of users) seems to play an important role;
- training within the framework of university cycles; this concerns initial experiments and is not present in all the OPs;
- some system actions, within the framework of the training and educational system, particularly those aimed at creating networks

¹ Cf. Classification of monitoring and evaluation actions approved in the Objective 3 Monitoring Committee in December 2000.

and partnerships and the transfer of good practice in system integration.

ESF cross-cutting priorities, another innovation in the 2000-2006 programme, were spelt out in around 40% of the calls for projects during the first three years, albeit with different methods, quantities and procedures for achieving the individual priority.

Vouchers were further studied during 2002, given the innovative nature of this line of intervention. The study firstly highlighted the widespread use of this support for individual training. In almost all the Objective 3 OPs there are provisions for distributing vouchers.

Vouchers are also present in all the programme priorities dealing with actions on persons, thus highlighting the willingness of issuing agents to experiment models for financing the demand on a wide range of policies.

The individual training provisions cut across all the different policy fields, with the exception of the measures for system adjustments (A1 – C1) involving all the ESF training areas. However, there is no uniform dissemination of the tool and it mainly involves measures C3, D4 and E1.

For the organizational models of the intervention there are two opposing approaches, demonstrating the different use of the voucher instrument and its implementation. The testing of a model for distributing and managing vouchers is either entrusted to third parties or else the public sector plays a central role, integrating on a system level with the other local actors (employment agencies and training agencies).

In the majority of cases, the vouchers are accompanied by a select list of agents with whom one can spend them (not necessarily limited to the regional market), but the bodies and institutions where the vouchers can be used are already specifically indicated in the public announcement.

2.2. Implementation of the Objective 3 Community Support Framework

The Objective 3 CSF has financial resources amounting to 8,720 million euro for the 2000-2006 period. The largest slice of financing has been allocated to priority A (32% of the total programmed), followed by priority C with 29% and priority D with 21%. Priority E follows with 10%, priority B with 6% and priority F with 3%.

At 31.12.2002, commitments came to 3,443 million euro and expenditures to 1,492 million euro. The commitment capacity of Objective 3 CSF is 39% (ratio between resources committed in 2000-2002 and resources programmed in 2000-2006) and rises to 92% if measured against the 2000-2002 programme. This shows a volume of resources committed not much lower than budgeted for the first three programme years. The capacity of utilisation is instead very low, around 43% (ratio between payments made and resources committed in 2000-2002). This gives an equally low implementation efficiency of 17% (ratio between payments made in 2000-2002 and resources programmed in 2000-2006), highlighting critical points in the expenditure disbursement mechanism.

Compared to the implementation estimated at 31.12.2002, priority B has the highest implementation efficiency (21%) and is also the only priority whose commitments are greater than those set during the programming for the same period. Priority F shows the lowest implementation efficiency (12%) and is also the priority with the greatest commitment problems. In the various programmes there is a greater variability in the implementation of priorities B, D and F, whereas priorities A, C and E have very similar indicators of progress.

For the evaluation of the physical progress of Objective 3 CSF in terms of numbers of projects and beneficiaries, various levels of analysis were used for the three stages of approved, launched and completed, with all the OPs being present. The analysis by measure and typology of action includes the following OPs: Piemonte, Valle d'Aosta, Lombardia, Autonomous Province of Trento, Emilia Romagna, Toscana and Abruzzo. The analysis by measure and

typology of project as well as by measure and approved costs considers the physical data for the following OPs: Piemonte, Lombardia, Emilia Romagna, Toscana and Abruzzo. The analysis of the typology of beneficiaries considers OPs of Piemonte, Autonomous Province of Trento, Emilia Romagna, Toscana and Lazio. Finally, the analysis for job placement involves OPs of Piemonte, Autonomous Province of Bolzano, Friuli Venezia Giulia and Emilia Romagna.

Around 87 thousand projects were approved by the OPs. At 31.12.2002, around 70 thousand projects had been launched and around 36 thousand completed. Over 87% of the total projects are concentrated in priorities A, C and D in line with their greater financial resources. Measures D1 and A2 have more weight than the other CSF measures in all three stages, with around 50% of the projects approved and 57% of the projects completed.

Around 1.8 million beneficiaries were approved in the first three years of ESF implementation on a CSF level. Of these, around 1.2 million were equally distributed among priorities C and D (66%) and over 415 thousand in priority A (23%). Around 1.4 million beneficiaries were involved.

For number of projects, the CSF as a whole has a good implementation efficiency (ratio between number of projects launched and number of projects approved) with 82%. Priorities D and B have values above the CSF total. A little over half the projects launched were completed (58%). Priorities D and C have values above the total CSF.

The implementation efficiency of the entire CSF, calculated on the number of beneficiaries, is 78%. Priority C has the highest value with 84%. The implementation result (ratio between beneficiaries of completed projects and beneficiaries of launched projects) is quite low at 35.2%. Priority D shows a better implementation result both for projects and, to an even greater extent, for beneficiaries, because of the lower average duration of the interventions.

In the total CSF, 49.2% of women are involved in the various ESF activities. The analysis per priority shows a gender balance in priorities A and C which, with priority D, have by far the highest density of beneficiaries. The other priorities show a certain degree of imbalance, natural in the case of priority E. In priority D, the lower incidence of women is mainly reflected by the gender composition of the employed.

On the basis of the data available, the distribution of beneficiaries by age class shows that each priority focuses on a particular age group. Priority A concentrates 88% of beneficiaries launched in the first three age groups (under 29-year-olds); priority B has a relatively homogeneous distribution of groups up to 44 years of age; in priority C the beneficiaries are concentrated in the under 19-year-old group; the beneficiaries of priority D are concentrated mainly in the '35-44 years' group; 67% of beneficiaries of priority E is distributed in the age groups between 25 and 44 years.

With regards to the labour-market conditions of beneficiaries launched, there is a strong presence of students in priorities A and C (52% and 59% respectively) and a concentration of employees in priority D (89%). Finally, over 50% of those launched in priorities B and E are seeking employment (61% and 54% respectively), with a similar distribution among jobseekers and first jobseekers.

The large number of interventions under priorities A and C, addressed to compulsory training and dropout prevention respectively, is reflected in the composition on the basis of educational level. Around 50% of priority A users have a lower-secondary school certificate and around a third of priority C beneficiaries have a primary-school certificate. Beneficiaries in priorities D and E mainly have an upper-secondary school certificate (diploma), whereas beneficiaries under priority B mostly possess a lower-secondary certificate (60%). Overall, around 36% of beneficiaries have a diploma or post-diploma qualification and around 30% have a lower-secondary certificate.

With reference to the macro-typology of actions, over 90% of the projects approved are addressed to persons, around 7% involve actions

addressed to systems and the remaining 3% involve accompanying measures. The picture changes if the composition is calculated on the basis of costs instead of number of projects. Considering the data on costs approved, the actions addressed to persons represent around 80% of the total, actions addressed to systems amount to around 16% and accompanying measures to around 4%. A similar distribution of costs per macro-typology is present in all the priorities except priority F, which concentrates on system actions (76.6%) and on accompanying measures (23%). In priority F, 60% of the projects launched involve instruments for supporting the development of governance systems and 30% consciousness-raising, information and advertising actions.

In all the priorities, most of the projects launched involve training actions: over 70% for priorities A, B and C followed by priorities D and E with 59% and 63% respectively. In terms of cost approved, training activities absorb a significant share of the total (72%). Post-compulsory training and post-diploma training alone cover a quarter of the total cost, whereas 17% is dedicated to continuing training, with 75% of this concentrated on priority D.

In terms of beneficiaries, the “guidance, counselling and information” action typology is also important. In almost all the priorities this typology has low percentages for projects launched and quite high ones for beneficiaries: around 50% in priority A, 67% in priority B, 43% in priorities C and E and 14% in priority D.

THIRD PART
THE EVALUATION OF THE OBJECTIVE 3 COMMUNITY SUPPORT
FRAMEWORK BY POLICY FIELD/PRIORITY/ MEASURE

3.1. Priority A – Development and promotion of active labour-market policies to combat and prevent unemployment, prevent long-term unemployment of men and women, help reintegrate the unemployed in the labour market and support the job placement of young people and male and female returners

Priority A pursues the global objective of fostering the employability of people of working age through the use of active labour-market instruments, with both preventive and curative approaches for long-term unemployment.

In line with the Objective 3 CSF strategy, the 2000-2006 programme assigns a larger sum to priority A - 2,791,905.0 euro - than that allocated to the other priorities.

The architecture of the priority is consistent with the structure of guidelines 1 and 2 of the EES (1999 and 2000). Two of the three measures of the priority – A1 and A2 – pursue the specific objective 1, or the preventive approach, and the third, A3, pursues the specific objective 2 or the curative approach.

The importance of the preventive approach under Objective 3 CSF is confirmed in the programming by the financial constraint – not uniform in all Objective 3 but varying according to the different conditions of the local labour markets – that assigns 70% of the priority resources to the specific objective 1.

The priority target is not only short and long-term young and adult unemployed, but also includes inactives (e.g. students leaving the educational system). In the evaluation, it has been attempted to see if the managing authorities have narrowed the target during

implementation, aiming only at the unemployed, or if they have included also the inactives in the implementation of interventions.

The analysis of priority A implementation programme highlights the important role played by the co-financed interventions in supporting the national reform processes, whether with regards to employment services or to the institution of compulsory training.

Overall, the financial progress of the priority is very good, also with relation to the rest of the priorities. In 2000-2002, the first three programme years, the commitment capacity amounted to 40%, the implementation efficiency to 19% and the utilisation capacity to 48%. The values of the financial-progress indicators are therefore always higher than the corresponding values for the total CSF. The utilisation capacity is the best in all the CSF, whereas only priority B achieves better results for commitment capacity and implementation efficiency. Critical points are to be found in measure A1 in both commitments and payments.

The implementation of the priority on a physical level is quite good. Considering only the OPs for which complete data is available, the indicators of progress using the projects as unit of measurement are just a little below the CSF average, whereas the indicators referred to number of beneficiaries are more or less in line with it.

The good performance of the priority should be pointed out, both in financial and physical implementation, probably because actions addressed to persons have been favoured, and in particular training actions, tapping the experience acquired in the previous ESF 1994-1999 programme.

With reference to the managing authorities possessing data for the number of projects launched by action typology, the actions addressed to persons represent 87% of the total activities, systems actions 11% and accompanying measures 2%. Actions directed at persons are divided up as follows: training 70%, incentives 9%, guidance, counselling and information 5%, work experience 3%, integrated pathways 0.2%. The implementation of the priority thus maintains

many of the great variety of interventions planned by the managing authorities during the implementation programming.

The data on beneficiaries, broken down by gender for all fifteen managing authorities, show that women represent the majority of beneficiaries in the interventions implemented within the priority (51%).

3.2. Measure A1: organisation of employment services

The employment services system has achieved important results thanks to ESF funding, mainly consisting of:

- improvement of employment centres in terms of structures, accessibility and furnishings;
- increase in ICT equipment and networks;
- reorganisation of work linked to services;
- implementation of new specialist skills, especially for the more innovative services, such as guidance and matching demand and supply;
- overall improvement in the quality of services.

The analysis of the calls for measure A1 and of the project typologies confirms that implementations are in line with the objectives of the measure and with the needs of the employment services system. The ESF interventions cater for all the requirements of the employment services system. These range from the need to procure resources to implement the new services to training for acquiring special skills; from the need to reach specific user groups (immigrants, women, disabled) to the need for communication instruments advertising the new public services. The new regulations (law 181/00 and law 68/99) are also supported by information and counselling activities.

The expenditure for measure A1 in Objective 3 represents around 40% of the total expenditure in Italy for employment services. An indication of this measure's contribution to the reform of these services is given by the revision of the register of the unemployed, where those registered in the old labour exchanges certify their

availability for work. The monitoring data on the employment services show that this certification procedure has been completed in 61% of the services in Objective 3 administrations.

3.3. Measure A2: integration and reintegration in the labour market of young people and adults under the preventive approach

Together with measure A1, in the CSF measure A2 is the one that is most explicit in its the preventive approach to reducing long-term unemployment.

The EES guidelines have gradually amended the preventive approach, initially applied only to the unemployed and then later extended to all those who want to strengthen their employability conditions throughout their life. This demonstrates the importance of instruments for continuously acquiring skills or preventing their deterioration, independently of the employment status and age of individuals. It is thus useful to try to see if and how the implementation of the programmes has incorporated the preventive approach.

The examination of the calls for proposals and financial data shows very positive results for the financial progress and for the managing authorities' ability to incorporate some innovative elements introduced in the CSF.

In the 2000-2002 period, the measure was put out to call by all the managing authorities who used, as already specified in the programming, a variety of intervention instruments. The training interventions inside compulsory education and training represent the most characteristic activities in the measure. Other project typologies, such as second-level training, training for re-entering the labour market, integrated pathways for job placement, as well as guidance and counselling activities, crosscut all the measures fostering job placement. The use of the ESF to support the new law on compulsory training testifies to a preventive approach to unemployment. The idea is to bring interventions forward to a stage prior to labour-market entry.

Overall, the decision taken during the programming to allocate the most resources to measure A2 is confirmed during the interim evaluation of Objective 3 CSF by its very high values for the effectiveness and efficiency of financial implementation. The commitment capacity is 42%, the implementation efficiency is 22% and the utilisation capacity is 52%. The financial implementation of the measure is better than the priority average and that of Objective 3 CSF overall for implementation efficiency and utilisation capacity (for commitment capacity only measure B1 registers a higher value).

The implementation of the measure is very satisfactory on a physical level. With regards to both projects and beneficiaries, the indicators of progress record values higher than those of the priority and CSF average, considering only the OPs for which complete data are available. However there is a considerable variability in physical progress between the individual OPs, both in relation to the projects and to the beneficiaries of the measure.

The analysis of the target, conducted on five managing authorities for whom information is available, shows very variable characteristics for beneficiaries according to the regional context and the different managing authorities' perception of the preventive approach. Sometimes the preventive logic has been mainly interpreted as early interventions on young people, at other times as interventions on all individuals seeking employment in the short term.

The first group involves very young beneficiaries, with a high percentage of students whose main educational qualification is a lower-secondary school certificate. In the second group of regions, there is a more uniform distribution by age groups or more over 20 year-olds than under 20 year-olds and a greater percentage of higher educational qualifications.

The distribution of beneficiaries by educational qualification varies according to the different types of action: beneficiaries of guidance activities and training interventions mostly have a lower secondary-school certificate. Instead, individuals with an upper-secondary school diploma followed by those with a lower-secondary school certificate

mostly have work-experience. Around 75% of young people following integrated pathways have only a primary-school certificate, since these presumably involve a combination of lower secondary-school and vocational-training pathways. Finally, the main beneficiaries of the incentives are mostly adults with lower secondary-school certificates followed by those with upper secondary-school diplomas.

The annual average coverage rate of measure A2, obtained by comparing beneficiaries launched with the target population of preventive policies, is 20%. The capacity to cover the target population is 10 percent higher for the male segment than for the female one. Thus the ESF contributed 20% to the achievement of the Community objective, sanctioned by guidelines 1 and 2 of the EES, to involve 100% of the short-term unemployed in an active policy measure.

The gross rate of job placement was calculated for the regions possessing data on employment outcomes. On average, 67% of beneficiaries were employed a year after the end of the interventions. If we add those who resumed their studies (17% of the total) to the employed, we can quantify a “success rate” of 85%. From the comparison with the other measures covered by surveys on outcomes it is seen that, albeit the rate of placement is relatively low, the success rate is higher, a reflection of the low average age of beneficiaries making the resumption of studies a probable outcome.

3.4. Measure A3: integration and reintegration in the labour market of men and women outside the market for over six or twelve months

Albeit involving the curative approach, measure A3, like measure A2, uses forms of intervention belonging to active labour policies. Like measure A2, the analysis of A3 shows a positive financial and physical progress and the managing authorities demonstrate a good capacity for acquiring the innovative elements proposed in the CSF.

In the 2000-2002 period, measure A3 was put out to call by all the managing authorities with a high degree of project typologies coverage, albeit lower than that of measure A2.

During the implementation programme, the managing authorities seem to have successfully interpreted the aims of the curative approach and, when necessary, differentiate curative interventions from preventive ones. Besides the lack of actions in the compulsory schooling and training area, the main difference between these two interventions in the implementation programme was the greater importance that the managing authorities assigned to incentives to firms for employment and the presence of interventions for creating new businesses. The differences also depended on the characteristics of the various groups targeted by the measure. For instance, young people seeking their first job without income protection; adults who risk losing or have already lost their job but with income support; adults with no guaranteed income and without previous working experience or with experience in the less protected sectors.

Like measure A2, in measure A3 each managing authority has given its own interpretation of the curative approach through a different mix of interventions in relation to the different local situation. However, the physical data denote less varied interventions than those envisaged in the implementation programme of this measure and than those implemented in measure A2. In the training area, the most popular project typologies are training after post-compulsory training and post-compulsory schooling, training aimed at reintegration in the labour market and compulsory-training/apprenticeship.

The financial progress of the measure is good, both in the CSF as a whole and with reference to priority A alone. At 31.12.2002, the commitment capacity amounted to 41%, the implementation efficiency to 17% and the utilisation capacity to 42%.

For the physical implementation of the project, the indicators show values not far from the priority average (above average for implementation efficiency) whereas the performance is lower than the CSF average (albeit remaining the highest implementation efficiency

in the CSF as a whole). The situation is not so good with regards to beneficiaries as the indicator values are never higher than the priority average and not close to the CSF average.

Like measure A2, the good financial performance of measure A3 can be attributed to the fact that it includes interventions, mainly addressed to persons, already tested in the previous ESF 1994-1999 programme. However, the lower values in the indicators of physical progress probably reflect the greater difficulties of intercepting the population targeted by this measure.

The analysis of beneficiaries highlights the fact that the interventions implemented under measure A3 regard more adult, and thus better educated, users compared to the interventions implemented in measure A2. In two of the five managing authorities considered, the incidence of young people on the total participants in ESF activities is in line with the incidence of young people in the target population, comprising those seeking jobs for over six or twelve months. A more detailed analysis by age groups also shows that the older adult segments have been involved to a certain extent.

The rate of coverage of the measure, obtained by comparing the annual average number of beneficiaries with the population seeking work for more than six months (youths) or twelve months (adults), was around 7%. Thus the ESF contributes over a quarter to the objective in the EES 2003 guidelines of involving, by 2010, 25% of the long-term unemployed through an active measure.

The rate of job placement of beneficiaries under the traditional “curative approach” to the reduction of unemployment was higher than that under the preventive approach (72% employed against the 67% of A2). However, there is a lower percentage of individuals with a positive outcome, i.e. having found a job or undertaken study activities (81% against 85% of A2). This is mainly because the A3 measure has beneficiaries on average older and better educated than those involved in measure A2.

3.5. Priority B - Measure B1: integration or reintegration in the labour market of disadvantaged groups

In a Community and national context characterised by a growing emphasis on social inclusion policies, the first three years of implementation of measure B1 has recorded extremely positive results. This both in terms of overall financial progress and of the managing authorities' capacity to implement innovative strategies proposed by the CSF (use of active labour policies directed at specific needs of the disadvantaged).

Under the financial profile, there is a commitment capacity of 45%, an implementation efficiency of 21% and a utilisation capacity of 46%. The financial progress of the measure is thus greater than that of the CSF as a whole and is one of the best compared to the others priorities and/or measures. This is a result of the good progress of some OPs, particularly important for the overall programming of the measure, and of the authorities who have considered social inclusion policies as a priority and given them greater weight in their own programme than in the specific B1 one on the CSF (5.6%).

Over the 2000-2002 period, the state of physical progress of the measure was one of the best of the CSF if referred to the projects (85% implementation efficiency and 56% implementation success) and less good – also with regards to the other policy fields – in the case of beneficiaries (69% and 23%). The traditional ability of Objective 3 managing authorities to manage interventions addressed to the more vulnerable groups has helped in setting up diversified and more innovative projects, albeit with somewhat greater difficulty in intercepting the target population.

In line with the CSF strategies, the analyses show the use of a structured mixture of interventions, favouring actions directly addressed to the disadvantaged. Important in this framework are training actions (62% of total projects, especially regarding compulsory training and reintegration in employment) and guidance, counselling and information actions (addressed to around three-quarters of the total users of the measure).

Among the economic incentives, aimed mainly at persons for participating in training activities, there are also small subsidies, whereas work experience mainly takes the form of practical training. The system actions cover all the actors involved in the complete social and economic rehabilitation of the most disadvantaged and are addressed, in particular, at improving the managing authorities' governance capacities (for example, through specific cognitive surveys) and at the integration of the educational and training systems.

The managing authorities have anyway given a greater role to accompanying actions, albeit limited, in this measure than they play in the CSF as a whole. The analysis of the average cost of the projects approved confirms the managing authorities' tendency to reward the quality of actions directed at persons (and in particular guidance actions) whose average cost (over 60,520 euro) is much greater than the overall CSF costs (38,170 euro). The contrary applies to the other two action macro-typologies.

For the beneficiaries of ESF interventions, in the first three years some managing authorities had already obtained half the number of participants indicated as a target in B1 for the entire programme period. But, above all, the calls for projects issued in 2000-2002 already show the authorities' clear intention to widen the range of groups targeted, albeit without neglecting the needs of the more traditional categories under co-financed policies.

The analyses confirm that the main beneficiaries of interventions continue to be the physically and/or mentally disabled, non-EU members, offenders, drug addicts and ex-drug addicts. However they also highlight the significant role played by "other user categories" (26% of the total analysed) in line with that laid down in the implementation programme of the measure in favour of ethnic minorities, HIV positives, alcoholics and ex-alcoholics, women in difficulties with low incomes and low educational standards, people in situations of family and social hardship classifiable as the "new poor".

The implementation of equal opportunities within the framework of social inclusion policies appears less significant than that indicated in

the calls (the female presence in beneficiaries of the measure is a little over 42%). Finally, analysing also other characteristics, the target reached by the measure during the first three years of CSF implementation seems consistent with the programme objectives of favouring the more disadvantaged from a socio-economic point of view, since they are mainly made up of young people and adults (up to 44 years) with low educational standards, seeking their first or new jobs. Within this framework there is a tendency to diversify the typologies of interventions addressed to these individuals.

The first analyses of the results show a modest rate of coverage of non-EU members and the disabled (0.1% and 1.2% of the potential target) and a good outcome for training activities addressed to these user categories (the success rate measured by the percentage of individuals who after the course have found work or resumed studies is equal to 70% and 55% respectively) and to the disadvantaged in general (65%).

3.6. Priority C: promotion and improvement of vocational training, education and guidance within the framework of a lifelong learning policy to facilitate and improve access to and integration in the labour market, improving and sustaining employability and promoting occupational mobility

Priority C absorbs 29% of the total CSF expenditure. Within the priority, 54% of the resources are absorbed by measure C3 supporting higher training.

The overall financial progress of the priority (with commitment capacity of 39%, implementation efficiency of 15% and utilisation capacity of 38%) is a little lower than that of the CSF for commitment capacity, whereas it is greater for utilisation capacity. The most financially important measure for the priority (C3) is anyway the one with the most satisfactory financial progress with reference to all three indexes considered. Vice versa, the measure with the least satisfactory progress is C1.

With regards to physical implementation, a total of 15,402 projects were approved: of these 11,753 were launched whilst 6,528 have been completed. 604,403 beneficiaries were approved, 505,803 of whom in launched projects and 133,179 in finished projects. The greatest contribution to these results comes from measure C3 (especially on a level of beneficiaries) followed by C4 (proportionally important in terms of projects), by C2 and finally by C1 (which, as was to expected, has a limited number of beneficiaries).

The implementation efficiency (77% for projects and 84% for beneficiaries) is proceeding satisfactorily – also considering the physical and financial amounts of the priority – but there are less positive values for the completed implementation of the projects and, above all, of beneficiaries.

Under the profile of intervention typologies, the most numerous projects are those involving training actions for technical-professional updating and for the cultural sphere, as well as incentives to individuals for training. From the point of view of beneficiaries, instead, guidance, counselling and information actions predominate (43% of beneficiaries approved and launched) followed by post-compulsory training and post-diploma training and compulsory schooling.

3.7. Measure C1: adjustment of the vocational training and educational system

Measure C1 contributes, together with measure C2, to the specific objective of "adjusting the vocational training and educational systems". The measure involves two systems - educational and vocational-training - of great complexity, significance and delicacy. For some years these systems have been undergoing a radical reform (still mostly incomplete) with the prospect of facing even more changes following the recent Italian law 53/2003. The measure is also important in a Community perspective since it crosscuts the educational systems and has a vital link with the new EES. Lastly, it is a measure in which the role of the Ministry of Labour and Social Policies' OP is strategic, addressing as it does the key topics of the

reform of vocational training (accreditation of structures, analysis of training needs, definition of national skill certification standards, etc.).

The measure absorbs 22% of the priority programmed expenditure. 29% of its financial value is allocated to the OP of the Ministry of Labour and Social Policies, which is the executing agency of the measure.

The implementation of the measure under the financial profile is decidedly less satisfactory than both priority C and the CSF as a whole. The main reason for this – also according to the independent evaluators' reports – lies both in the features of the actions (complex, multi-year, innovative) and in the procedures – planning and administrative – and times needed to start them up and implement them.

The progress of the measure is quite varied. The implementation efficiency referred to the projects is very high at 84%, whereas the ratio between projects completed and launched is low at 35%, as is the implementation efficiency for beneficiaries (45%). The ratio between beneficiaries completed and launched is instead a high 95%.

The physical implementation figures per action typology and, primarily, by project show that what has been implemented to date is consistent with the mission the CSF entrusted to the measure. Over 90% of the measure is made up of assistance to structures and systems in the three stages of approved, launched and completed. With regards to project typologies, 90% of beneficiaries are inserted in actions for enhancing educational structures. The projects mainly consist of actions for strengthening vocational training providers (17% of the actions approved), counselling and training of vocational training staff (10% of the actions approved), actions supporting the adjustment and innovation of managing authorities' organisations (8%), interventions for building and testing prototypes and models for the vocational training system (8%) and socio-economic studies and analyses (9%).

3.8. Measure C2: school and training dropout prevention

Measure C2 has the mission to prevent and combat school and training dropouts, still one of the central problems of the Italian educational system. It contributes, together with measure C1, to the specific objective of "adjusting the vocational training and educational system".

The resources programmed for the measure amount to 11% of the priority total. The overall financial progress (with commitment capacity at 34%, implementation efficiency at 12% and utilisation capacity at 36%) is slower than both that of the priority and of the CSF, testifying to some difficulty in implementation, despite the importance of the issue. These slowdowns are caused by the nature of the dropout phenomenon, by the difficulties inherent in designing and launching interventions that have to overarch all the components of the educational system (students, teachers, operators, structure managers, families) and also involve educational establishments, and by the presence of financing and interventions outside the ESF that can create crowding out effects.

The analysis of the project typologies addressed to persons (over 90% of cases) shows that the measure strategy essentially corresponds to that of the CSF. It involves four project typologies (training within compulsory training, training within compulsory schooling, guidance, counselling and information, incentives to individuals for training) which cover the two segments of the educational system most affected by the dropout phenomena as well as the two most consolidated interventions (guidance and training). For these last two interventions, the physical implementation figures referred to beneficiaries highlight the importance of guidance/counselling actions – actually a much larger and vaguer container – which concentrate around 50% of approved and launched beneficiaries, followed by training actions for pupils still in compulsory schooling.

The measure has a weight of around 20% of the priority in terms of projects (approved) and 26% in terms of beneficiaries (approved). The implementation efficiency of projects and beneficiaries is almost the

same (the former 76% and the latter 77%), whereas the implementation outcome is significantly different (calculated as ratio between completed and launched) with 64% for the project but only 44% for the beneficiaries.

The typical beneficiary involved in the actions is the student with either a primary-school certificate or no certificate or with a lower secondary-school or first two years of upper secondary-school certificate, under 19 years of age.

The annual average rate of coverage obtained by comparing the beneficiaries of the measure with the population of 14 to 18 year olds potentially at risk of leaving/dropping out of school is around 28%.

3.9. Measure C3: higher training

Measure C3 alone contributes to the specific objective 5 "promoting a suitable higher training supply" and is financially the most important of the priority (54% of expenditure) and the second most substantial of the CSF (after A2). The overall financial progress (with a commitment capacity of 42%, implementation efficiency of 17% and utilisation capacity of 41%) is better than that of priority C and the commitment capacity and implementation efficiency are also higher than those of the CSF. The measure includes medium-term actions, significant as well as complex (by profile and number of participants), with executing agents relatively new for the ESF, such as educational establishments and universities. However, the measure supports interventions – especially those addressed to persons – in which managing authorities and executing agents have generally been successful in designing and implementing, at least up to the ESF 1994-99 programme. Nor should it be forgotten that measure C3 represents a rich and attractive financing source for universities, schools, training agencies and the like, which are being increasingly encouraged to acquire additional resources to those from institutional schemes.

The physical implementation data show that this measure involved almost exclusively actions addressed to persons and among these

training actions clearly predominate in all three stages, followed – but in a much smaller quantity – by incentives, guidance/counselling actions and work experience.

The most popular project typologies of those financed (post-compulsory training or post-diploma training, training within university cycles, incentives to people for training, higher technical training courses, post-graduate courses) seem entirely in line with the mandate the CSF gave the measure, especially considering that there is a predominance of post-compulsory training and post-diploma training.

For the values of the physical progress indexes, the comparison between the data on the projects and that on beneficiaries shows that the implementation efficiency calculated on the beneficiaries is much higher than that calculated on projects, probably meaning that the launched projects are those with a greater number of beneficiaries.

The actions of guidance and counselling account for almost half the approved and launched beneficiaries (over 100,000) followed – considering both the approved and launched figures – by post-compulsory training or post-diploma training courses, training within university cycles and post-graduate training courses. Finally, the typical beneficiary is aged between 20 and 29, firstly with an upper secondary-school certificate (diploma) and secondly with a degree, seeking a job (first or new), consistent with the CSF design.

The rate of coverage of the measure was calculated by considering the target population as jobseekers possessing at least a diploma (stock data, 2001). This is a more limited group of individuals than in the CSF (where reference is made to "total higher-training students") but it appears consistent with the target effectively reached by the measure. Thus defined, the rate of coverage is 22%.

3.10. Measure C4: lifelong training

Measure C4 is of great strategic importance in lifelong learning, although its mission should never be confused with the general

priority mission. Important here is both the contribution it can give to constructing a system based on the lifelong learning principle and to the immediate provision of a significant training supply addressed to adults and with individual access. However, it is one of the less substantial of the CSF actions under the financial aspect (13% of the programmed priority expenditure) although it alone contributes to specific objective 6 "promoting lifelong training".

The strategic importance of the measure is explicitly recognised, as confirmed by the interim evaluation reports, by a large number of managing authorities. However, this has not prevented delays in launching it. These are both because of the need to find the most suitable procedures for reaching the target population (potentially very large and thus very segmented) and because of the difficulty in achieving an adequate supply with regards to contents and territorial distribution. There is also a significant informal supply from voluntary and non-profit associations and organisations with which the measure has to reckon.

An indicator of these difficulties is given by the differential on a financial level between commitments (42%) and effective expenditure (the implementation efficiency is 14%, lower than both the priority and CSF and the utilisation capacity is 34%, almost 10% less than that of the CSF). The implementation efficiency is instead satisfactory both for the projects (80%) and for the beneficiaries (79%).

The physical implementation by action and project typology shows a measure consisting mainly of actions addressed to persons (94% of the actions approved and 96% of those concluded) with a majority of training actions (96% of those approved and 99% of those completed). These mainly consist of cultural updating and vocational and technical updating, demonstrating that measures supporting training interventions are preferred to systemic interventions for adjusting the training supply to lifelong learning.

There are three types of assistance projects for structures and systems: technical assistance for implementing the measure; training actions for the vocational-training system staff; combined training actions for the

vocational-training and educational system operators. The overall picture is similar if one considers the beneficiaries involved in the project typologies activated. The main difference concerns the considerable numbers of those participating in guidance and counselling actions as well as the emergence of training for educational system staff as a significant further project typology.

The typical profile of the beneficiary reached to date by the measure is consistent with CSF indications, and is that an employee (but also probably retired or inactive in the labour market) with a higher secondary-school diploma or lower secondary-school certificate, over 30 years of age. The rate of coverage of the theoretical target population (aged between 25 and 64) by the measure is 0.3% for the approved beneficiaries and 0.2% for those started up.

3.11. Priority D: promotion of a competent, qualified and adaptable labour force, of innovation and of adaptability in the organisation of work, of the development of the entrepreneurial spirit, of conditions that help to create jobs as well as the training and strengthening of human potential in research, science and technology

The competitiveness of the Italian productive system has experienced a lull over the last few years. Factors linked to the behaviour of companies can partly explain this negative performance. There is a low propensity for staff training and investments in R&D, but also a weaker entrepreneurial spirit, in terms of business creation, than in other European countries. However, there are policies on a European and national level aimed at the development of a knowledge-based society in line with the objectives set in Lisbon in 2000.

Priority D of Objective 3 CSF has the general goal of raising the overall competitiveness of the production system. It has three guidelines: the adjustment of businesses and encouragement of entrepreneurship, as policies for maintaining and increasing employment; the upgrading and updating of human resources in the research and development sectors as a strategic element for a more competitive production; rescheduling working hours and making the

labour market more flexible, since these interventions enable a better response to market trends. In the Italian strategy, the topic of upgrading and updating employees has also been extended to civil servants, targeted by a specific measure inside the priority.

During the first three years of implementation, the utilisation capacity on an priority level achieved 37% of the seven-year period, the lowest of all the priorities (with the exception of priority F) and under the average of Objective 3 CSF; the implementation efficiency was 16%, also under the objective average. However, the different performances in the various measures have affected the priority values. Those boasting the best utilisation capacity are D1 and D2, with 40% and 37% respectively; measure D3 has encountered greater difficulties (28%) as has D4 (31%).

From an implementation angle, with its 41,759 approved projects, priority D constitutes almost 48% of the objective total, whereas beneficiaries represent 33%.

Around 75% of projects and beneficiaries approved in the first three years are concentrated in measure D1, which also drains 62% of the total financial resources of the priority. Almost all the actions in the priority are addressed to persons, who represent 96% of the total. The actions addressed to systems amount to 3.7%, whereas the accompanying measures are entirely residual at 0.6%.

This priority could also be called a training priority. The information available on a project typology level shows that training interventions represent 59% and that a large share of launched projects, made up of incentives, are anyway aimed at financing training (33% of total priority). Moreover, in terms of beneficiaries, 76% of launched beneficiaries are concentrated in continuing training (i.e. addressed to the employed).

3.12. Measure D1: development of continuing training, labour-market flexibility and competitiveness of public and private enterprises, with priority for SMEs

Measure D1 has the target of encouraging continuing training, in response to the aim of increasing the competitiveness of business. The measure is also responsible for supporting policies for replanning working hours and making the labour market more flexible and, within the framework of reconciling flexibility and safety, protecting the more disadvantaged workers in the labour market.

The measure has the best financial performance in priority D and a commitments level in line with the annual targets set in the programme (40% of the total programme). However, in this measure as in the entire CSF, the financial implementation level does not match the expenditure recorded over the 2000-2002 period (20% of programmed).

The projects approved under this measure involve over 455 thousand beneficiaries (25% of the beneficiaries approved by the CSF) and over 152 thousand 600 persons in the completed projects (32% of the total completed beneficiaries). The implementation was concentrated on training interventions: 99% of the projects launched under measure D1 consist of actions addressed to people and in particular to co-financed training interventions (63%) and incentives for employees to participate in training (37%). Marginal spaces were dedicated to the implementation of system and accompanying measures.

On average, the measure has an implementation capacity in line with that of the entire CSF: 86% of the projects approved by the measure have been launched against the 82% of the CSF, whereas the percentage of projects approved and completed was 60% and 58% respectively. The measure has a better implementation success at 52% than the overall CSF, probably due to the shorter duration of interventions, meaning that more launched actions were completed than in other types of projects.

With regards to users of the measure there is:

- an involvement of women generally aligned with the gender structure of the employed;
- an age structure where 24% are under 30, 53% between 35 and 44 and 23% over 44, providing encouraging signals on the involvement of older workers;
- a greater participation in training of workers with a medium-high educational standard (diploma in particular) that does not correspond to the target of protecting the more disadvantaged workers specified in the CSF.

The average cost per trained beneficiary is greater than that for the continuing training activities as a whole. The reason for this difference seems to be that the ESF specialises in longer-term interventions, consistent with past experience and with the durations envisaged by the managing authorities in the calls for proposals for this measure. The training hours per beneficiary are 96, against an average of 64 hours.

The annual average rate of coverage of the measure has values under 1% in almost all the administrations. The coverage of those with upper secondary-school diplomas is double those who only have a school-leaving certificate. The weight of measure D1 on continuing training in Objective 3 administrations amounts to 8%, that is 8 trained workers out of 100 have participated in D1 interventions.

Overall, the measure has helped to develop continuing training and also supported equal opportunities for women, but it has not taken sufficient account of disadvantaged workers in the labour market.

3.13. Measure D2: adjustment of Public Administration responsibilities

The analysis of the action and project typologies financed through measure D2 show that this measure is consistent with the priority objective. There is also a more general coherence with regards to the continuing training policy in public administrations.

The ESF financed interventions are inserted in a more general evolution of strategies and formalities for implementing continuing training and of the organisation, functioning and procedures of public administration structures/offices. The two processes are mutually supportive: the training lever is often used strategically to accompany and implement change, and this change (organizational, procedural, legislative) in turn affects the training interventions, not only in terms of content, but also for methodologies and types of beneficiaries.

The analysis of the implementation shows, in financial terms, a good commitment capacity but a low implementation efficiency. The number of projects and beneficiaries launched and completed compared to those approved shows a positive trend. There is a predominance of actions addressed to persons, albeit a relatively large number of projects are addressed to systems. The interventions addressed to persons mainly consist of training actions, whereas those addressed to systems concern study and research, transfer of good practices, monitoring and evaluation. This measure also contains individual incentives for training activities. In the system actions there is a predominance of training, guidance and counselling actions.

The analysis of the beneficiaries and typologies of interventions activated under measure D2 highlights the following elements:

- a high number of administrations aiming interventions at organizational adjustment and innovations, the quality of services to users and the simplification of procedures;
- the presence of interventions involving systems alongside those aimed at improving individual skills (also through training vouchers);
- the project typologies other than guidance/training very likely play a role before and after the training interventions, since they involve study and research, transfer of good practices, monitoring and evaluation;
- the guidance, counselling and training interventions not connected with support for organizational changes involve the more traditional type of interventions. Training courses in information technology and English are to be found in

- these interventions, which help to achieve the objective of lifelong learning by strengthening civil servants' basic skills;
- extending the range of beneficiary administrations to the provinces, municipalities, mountain communities signifies a real decentralization of continuing training to support the devolution of responsibilities;
 - extending the range of beneficiaries to include coordinated and continual collaborations (*co.co.co.*) and part-time or temporary contracts.

3.14. Measure D3: development and consolidation of entrepreneurship with priority for new employment basins

The latest documents show that the support for entrepreneurship remains one of the most important policy objectives on a European level. In Italy it can benefit from a series of financial incentives on both a national and local level.

In our country, there seems to be a lower rate of business creations than the European average, albeit in absolute terms Italy remains the country with by far the greatest number of active businesses, of businesses started up and closed down, and especially of small and medium enterprises. The gross creation rate for the 1996-2002 seven-year period also shows a positive trend, save for a slight drop recorded in 2002, with higher values in the building construction (9%) and services (6%) sectors. The average size of the new businesses is however quite small, with 1.4 employees (according to 2000 figures).

In this context, the implementation programme of the Objective 3 administrations shows a substantial coherence between the programmed interventions and the measure objective. Calls have been published for: training for setting up businesses; guidance, counselling and information; integrated pathways for starting up businesses; incentives to individuals for self-employment. Also found in the calls are actions for upgrading the governance system, such as economic and social studies and analyses (aimed at pinpointing sectors interested in starting up new entrepreneurial activities, at enhancing the potential of the new employment basins and at combating irregular

work) and services addressed both to businesses and to individuals (information counters and counselling).

As regards implementation, the financial progress of the measure has encountered some difficulties with lower values in all three indicators (27% commitment capacity, 10% implementation efficiency, 38% utilisation capacity), both compared to the priority average and to the Objective 3 average. However, analysing the first three years of the programme it can be seen that the measure effectively took off during 2001 in terms of resources committed and in 2002 there was a considerable increase in expenditure, albeit against a drop in commitments.

The changes in the contents of the measure, both according to the 1994-1999 ESF and to the traditional responsibilities of vocational training officers, has undoubtedly affected the expenditure capacity of the different managing authorities. Moreover, in some contexts the measure has encountered delays in the start-up of innovative procedures such as disbursing global grants to intermediate bodies.

On the physical implementation side, the measure has a marked prevalence of actions addressed to persons (91%), in particular training, incentives and integrated pathways for starting up businesses, aimed at encouraging new entrepreneurship rather than consolidating existing enterprises. The choices made by individual OP managing authorities, besides determining very different expenditure performances, have demonstrated that policies supporting entrepreneurship are strongly rooted in the local territory and coherent with the economic and regulatory context. However, the figures regarding users' characteristics have not given the measure any connotation of a specific ESF strategy for supporting entrepreneurship when compared with other similar policies.

3.15. Measure D4: enhancing human resources in the technological research and development sector

Measure D4, dedicated to the enhancement of human resources in the scientific and technological research sector, constitutes an entirely new intervention in the 2000-2006 ESF programme.

The first three years of implementation should be read against a European and national backdrop characterised by:

- a renewed commitment on a Community level for the relaunch of investments in research and development to create a European research space and to fix the target of 3% of GDP expenditure in R&D by 2010;
- the recognition, on a national level, of the gap between levels of expenditure in R&D in Italy and the other European countries;
- a lack of professionals with a higher technological background: in 2001 in the centre-north graduates in technical-scientific disciplines constituted only 29% of total graduates, with a decreasing trend from 1995 to 2001;
- the gradual transfer of responsibilities from the State to the regions in the R&D sector with constitutional law 3 of 2001 relative to Title V of the Italian Constitution.

In this context, the implementation programme of Objective 3 administrations shows a substantial coherence between the programmed interventions and the measure objective. Calls for proposals involved: activities supporting the dissemination of technological innovation, spin-offs from research institutions and centres; research grants and scholarships for those interested in developing technological transfer projects in cooperation with universities and businesses and in particular with SMEs; interventions supporting the placement of research graduates and doctors in businesses to perform research projects. In the system actions, those aiming at updating the training supply system have been favoured.

With regards to the financial progress, the measure has a commitment capacity of 30%, an implementation efficiency of 7% and a utilisation

capacity del 25%. The trend of commitments and payments recorded significant increases from 2000 to 2002. The low profile of this policy in the 2000-2002 programme can be put down both to the limited financial weight of measure D4 and to the innovativeness of this intervention compared to the traditional spheres of competence of regional/provincial officers and to the typology of financeable actions (especially networking between universities and businesses and spin-offs from researchers). Moreover, some regions have started to use new instruments such as the global grant, which have affected the financial progress of the measure.

For physical progress, the analysis has highlighted a substantial coherence between the activities approved during the three-year period with regards to both implementation programme and the objective of the measure. However, there was only a small number of the more innovative interventions linked to the placement of researchers in firms, notably for spin-offs, and to systems strengthening, particularly for creating networks and partnerships.

The figures show a concentration of interventions inside the macro-typology of actions addressed to persons (84%). These mainly concern integrated pathways (47%) and work experience (33%) involving 3006 beneficiaries. The composition by gender shows a slight prevalence of the male target (59%), with 65% of the beneficiaries aged between 25 to 29 years and seeking their first job (71%), and a majority of graduates (77%).

3.16. Priority E and gender mainstreaming - Measure E1 promotion of women's participation in the labour market

The growing participation of women is one of the most striking aspects of the current labour-market situation. Most of the issues characterising female employment (entry into, duration and quality of work, horizontal and vertical segregation) seem linked to finding the right balance between professional and family duties since women still bear the major burden of domestic and care work in families.

This measure is the result of the public policy-maker's growing awareness of the theme of equal opportunities between men and women, deducible from the provisions regarding the various social organisation spheres. It is also in line with the idea underpinning the ESF that increasing female participation in the labour market is a target that cannot only be pursued through direct interventions on the female population. Moreover, the most important contaminations between national policies and the ESF are on the theme of a work-life balance.

The analysis of the implementation programme indicates that Objective 3 administrations have used a variety of actions to pursue the aims of measure E1. Interventions with employment aims have been favoured within the framework of actions addressed to persons. The system actions are also interesting, mainly concentrating on devices and tools to support the upgrading of the governance system, an indicator of how much is being achieved on gender mainstreaming on a local level. Within the macro-typology of accompanying measures there is a more widespread use of personal service actions with the intention of accompanying, or putting first, the specific initiatives supporting their implementation.

With regards to the cross-cutting priority of equal opportunities, around 41% of the total calls for proposals take it as a condition of admissibility and selection criterion.

An overarching analysis of the implementation programme on the life/work balance for priorities E and D indicates a rather low tension towards gender mainstreaming on this theme, which seems to be delegated almost entirely to the direct channel of measure E1. It can be assumed that the same has also occurred for the other variables/objectives fixed in the VISPO guidelines (guidelines designed by the Equal Opportunity Department within the Prime Ministry's Office in order to evaluate the strategic impact of equal opportunity policies and interventions).

The financial performance of measure E1 referred to the first three years of implementation indicates a good, also compared to the other priorities, commitment capacity of 41.7% of the resources programmed

for the 2000-2006 period. The progress of the indicators for the implementation efficiency and utilisation capacity (17% and 40% respectively) is also within the average. A good six managing authorities, moreover, committed a higher quantity of resources than those programmed during the first three years, matched by a good implementation efficiency. The indicators of physical and procedural progress also show a good performance of the measure for implementation efficiency and outcome (74% and 56%), slightly lower than the CSF average.

In the current ESF programme the more “traditional” training projects aimed at employability are still the most important in terms of number of projects and beneficiaries involved, in line with what has emerged from the analysis of the implementation programme. Notable for their innovative nature are the accompanying services addressed to persons and the system actions which have a greater weight, including financial weight, than the other priorities.

The figures on beneficiaries reached by the interventions highlight the fact that women are the target of the measure (around 84% of the total measure) concentrated mainly in the middle-age groups (especially 35-44 years), with a medium-high educational standard (mostly higher secondary-school diploma) inserted in training and guidance actions. It is reasonable to suppose that the measure has effectively intercepted a segment of female users distinguished by the need to return to work after a temporary absence from the labour market.

The contribution of the measure to achieving the specific objective in terms of rates of job placement is spelt out in extremely positive results: 75% of the beneficiaries who participated in training activities stated they were employed a year later.

The analysis of the initial results on the gender mainstreaming principle demonstrates:

- an ample female participation in CSF activities, reaching 49% of the beneficiaries in the projects launched;
- a 2.8% annual average rate of coverage of the female population aged between 15 and 64 years and not employed (with regional

fluctuations from 0.5 to 9%) and a 37% rate of coverage of the female population seeking work;

- the start-up and testing of governance models for equal opportunities on a regional level, with the ESF being the main driving force for their definition, experimentation and subsequent consolidation.

3.17. Priority F: accompaniment of the CSF and operational programmes

Priority F supports a very particular objective within the framework of the CSF global objectives, that is the accompaniment of the CSF and the operational programmes. This global objective is linked to the only specific global objective of the measure that involves the enhancement of the monitoring, evaluation, information and control systems of the CSF and OPs. It is broken down into two measures, the first of which (F1) finances management, running, monitoring and supervisory expenses and the second (F2) covers the "other technical assistance expenditure".

The priority is totally financed with 3% of the total resources. The financial progress has given a commitment capacity of 29%, an implementation efficiency of 12% and a utilisation capacity of 43%: however this progress is much less satisfactory when compared to the CSF as a whole, especially with regards to the commitment capacity (the lowest among the CSF priorities), the most problematic element in the priority implementation.

The financial data for the measure show up a greater difficulty of financial progress for F1, which is allocated the greater share of resources. The measure is also affected by its concentration of technical assistance and monitoring/evaluation projects, which means long bidding and approval procedures before the financial resources can be committed.

However, the low level of commitments also gives the priority a more than satisfactory progress with regards to the implementation efficiency of projects (88%) albeit the situation is decidedly less good

– but largely justified by the type of project launched – in terms of implementation results (52.5%).

Overall, 534 projects have been approved on this priority, 301 of which were started up and 135 completed. They consist of assistance to structures and systems (74%) and accompanying measures (26%). In the assistance to systems, there is a predominance of interventions supporting ESF governance systems (adjustment of managing authorities' organisation; monitoring and evaluation; technical assistance to the managing authorities for programming and managing CSF and OPs; support for programme consultation bodies). All the accompanying measures involve information and advertising. The intervention typologies are mostly consistent with the priority mission.

3.18. Measure F1: management, running, monitoring and supervision of expenditure

Measure F1 contributes, together with measure F2, to the specific objective of enhancing the monitoring, evaluation, information and supervision of the CSF and OPs. It is thus a service measure aimed at the effective and correct implementation of the ESF intervention on its different levels.

The Objective 3 2000-2006 programme assigns 1.9% of the total CSF and 65% of the priority F financial resources to the measure. At 31.12.2002, the commitment capacity of the measure was 27%, the implementation efficiency 11% and the utilisation capacity 40%. These values depict a decidedly unsatisfactory implementation situation since it is lower than that of priority F – in itself not very promising – and the CSF as a whole.

The interim evaluation reports by the independent evaluators confirm these financial problems, albeit with some exceptions. The reason for this is mainly to be found in the type of actions covered by the measure which – technically complex to conceive and plan, as well as mostly assigned after relatively lengthy tendering procedures – have considerably slowed down the approval and expenditure formalities.

The procedural progress of the measure (referred to projects) is positive with regards to the implementation efficiency (88%) while it is less satisfactory in terms of implementation results (52%).

The measure only supports actions of assistance to structures and systems, and in particular interventions supporting the governance actions of the managing authorities. These include adjustment and innovation of the managing authorities' organisations; technical assistance to the programming, implementation and supervision of the OPs; monitoring and evaluation as well as activities supporting the functioning of OP consultation bodies; economic and social studies and analyses; guidance, counselling and training; transfer of good practices.

3.19. Measure F2: other technical assistance expenditure

Together with measure F1, measure F2 contributes to the specific objective of priority F. Therefore, like F1, this measure supports the effective and correct implementation of the ESF intervention albeit, unlike F1, its content is basically residual. Also for this reason the measure is allocated a very modest share of the CSF resources, around 1% or 35% of the priority, which should serve primarily for information and advertising expenses.

With regards to the implementation programme, not only information and advertising actions were put out to tender over the 2000-2002 period but also, like F1, technical assistance as well as monitoring and evaluation projects.

The commitment capacity of the measure is 34%, the implementation efficiency is 16% and the utilisation capacity is 46%. These percentages outline a better situation than that of priority F but not as good as that of the CSF as a whole with regards to commitments.

Its performance (referred to projects) is indirectly favoured by the low level of commitments, amounting to 87% for implementation efficiency with a less satisfactory implementation outcome (54% and

46%). However, these figures seem largely justified by the type of projects allocated to the measure.

The measure is characterised by its support for both actions of assistance to structures and systems and for accompanying measures. These latter are decidedly predominant and consist of information and advertising actions. The former instead are mainly actions supporting the adaptation and innovation of the managing authorities' organization and monitoring and evaluation actions.

FOURTH PART

THE POLICIES CO-FINANCED BY THE 2000-2006 EUROPEAN SOCIAL FUND

4.1. Analysis of the Objective 3 Community Support Framework by project typology

Within the framework of the interim evaluation of Objective 3 CSF, when examining the ESF implementation over the 2000-2002 three-year period it has been decided to analyse also the typologies of the projects activated by the administrations. The aim was to check what crosscutting instruments the administrations had adopted to achieve the objectives indicated on a measure and priority level.

The implementation has been read both through the composition by intervention typology, obtained from the cost of the approved projects, and through the implementation efficiency of the individual typologies, measured by the ratio between launched and approved projects. The object was to highlight any critical elements in the implementation.

The “cost of approved projects” indicator is available for a group of regions accounting for 63% of total CSF expenditure. Albeit its significance is limited to the implementation, this indicator shows the magnitude of the policies underway. In the 2000-2002 period there was a predominance of actions addressed to persons (80% of total costs), although the amount of resources destined for system actions increased considerably, rising from the 9% of the Objectives 3 and 4 1994-1999 programmes in the centre-north to the present 16%. A new entry is the accompanying measures, to which 4% of the resources are destined.

In addition:

- training, in which 72% of the approved costs are concentrated, remains the main ESF co-financed policy. Within it, almost a quarter of the cost of the approved projects was allocated to

continuing training and over a third to post-compulsory and post-diploma training;

- the ESF supports the construction and setting up of public employment services with 3.5% of total resources; in this action typology there is a predominance of resource acquisition activities (68%) followed by the construction and testing of prototypes and models (15%);
- the activities of guidance, counselling and information are important as individualised pathways, also with regards to the range of users of the new employment services, requiring 4% of total resources;
- the interventions for upgrading and updating the governance system constitute 6% of the total and are the main typology within the framework of actions addressed to systems, of which they represent 41%. In this intervention typology, economic and social study activities predominate, followed by technical assistance measures;
- in the accompanying measures, there is a preponderance of actions aimed at fostering consciousness arousing, information and advertising of interventions, with a 54% share.

In the actions addressed to persons, there is still ample space given to training and guidance, albeit the same cannot be said for work experience and integrated pathways. On the other hand, incentives are given 4%, similar to that of guidance.

The analysis shows that some policies, such as work experience and integrated pathways, targeted during the programming stage both in the regional OPs and in the managing authorities' calls for proposals, have not been given equal attention in terms of cost during the first three years of the programme.

In training for job placement (obtained by stripping training of continuing training and training for the employed typologies):

- post-compulsory and post-diploma training account for 48% of costs;
- training inside compulsory training accounts for 23% of costs;

- training for returning to work accounts for 9% of costs;
- higher training accounts for 9% of costs.

This follows on from the previous programme that had placed the emphasis on second- and third-level training and on employees' training. The structure of investments by training typology highlights the lack of attention devoted to jobseekers with low educational standards.

In terms of approved beneficiaries by action typology, the actions addressed to persons concentrate on training activities (57%), albeit a consistent number of beneficiaries has also been involved in activities of guidance, counselling and information (40%). Instead, there is a relatively low number of individuals registered under incentives, work experience and integrated pathways (1.8%, 0.6% and 0.2% respectively).

It is interesting to note that, in training actions, beneficiaries are concentrated in training for the employed and account for over 40% of the total approved beneficiaries. A consistent number is also registered in post-compulsory training and post-diploma training (13%) and in lifelong training (12%). Instead, there are very few approved users in training projects for setting up businesses (0.7%) and in higher technical education and training projects (IFTS) (0.7%).

The analysis of training typologies shows that the present programme has a substantial continuity with the previous one, which had profoundly innovated the training system with the introduction of continuing training.

In terms of implementation efficiency, a greater difficulty of implementation is noted in accompanying measures, and particularly in business-service interventions, where the 57% of approved projects were launched against 90% of actions addressed to persons and 80% addressed to systems.

Within the framework of actions addressed to persons, there is a lower implementation efficiency in guidance, counselling and information

activities (76%), in IFTS (73%), higher training inside university cycles (68%) and training for setting up businesses (69%).

The lowest implementation efficiency for system actions is recorded in guidance, counselling and training activities for employment-services staff and for interventions on the training supply system.

4.2. The Objective 3 Community Support Framework analysis from the viewpoint of the European Employment Strategy

The CSF was analysed from both a previous and current EES viewpoint to provide a balance-sheet of the CSF implementation and to examine its coherence with the future strategy.

Compared to the previous EES, the most significant fact is that 5% of the total resources spent in Italy in 2001 for labour-market policies came from the implementation of co-financed programmes. However, contributions to the single pillars vary considerably:

- 5.5% for employability
- 6.4% for adaptability
- 0.6% for entrepreneurship
- 51.9% for equal opportunities

It is clear that the Italian 2000-2006 ESF is mainly linked to the employability pillar, as it also is in the majority of European Union countries.

88% of the ESF programmed resources are linked to the EES and of these 68.6% to employability, 13.9% to adaptability and 7.4% to entrepreneurship, whereas the resources for equal opportunities reflect the 10% reserve indicated as programme priority.

With regards to the new EES, the CSF has 97% of its resources allocated to measures directly linked to it, with almost a third of the programme devoted to active measures for the unemployed and inactives (priority 1), over 40% to interventions fostering adaptability,

the development of human capital and lifelong learning (priorities 3 and 4).

The role assumed by the objectives of development of human capital, lifelong learning and support for employment services mean that the ESF has become a particularly important instrument; the European Commission's recent implementation recommendations addressed to Italy also confirm this view.

The analysis of the approved cost of the co-financed projects regrouped by policies basically confirms the picture of a CSF concentrated on the priorities (active measures, adaptability and human capital). These together account for 74.2% of the resources (34% for adaptability and human capital development and 44.2% for active measures). 8.1% is allocated for the inclusion of the disadvantaged in the labour market and 11.6% for interventions specifically aimed at equal opportunities. An entirely residual share (2.1%) is allocated to entrepreneurship.

The analysis thus confirms that the current Objective 3 programme implementation has been almost entirely devoted to the new EES priorities. Moreover, some elements of the evaluation suggest that other contributions can come from programmes whose priorities are not explicitly linked to the co-financed interventions. For example, a contribution to active ageing can come from the implementation of measures D1 and C4 and to increasing the labour force through interventions addressed to the inactive (as in E1).

FIFTH PART

THE EVALUATION OF SOME KEY THEMES

5.1. Local development

The CSF looks at local development from a mainstreaming angle, spelling out the desired actions in each of the priorities of intervention and indicating the following directions:

- support for local development initiatives promoted through negotiated programming;
- training of occupational figures matching local needs;
- consultation as a procedure for building up coordinated actions coherent with the territory;
- construction of local actor networks.

In the implementing programme, the managing authorities should have taken action with regards to the local development priority, expressing choices and preferences for executing agents. However the calls are too generic using the same formulas already set forth in the regional OPs and planning committees and only viewing the enhancement of local resources as attention to local training needs, anyway already existing in regional training programmes.

There is a lack of homogeneity in the data provided by the independent OP evaluations used as an information source. This is because the priorities are given different weight in the regional programmes and probably also because the managing authorities give different significance to these priorities. Hence no useful indications can be given on how and how many of the OP interventions reflect the local development priority, but only on how this priority is “managed”.

With the data available, it is impossible to see whether the actions have actually been integrated or not, or whether there has been success

in constructing integration practices. Nor has it been possible to deduce the reason for any failures.

This lack of data prompts some recommendations. To date, integration seems to have proved effective for starting up local development processes, since it provides opportunities for human resources to be employed productively, tapping to the full their knowledge and accumulating specific know-how at work. However, its complexity means that devices are needed to help create knowledge of the process itself, hence the recommendation to observe attentively the processes, including their successes and failures. The idea is not only to verify their implementation and results, but also to build up a base of cases useful for defining further programmes. The evaluation of the attempts to integrate ESF actions with local development programmes can provide an initial and experimental contribution.

5.2. Information society

At the moment it is very difficult to analyse the implementation of the cross-cutting information society theme, and above all it is very hard to evaluate the interventions set up by the various Objective 3 administrations and their coherence with the ESF mainstreaming objectives.

In brief, there is a great heterogeneity in the managing authorities' interventions on the information-society priority, based on the idea that the original European Union proposal incorporated in the CSF programme is unspecialised. The reprogramming could thus be a good chance to adjust ESF intervention lines to the new Community proposals (already incorporated in Italy outside the ESF: see, for example, e-government).

The analysis of the public calls for proposals issued by the managing authorities over the 2000-2002 period shows that the information society is a priority explicitly envisaged in around 32% of cases, with different specifications according to the importance of the theme in the measure or action. The priority mainly involves regulated vocational or training areas and consolidated pathways/profiles.

Moreover, the calls for proposals often refer to the design of procedures for achieving the priority as a project.

The interim evaluations and the managing authorities' executive reports often reveal a great heterogeneity in the regions' definition - and therefore evaluation - of the information society over these first three years of Objective 3 CSF implementation. In particular, there is no uniformity in the criterion used to decide what and how many actions should cover this topic, that is the characteristics a project must have to be considered as an information-society intervention. Examples of this heterogeneous approach can be found in distance training activities, in compulsory modules dedicated to the information society in courses exceeding 100 hours and in generalised references to ICT.

Finally, it can be seen that few administrations have referred to the document written by the National ESF Evaluation Unit in 2001-2002 on monitoring the ten CSF priorities, proposing that the managing authorities use standard procedures to survey interventions addressed to the information society.

5.3. Quality of regional training systems

The aim of the in-depth survey on quality was the definition of an evaluation model for regional training systems². This was done by analysing the main components of the quality of the training system taken as a whole, and thus defining a set of indicators capable of describing the systems and rendering them mutually comparable.

First of all, the quality analysis areas were defined, in successive levels of detail, in terms of macro areas and scope of the quality and, in cascade, in factors/indicators and respective operational stages.

The definition of the model was followed by an initial testing of the three vocational training systems in Objective 3 areas (Valle d'Aosta

² The reference to the regional administrative unit includes autonomous provinces since they are also managing authorities.

and Lombardia regions and autonomous province of Trento), with the aim of:

- testing the theoretical approach, checking its effectiveness in terms of coherence with the project objectives, correspondence with contexts and feasibility of instruments;
- changing the model on the basis of the test results;
- testing the model with two managing authorities in the Mezzogiorno;
- validating the model;
- utilizing the model (managing authorities) for self-evaluation of quality.

An initial evaluation gave marks from 0 to 3 to the operational stages of the indicators (sub-indicators). Mark 0 means no indicator; mark 1 shows a weak presence, whereas 2 and 3 denote a “good” and “excellent” presence of the indicator.

The analysis of the marks given to the indicators of each region/province has enabled them to be cross read. The comparison of the different situations is not aimed at establishing a hierarchy of quality for training systems. The idea is to offer a reflection on the different components of quality which, in each managing authority, play a different role according to the importance “objectively” attributed to them.

The analysis of the indicators in the three areas also enables some common critical points to be identified. In some cases, the problem is linked to the human resources engaged in the programming, management and evaluation of the vocational training interventions in terms of numbers or organisation. Another critical point remains the difficulty in starting up a system for training credits that can be spent in different learning contexts. In other cases there is difficulty in launching integrated, composite or multi-actor projects.

When designing the evaluation model it was decided to ask a panel of four vocational training experts, from different institutions and/or work environments, to give a “weight” to the factors/indicators for

evaluating the quality of training systems. This weight was then applied to the regional/provincial cases, resulting in a second evaluation by people outside the working groups.

Despite its experimental character, the survey achieved some significant results:

- the systemic reading of the indicators referred to the three regions/provinces - by case studies and by giving marks for the presence/absence and consistency of factors - gives a good idea of the effectiveness and efficiency of vocational training strategies and interventions in the situations considered, from a system quality angle;
- the weights attributed by the experts highlight what areas (indicated in the model as quality investigation areas) and segments of the vocational training system (corresponding in the model to the factors/indicators) are considered strategic for quality;
- compared to the areas and segments of the previous point there is a substantial convergence with the priorities “objectively” pursued by the political decision-makers, because in all the situations the indicators have generally obtained medium-high marks.

For the first point, all the managing authorities tested have a high performance index, albeit with varying strategies for attaining it. This achievement is probably due to the overall presence of medium-high marks. Only rarely did the indicators have a zero mark. Therefore one of the conditions for upgrading vocational training systems consists of a holistic approach, that is an approach that keeps equal account of all the system components, although naturally not all the segments can achieve excellency.

SIXTH PART

THE EVALUATION OF THE OBJECTIVE 3 COMMUNITY SUPPORT FRAMEWORK RESULTS AND IMPACTS

6.1. Evaluation of results: rates of coverage and rates of job placement

On a programme level (CSF and OP), the indicators of result measure the achievement of specific targets (effectiveness) by the different ESF measures. In particular, within the framework of the CSF, both the effects on direct beneficiaries (rate of job placement) and the effect of the supply on the potential population (rate of coverage) have been considered a result of the co-financed activities.

The greatest rates of coverage are found in measures C3 (22%), C2 (21%) and A2 (19%) concerned with the development of higher training, school dropout prevention and unemployment prevention respectively. In the implementation programme, these measures were linked by their target population, relatively easy to involve in training interventions because of the strong continuity with training in schools. In the case of C2, the beneficiaries are mainly students, whereas for C3 and A2 they come from the different school or university levels.

The lowest rates of coverage are in measures C4 and D1. However, it is not easy to fix time limits when involving persons of working age and the employed in the interventions. The indicator used - the capacity of coverage in a year - is not necessarily the most appropriate. Overall, only 2.1% of the Objective 3 employed were trained under the ESF in the 2000-2002 period.

For measure E1, the rate of coverage of the female segment compared to the target one, which also includes inactive women, is particularly low (0.3), although it rises to 3.3 for female jobseekers.

Summing up the beneficiaries of all the measures except for D1, the coverage capacity of non-employed women came to 2.8%. This low

figure is to be expected when considering the inactive population, only marginally involved in ESF activities.

Inactive women represent a minority component of the numerator and a majority one of the denominator. Therefore, as a proxy of the capacity to involve women jobseekers, the beneficiaries of the interventions under all the measures (except D1) were compared to the female population seeking work. This is an indicator that is methodologically incorrect because of the lack of coherence between numerator and denominator, but still useful for giving an order of magnitude. The rate of coverage in fact rises to 37%. Although it is overestimated, it still provides an idea of the weight of the ESF in this population segment.

An overall rate of coverage has also been calculated for the measures fostering labour-market placement, i.e. measures A2, A3, E1 and B1 that specify this aim for different target categories (short and long-term unemployed, women and disadvantaged groups). The annual rate of coverage was 16% for women and 18% for men.

For measure B1, the rate of coverage of three categories at risk of social exclusion (disabled, non-EU nationals and offenders) was calculated for six managing authorities. Measure B1 was reached 3.4% by offenders (although the figure is overestimated), 1.2% by the disabled and 0.1% by non-EU nationals.

When evaluating how the different measures contribute to achieving the specific objectives, not only is the coverage capacity of the target population taken into account but also the effectiveness of the measures. For the measures aimed at job placement, a first indicator of effectiveness is given by the gross rate of placements, that is the percentage of participants who had found work a year later. The indicator was calculated for a group of regions possessing data on employment outcomes one year after the end of the interventions, and was limited to measures A2, A3, B1, C3 and E1.

The rate of placement in education was also considered, given by the percentage of beneficiaries who, after participating in the training

activity, resumed or continued their studies. Finally, considering the resumption of studies as a positive outcome, a “success rate” can be quantified by adding students to employees and comparing them to the total. When interpreting the data on different measures, it has to be recalled that they also have different user typologies and thus the target population’s employment possibilities and probabilities of investing in education are also different.

The highest rates of job placement are observed in measures E1 and A3. For measure E1, however, the success rate is not one of the highest. A3 has a higher rate of job placement than A2 (72% against 67%). All three indicators are very similar for measures A3 and C3 that address similar groups of beneficiaries. In addition, for A2, the success rate is high against a relatively low placement rate, since the low average age of the beneficiaries makes the resumption of studies a probable outcome.

In accordance with the economic and empirical theory of human capital, the rates of placement increase with educational levels. The highest success rate, however, is recorded for beneficiaries with a high-school diploma that does not permit access to university (85%), because of the large number of participants who continue their studies (17%).

With regards to age, the highest placement rate is recorded by beneficiaries belonging to the 25-29 year group. Surprisingly, the 40-44 group (74%) also has a high rate of job placement. Overall, the highest percentage of positive outcomes is observed for all the youngest age groups (around 84%).

6.2. Employment impact of ESF training interventions on particular target categories

Within the framework of the interim evaluation, econometric techniques have been used to estimate net rates of job placement for the ESF co-financed vocational-training interventions and the net impact of vocational training courses on the employment outcomes of particular target groups over the 2000-2001 period. Thanks to these

methodologies, it has been possible to estimate the effect of training policies on the probability of finding work net of the results that would have been achieved without the intervention.

In particular, the study calculated the following indicators:

- rates of job placement (gross and net): indicators of result aimed at measuring the direct effects (on effective or potential beneficiaries) produced by the co-financed policies. These indicators are calculated for the different beneficiary categories;
- employment impacts (gross and net) on particular target categories: indicators of impact based on variations in the probability of employment attributable to training, weighted for the probability of participating in the training interventions of the different target groups. These indicators measure the impact of the co-financed policies on the target population.

It is thus possible to evaluate the effect of the programme on the different categories, taking into account both the benefit achieved by the participation and the programme's capacity to involve the target population.

When measuring the impact, therefore, information on employment outcomes of direct beneficiaries is used to calculate the effect on the target population. In particular, the net effects were estimated, that is net of the results that would have been achieved without the training programme. This is an indicator that takes into account the “dead-weight” costs (results that would also have been achieved without the intervention) but not the “crowding-out” effects (of participants with respect to non participants). This is suitable for comparing the results of the different target categories but not for a quantification of the impact in absolute terms.

The analysis was focused on co-financed training interventions aimed at increasing employment possibilities, carried out in two Objective 3 regions. Thus only interventions concerning measures A2, A3, B1 and E1 were considered. These all had the general objective of fostering insertion in the labour market, albeit each measure was specifically

addressed to particular target categories. Also analysed were the interventions under measure C3 which pursued a similar goal.

Without going into technical details of the methodology used, the model firstly offers an analysis of the variables that mostly seem to have affected both the decision to participate in training activities and the probability of job placement. In particular, the choice of individuals to participate in vocational training courses is influenced by their parents' educational standards, and especially the mother's, by a unfavourable provincial labour market, by the possession of a diploma or vocational qualification as well as by the fact of being unemployed for over six months. Being older seems to have discouraged participation in training activities.

Moreover, not only the access to vocational training channels, but also the probability of job placement is significantly influenced by the parents' employment status (the fact of having an inactive father or an unemployed mother has a negative impact on this probability). Employment possibilities increase as the educational level increases, whereas they decrease as the age increases.

The net rates of job placement, obtained as the difference between the probability of employment corresponding to the choice of participating in the training courses and that of deciding not to participate in them, show that women obtain the greatest benefits from participation. The net rate of job placement is greater for women than for men, whether one applies the model to the direct beneficiaries (0.33 for women against 0.25 for men) or to the potential beneficiaries (0.28 against 0.19). Therefore training is helping to balance out the various initial employment possibilities between men and women. The impact on the target population is also high for women, who have recorded a greater increase in the probability of work than the male population.

With reference to the different human-capital endowment of job seekers, the possibility of finding work for those with upper secondary-school diplomas compared to graduates is balancing out, whereas the gap increases for individuals with lower educational

levels. The vocational training activities considered have a greater impact on individuals possessing a diploma, also because of the high interception capacity for this category of beneficiaries. Against this, a minor impact is observed for individuals only possessing a primary-school certificate, who are difficult to involve and with almost no effect on employment chances.

A similar reasoning shows that the employment possibilities of individuals with different unemployment durations are also balancing out. The analysis of impacts shows that the different capacity of coverage causes a greater impact of interventions on beneficiaries of preventive policies than on beneficiaries of curative policies.

SEVENTH PART

CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

7.1. Priority A

The analysis aimed to check the relevance of the priority strategy, to understand if and how the implementation of programmes has followed the preventive approach as outlined by the EES. With regards to the traditional curative approach, the aim was to see if and to what extent the managing authorities have managed to differentiate interventions for the variety of user typologies in the target population.

The analysis of the context highlights an improvement over the three-year period in labour-market indicators. However critical points remain, rendering the priority target and its qualification into specific objectives still relevant. With regards to the general priority strategy, the reduction of the percentage of long-term unemployed out of the total unemployed seems to confirm the effectiveness of the approach adopted by national policies. This approach, in line with the EES and incorporated in the ESF programme, takes the preventive path for combating long-term unemployment.

The analysis of the implementation programme and the physical implementation of priority A highlights the importance of the co-financed interventions in supporting the national reform processes. This applies to both employment services and to the institution of compulsory training.

The financial progress of the priority is good compared to the rest of the priorities, whereas its physical progress is only average. This result mainly depends on the good performance of measure A2, with the best financial implementation in the CSF and a very satisfactory physical implementation.

Critical points are to be found in measure A1 regarding both financial and physical progress. Very likely this is due not only to the innovative nature of this measure (the first CSF support of employment services) but also to the complex programming and management involved in system actions. This is the first time that the ESF is being used to purchase fixtures and instruments for employment service centres, for IT products and for acquiring additional human resources.

The considerable variety of individuals who have benefited from the measure should also be mentioned, including staff in the centres and in the regional and provincial offices, social partners and private employment-agency staff. Probably also these innovative aspects have played against the efficiency of the measure.

Despite the critical points, the procedural and physical progress data should not induce revising the overall priority strategy with reference to the weight of measure A1. The managing authorities who have achieved good performances show a reasonable effectiveness in their interventions with regards to the objectives of the measure and to the needs of the target context.

During the first three years of its implementation, the ESF has contributed, through measure A1, to the reform process and to the quali-quantitative improvement of employment services. The analysis of the implementation programme and the physical implementation places the spotlight on interventions for upgrading employment services. This does not only mean involving more people in preventive initiatives, but also a greater attention towards the problems emerging from the more general reform process.

It is no coincidence that the most popular project typologies in the calls for tenders - and the most important in terms of costs approved - are “the acquisition of human, logistic and instrumental resources”. Moreover, the importance of the “construction and testing of prototypes and models” is an indirect confirmation of the managing authorities’ need to find innovative instruments for tackling the complex nature of employment services.

What has been learnt from the first three years of measure A1 implementation mainly regards the programming and utilisation of the funds allocated to the employment services and the programming/management of interventions supporting human resources.

If it is true that it's difficult to choose between financing sources since they all aim at satisfying the same needs, then the managing authorities should aim at integrating their local activities to achieve not only an economy of scale but also better to target the financing typologies. This would help to assess the impact of the committed resources on the direct beneficiaries, on the target organisations, on the context and on the territory.

For the updating/upgrading of staff, one of the most widespread project typologies in the measure, the same recommendations apply as those for continuing training in the civil service (see the analysis of measure D2), i.e.:

- the need to programme/plan activities on a local level (provincial), anchored to the analysis of needs, the drafting of training plans, the evaluation of the result and impact of the previous actions and addressed to the same target;
- the advisability of integrating training interventions with human resource development plans and, more in general, with the interventions involving organizational changes.

On the procedural level it can reasonably be expected that, after an uncertain inception due to the innovative nature of the measure and of the action and project typologies, the measure will progress more in line with the CSF and priority average implementation efficiency values.

For measure A2, the analysis of the calls for proposals shows that training interventions within compulsory training and schooling are characteristic of the measure. The use of the ESF to support the new compulsory-training laws interprets the preventive approach to unemployment by placing the intervention at a stage prior to entry in the labour market.

Moreover, the implementation data, albeit not available for all of Objective 3, shows that the managing authorities have two basic approaches to the measure: one uses the preventive approach as an early intervention for the young whereas the other concentrates on interventions for all jobseekers. In any event, the proposal in the CSF to use the measure to support national regulations on compulsory training seems to have been taken up by all the managing authorities. This means including the inactive of working age in the beneficiaries and anticipating the interception of potential users to a time prior to their entry on the labour market.

Because Italy is the European Union country with the lowest percentage of young people finding their first significant job within six months, it is recommended that in the remaining programming period, when the target of interventions is extended to the inactive, attention should be concentrated on young people leaving the educational system rather than those effectively looking for work. In the remaining programming period it would also seem advisable to concentrate this type of intervention in measure A2 as some managing authorities have already started to do.

The empirical evidence shows that, in Italy, the six-month threshold for finding work, chosen as the *lumen discriminis* to define the beneficiaries of both preventive and curative interventions, does not pinpoint very different groups of young people.

For the beneficiaries, albeit there is a prevalence of calls with no reference to particular categories and thus no particular characterisation of interventions, there is also a high number of calls for specific interventions addressed to particular categories of long-term unemployed and workers at risk of expulsion from the labour market.

The analysis of the implementation programme thus shows that the managing authorities seem to have managed to interpret the targets of the curative approach and to differentiate these interventions, where considered necessary, from those used by the preventive approach.

The implementation figures show less variety of interventions than those envisaged by the implementation programme of the same measure and of those under measure A2. Like measure A2, in measure A3 each managing authority has also given, in relation to the specific nature of its territory (whether on a level of economic context or project supply) its own interpretation of the curative approach through a different mix of interventions.

The analysis of the beneficiaries' characteristics shows that the interventions carried out under measure A3 involved on average more adult - and thus better-educated - users than the interventions under measure A2. A more detailed analysis of the age groups also shows that, in almost all the regions considered, the older groups have also been relatively well covered in the adult segment.

The physical implementation of measure A3 thus seems consistent with the curative nature of the approach underpinning it. In the following programme period it would perhaps be better to focus more on the target of the measure. It could be useful here to concentrate, as some managing authorities have already started to do, interventions aimed at young people leaving the training pathways of the scholastic or university system in measure A2, and to aim measure A3 at interventions addressed to particular categories of the unemployed or workers at risk of expulsion from the labour market. The beneficiaries of this measure will thus be individuals who, having left the educational system for some time or having acquired a greater work experience, need different interventions than those continuing on from educational or vocational training cycles.

In brief, therefore, it would seem advisable to keep the original architecture of the priority. However, a different specialisation of interventions is suggested for measures A2 and A3.

7.2. Priority B

The good physical and financial progress achieved during the first three years of implementation of priority B is effectively helping to achieve the main strategic objectives indicated in the CSF. The ability

to reach the more disadvantaged (from a socioeconomic angle) population groups, the impressive range of interventions directly addressed to their needs (including system actions for improving their effectiveness), the tendency of the managing authorities to widen - diversifying more than in the past - the target groups of co-financed policies are some of the most significant aspects emerging from the analyses of the physical implementation of the measure.

Some more specific indications formulated during the programming stage are also confirmed. For example, the important role (in the overall strategy) played by guidance actions, to remedy the lack of information on local training and work opportunities that further damage the beneficiaries of the measure; the importance of training actors in the various systems involved in social-inclusion policies (education, training, managing authorities' work and governance); and the specific innovative intervention formalities (small subsidies and global grants). Less important with regards to the programming design are the integrated job-placement pathways.

The analysis of the 2000-2002 implementing programme also provides further indications on the managing authorities' approach to the topic of disadvantage. There is a tendency:

- to use the CSF mainstreaming strategy also for the more disadvantaged groups; the calls for proposals highlight actions expressly addressed to user categories under priority A (cognitive tools for employment services on characteristics of offenders and immigrants and support for placing the disabled; preventive training actions for the disabled; interventions addressed to the long-term unemployed in particular economic difficulty) and priority E (guidance and counselling for immigrant women);
- to give priority to interventions supported by multi-actor partnerships (also in the CSF) and to other conditions for fostering the employability of beneficiaries (primarily the overall quality of the interventions and the forms of job placement they envisage).

There are no particular critical points in the implementation of the measure strategies in the present ESF programme period. On the contrary, the majority of managing authorities seems already to be fully aware of the guidelines for extending the intervention strategies to certain target groups (disabled, immigrants, ethnic minorities, the so-called new poor, etc.) involving social-inclusion policies on a national and Community level.

It thus seems obvious that measure B1 will play a major role in the remaining programme period. And this not only in the implementation of CSF strategies (not posing particular problems) but primarily in the new impulse they will receive from the benchmark objectives indicated by the 2003 EES. That is, significantly to reduce - by 2010 - the employment gap for the disadvantaged and that between EU and non-EU citizens.

For this contribution to be evaluated, suitable information systems are needed on both a local and national level. These have to be able to provide policy-makers with increasingly in-depth, systematic and recurrent information on the different categories of the disadvantaged reached by the ESF and on the effects products by the co-financed policies. Thus, also in view of the good performance of the measure, it would be advisable in the short term:

- to strengthen the monitoring of the main target groups already benefiting from co-financed policies (for example, the disabled and immigrants, who also constitute future priorities), seeing how to remove any problems in surveying their distinctive features;
- to launch similar initiatives in favour of the more innovative user categories, not yet sufficiently codified in the managing authorities' information systems;
- to create specific evaluation models, methods and instruments for these particular beneficiaries, checking and comparing the results produced by the main intervention typologies in the managing authorities' choices (guidance, training and incentives);

- to encourage the mainstreaming evaluation with specific system actions that can tap similar positive experiences launched on a regional and/or national level;
- to promote round tables on the topics cited for technical comparisons between the various managing authorities, making use of the national consolidated cooperation procedures set up by the “placement” working group coordinated by ISFOL’s National ESF Evaluation Unit.

Bearing in mind these strategic, mid-term objectives, some signals emerging from the initial analyses of targets and results should not be underestimated. It is therefore suggested that the managing authorities:

- foster a greater coverage of specific target groups already set as priorities in their reference contexts (disabled and immigrants) also encouraging information and consciousness-raising on the opportunities the ESF offers them;
- do not neglect the needs of the older disadvantaged groups and of women.

7.3. Priority C

Priority C has a considerable strategic importance in the CSF design and its initial implementation has inevitably been affected by the nature of the themes it covers. The priority has also been involved in the changes to the Italian educational system after the approval of law 53/2003 and the application of constitutional law 3/2001 reforming the State organisation.

The priority contains measures that often have new contents (in particular measures C1, C2 and C4) and that are complex to launch and implement, both in terms of conception and design and of the construction of the relative implementation conditions. Moreover, especially for measures C2 and C4, the effective involvement of beneficiaries has not been as immediate and direct as was theoretically necessary for an optimal expenditure path. The overall progress of the individual measures is linked to a myriad of inter-related factors: the

innovative policy contents proposed; the typical profile, including the structure, of the projects supported; the financial entity of the measure; the priority and measure strategies of each managing authority.

Another element is the considerable heterogeneity of the beneficiaries involved in the projects. This makes priority C a very differentiated intervention, covering a vast range of beneficiaries in terms of personal characteristics and educational levels but also – albeit to a lesser extent – of labour-market status. The rates of coverage calculable for measures C2, C3 and C4 show that this broad range can represent a problem, especially for measure C4 which seems only able to involve a very low share of potential beneficiaries.

Under the evaluative profile, the actions financed on the priority also confirm its wide-ranging intervention. The projects cover a supply segment that starts with basic compulsory training and ends with post-graduate training, both through specific measures for each segment (C2, C3) and through the intervention of measure C4, potentially crosscutting all the beneficiary groups.

The four most important projects as regards numbers (technical-vocational updating courses, cultural updating courses, post-compulsory training and post-diploma training courses, personal incentives for training) outline an priority in which there are both long and short training courses, of a circumscribed thematic content and aimed – the long courses – at training complete vocational profiles.

A reading of the priority according to the beneficiaries collected by the single project typologies (with 43% of approved and launched beneficiaries inserted in guidance and counselling actions) changes the picture given by an analysis only by projects. But it also gives the idea of an priority still solidly concentrated on the youngest age groups. The specific elements of the priority are to be found in the profile of the beneficiaries reached – as well as obviously in its overall design. Priority C involves a greater percentage of beneficiaries with a primary-school certificate or without any educational certificate than the CSF (measure C2 is mainly responsible for these) just as it is

reaching more students and less employees (and this depends essentially on the C4 quantities compared to D1). Moreover, it is involving on average younger beneficiaries, with a much greater weight of under 19-year-olds.

One of the basic strategies of the priority concerns assistance to structures and systems, mainly involving measure C1, which has to be reconciled with the recent decentralization moves (starting with constitutional law 3/2001). The implementation is thus undoubtedly more complex than that of pathways directly addressed to persons. The new art. 117 of the Constitution has rendered the – necessary – link between the OP of the Ministry of Labour and Social Policies and the other OPs rather delicate. Article 117 gives the regions exclusive powers on the topic of education and vocational training, but makes the State responsible for the "determination of essential performance levels (...) that have to be guaranteed nationwide".

In this scenario, the main issues which the priority will have to address in the coming three year-period are:

- a) the link-up – hopefully involving a synergy – with the processes for implementing the educational reform (including universities) and the redesign of the State organisation;
- b) a new theme – that of lifelong learning – which in Italy is grafted onto an existing situation unfavourable both as regards systems and beneficiaries' profiles;
- c) the connection between the national and the regional/subregional levels of intervention (especially for system actions).

On a measure level there are further aspects which have to be tackled in the next three years. The first is that of dropouts, delicate in areas – such as those of Objective 3 – in which work exercises a strong attraction and the dropout issue risks being hidden or underestimated because its most dramatic traits do not emerge.

Within this framework, the issues on which to reflect, especially for the future, are the following:

- the links of the measure with law 53/2003 which tackles “theoretically” the dropout issue in an explicit manner, attacking it with the functional differentiation of educational pathways;
- the need to pinpoint suitable methods and forms for tackling the issue (for example in a mainstreaming logic); the challenge is to keep people inside educational systems without forming enclaves or reserves for those with difficulties or at risk of dropping out;
- the need to tackle the roots of the problem (living and socialisation arenas, educational and training processes, learning relationships) and not only its effects, intervening not only on the educational system in its different segments but on the social and cultural systems as a whole.

With reference to higher training, there seem to be three main aspects to be addressed in the next three years:

- the link with the new reforms of the educational and university system and in particular with the possible scenario – within the framework of the university reform – of a university supply with initial pathways giving direct access to the labour market;
- the general contribution of the measure to the construction of a non-academic, post-secondary supply with multiple providers (universities, training agencies, educational establishments);
- the relationship existing between local supply (quantity and quality), characteristics of the local labour markets and propensity of the target population to invest in training (with the impression that sometimes there is a surplus supply in this segment).

For lifelong training, C4 has to cope with numerous aspects, mainly regarding the following areas:

- a) the quantities but also the different qualities of the theoretical target population;
- b) the contents of the supply (either basic technical-vocational or crosscutting) and the need to give a specific identity to this segment, especially with regards to the ESF;

- c) how to access the training supply and how to make use of it (forms, timetables, conditions, ...);
- d) the distribution of the supply (with the risk of its concentration in a few local districts);
- e) the need to involve individuals with medium-low educational levels and qualifications in training actions;
- f) the link between the different providers as well as between the formal (compulsory education and training) and non-formal (senior citizens' universities, etc.) pathways.

7.4. Priority D

The analysis of priority D shows that the managing authorities have only partly tapped the potential of its global objective to raise the competitiveness of the production system. For example, the theme of rescheduling working hours and making the labour market more flexible was not present in the implementation of measure D1. In measure D3, interventions encouraging entrepreneurship were favoured (especially guidance for setting up new businesses) at the expense of interventions for consolidating businesses. Measure D4 shows difficulty in systematically tackling the theme of networking between universities and firms, for which the placement of researchers in firms is an important aspect. Instead training for the employed, mainly conceived as a course activity, is widespread and appears well consolidated.

In the light of this first three-year implementation period, for measure D1 it seems advisable to pay particular attention to refocusing the objectives of the measure. Very briefly, these objectives should be set in terms of a choice between “making businesses more competitive” or “promoting individuals with disadvantages in the labour market”.

The recent evolution of the national policy in terms of encouraging continuing training (*fondi interprofessionali* - multisectoral funds for financing continuing training) raises the problem of the measure's concentration on target-oriented interventions (in terms of businesses and/or of workers) to tap the complementarity between Community, national and regional instruments and to prevent overlaps.

A proactive approach to the measure based on the lifelong learning strategy promoted by the EES suggests using system and accompanying actions to foster individuals' awareness of and responsibilities for updating their skills and to negotiate with employers to integrate the measure's resources with the existing regulatory provisions (e.g. training leaves).

The policy for encouraging entrepreneurship with ESF financing must perhaps be given its own personal features and a better targeting. The paucity of resources attributed to it and the presence of a consolidated set of financial instruments (similar activities under Objective 2, as well as regional and national laws) could create crowding-out effects.

There is also the more general issue of the objectives to be attributed to the policies for encouraging entrepreneurship, where it has to be decided whether they are to be enterprise-creation or job-creation policies. Albeit not actually in open conflict, the benefits and drawbacks in a policy for creating businesses aimed at combating unemployment and basically viewed as a social cohesion policy are evident. As various studies have shown, the enterprise "assisted" for certain user targets is not always feasible and sustainable. The profile of ESF beneficiaries shows that the co-financed policy is more addressed to competitiveness and less to equity targets.

There is also a need for a coordination among the various financial resources for training civil servants under measure D2. If the actions under this measure are to be effective it must be borne in mind that:

- the integration of the various funds for developing human capital in the civil service enables more ambitious objectives to be achieved than in unconnected or emergency training interventions;
- the separation of the ESF structures and offices from the offices responsible for in-house training does not help to rationalise interventions and make continuing training a system using different supports but interested in achieving common targets;
- the definition and selection of beneficiaries whose profiles and functions are consistent with the objectives of the training

activity produces results that have an impact on working and organisational procedures as well as on individuals;

- the supervision of all the segments and stages of the training policy, from the analysis of needs for skills and training to the evaluation of results, as laid down by the Frattini Directive, is the best way of giving continuity and consistency to interventions aimed at developing human resources in the civil service, and thus of increasing their effectiveness.

Finally, on the R&D front, networking between universities and business should become a priority to best tap the potential and results of other human-resource upgrading activities within the R&D framework.

The strategic importance of Community guidelines, recently reiterated in the conclusions of the Lisbon European Council, in which the objective of achieving 3% of expenditure on R&D by 2010 was fixed, requires greater efforts on Italy's part and a constant attention to the theme. It would be thus appropriate to act not only on the programming strategy but also on the operating procedures for implementing the measure.

It is thus suggested:

- to make the connections and synergies between scientific research and the business world more systematic;
- to develop the monitoring and evaluation of the initiatives undertaken;
- to promote discussions and comparisons between the various managing authorities;
- to publicise interventions for potential beneficiaries;
- to promote R&D among businesses by recognising local needs and prospects;
- to foster good practices.

7.5. Priority E and gender mainstreaming

Priority E has given good performances during this first three-year implementation period, both from a financial and physical progress angle with an ample, but not exclusive, participation of women in the co-financed activities. The priority is seen as a container in which traditional training actions flank the more innovative ones, such as accompanying and system actions. This distinguishes it from the other priorities in terms of the weight, including financial weight, that these interventions have had on all the actions launched.

Thus two “cores” exist in the priority: the first intercepts a demand from women for integration and reintegration in the labour market through updating and upgrading; the second instead involves the more innovative interventions. These latter include the reconciliation of family life with a working career, aimed at improving access to training activities, as well as the support and encouragement of the dissemination of an equal opportunities culture. In this case, the priority has also acted as a complement to the other priorities (for example by handing out vouchers).

Probably this double role is the expression of differentiated strategies for promoting women’s participation in the labour market. In the regional context, which have high rates of female employment and low rates of unemployment, the administrations have used priority E as a chance to disseminate a gender culture in the economic and socio-institutional scenario through system actions, and to improve women’s access to training activities.

In these cases, the policies favouring female participation have been addressed not so much to promoting their access as to helping them remain in the work place. In the presence of low rates of female participation, however, administrations have tended to favour training interventions aimed at the integration and reintegration of women, as well as entrepreneurship and higher training.

This different structuring of intervention policies has led to different interpretations of gender mainstreaming, and consequently of how the

equal-opportunities principle crosscuts and integrates in the OP priorities and measures. The analysis of the implementation has shown that the project typologies promoted in priority E have in some way enabled the other priorities to be less wholehearted in embracing the equal-opportunities principle in their objectives and strategies through specific actions addressed to the needs of the female population, or to do it by aiming almost exclusively at a widespread involvement of women.

It should also be recalled that, with its system actions, the priority has been the driving force for setting up equal-opportunities governance models on a regional level. These bring in new occupational figures, involve local actors concerned with equal-opportunities issues in the programming, provide services specifically dedicated to these topics, etc. The responsibilities for equal opportunities are also being consolidated within the framework of the administrative decentralization to the regions/provinces. The promotion of actions aimed at persons is concentrated more on a provincial level, accompanied by a consistent presence of regional responsibilities for system actions.

Inevitably, there are very close links and relations between priority E and the crosscutting priority spelt out in the CSF on equal opportunities. But these links should also be better structured, to differentiate the objectives of an priority specifically dedicated to the promotion and permanence of women in the labour market from the objectives of all the other priorities. In this pathway, the other priorities can create greater synergies inside the CSF by embracing the more “traditional” core of priority E (job integration and reintegration). This priority could perhaps provide greater support for promoting an equal-opportunities mentality in regional contexts, as well as helping to improve women’s quality of work (interventions for reducing horizontal and vertical segregation at work) and to remove constraints to their remaining in work (actions promoting the reconciliation of work with family life).

7.6. Priority F

Priority F has an entirely particular nature within the CSF, which has obviously to be borne in mind when evaluating its implementation progress. It is an priority providing services to the CSF and to the OPs within it and is the most direct reference context for the implementation of the programmes. Its low amount of financing and its involvement with some crucial themes for the success of the ESF action (evaluation, technical assistance to the managing authorities, information and advertising, expenditure control) are its other distinctive features.

The interim evaluation of the priority implementation must refer first to the financial quantities assigned to it and to the mission that the CSF entrusts to the priority. That is setting up – on a national and OP level – the systems of monitoring, evaluation, financial control and information/advertising.

Like priority F as a whole, measure F1 has a suitable coherence between financed projects and its mission within the framework of the CSF, but its financial progress is rather unsatisfactory. In particular, its commitment capacity (blocked at 26.6%) is an obviously critical element, also because of its repercussions on the implementation efficiency and utilisation capacity.

The expenditure performance during 2003 can help us to see if these initial difficulties (entirely plausible since the measure supports a large amount of technical assistance, monitoring and evaluation activities as well as the managing authorities' organisational adjustments) have been overcome or not.

Undoubtedly, the low level of expenditure has to be carefully investigated first of all, also because it is not general to all the OPs. However, when evaluating the overall performance of measure F2 it has to be borne in mind that it has a modest strategic importance and low profile.

The financial progress of the measure, despite its limited financial allocation (but perhaps it would be better to say because of), is not completely satisfactory but anyway better than F1. Precisely thanks to this financial progress, its physical implementation is positive whereas its implementation outcome is conditioned by the content of the actions financed.

The interim reports of the independent evaluators devote a space to the measure commensurate with its importance in the overall OP economy. Therefore, since the physical and financial implementation of F2 is not homogeneous in the different OPs, the evaluators give detailed opinions on the measure, often inside a general reasoning on priority F. Hence there are both positive, or anyway not negative, evaluations and evaluations that highlight at least the delay in the launch and implementation of the measure. However, there seems to be an awareness in all the reports that the actions the priority supports are important both for the good functioning of the OP and for the contribution they can give to the effectiveness of local human-resource development systems and of employability.

ACRONYMS

CSF	Community Support Framework
EES	European Employment Strategy
ESF	European Social Fund
EU	European Union
GDP	Gross Domestic Product
HIV	Human Immunodeficiency Virus
ICT	Information and Communication Technology
IFTS	Istruzione e formazione tecnica superiore (higher technical education and training)
ISFOL	Istituto per lo sviluppo della formazione professionale dei lavoratori (Institute for the Development of Workers' Vocational Training)
IT	Information Technology
OP	Operational Programme
R&D	Research & Development
SME	Small and Medium Sized Enterprise
VISPO	Valutazione Impatto Strategico Pari Opportunità (Evaluation of the Strategic Impact of Equal Opportunity)

GLOSSARY

Commitment capacity	Ratio between resources committed and resources programmed
Capacity of utilisation	Ratio between payments made and resources committed
Implementation efficiency	Ratio between payments made and resources programmed or ratio between number of projects launched and number of projects completed
Implementation result	Ratio between beneficiaries of completed projects and beneficiaries of launched projects