

NEEDS ANALYSIS: MAIN RESULTS FROM THE INTERVIEWS IN ITALY

Organisation	Finproject
Output	IO1
Title	TICTAC Guide
Activity	Needs Analysis
Research tool	Interview (Qualitative Questionnaire)
No. of valid questionnaires received	10 questionnaires
Profile of the institutions	Municipalities (4), Province (1), Regions (1), Universities (2), Associations or Cooperatives working with public bodies (1), Interregional Park (1)
Area covered by the research	Italy
Date of execution	March - April 2020

1.	<i>Which is your level of knowledge of the EU programmes in general?</i>
<p>Most interviewees have a quite medium-high knowledge as regards the general knowledge of EU programmes and their aims, but poor at operative level. Mostly the knowledge regards some specific direct EU Programmes and some European Territorial Cooperation Programmes.</p>	
2.	<i>What level of intensity have you experienced in obtaining EU funding in your city/region over the last decade? Which is your concrete experience?</i>
<p>The situation is heterogenous in intensity and achievement of EU funding: some local institutions have obtained good results as one indicates even 6 different projects funded of which 4 by ECT Programmes. At the other hand, others which have been successful in previous planning periods getting extremely interesting experiences, in the period 2014-2020 they have been unsuccessful. Others expressed the increasing complexity in managing and reporting of funded projects. One interviewee stated that the biggest challenge the institution had to face was to raise a deeper awareness among apathetic colleagues, local institution representatives and citizens of the huge opportunity the EU programmes represent.</p>	

3. How do you get involved in EU projects and who usually manage these projects (clerks or external consultants)?

Most interviewed entities get to know about EU funding opportunities through internal European Policies Offices or because they are informed by external consultants which play a key role in proposing new project and ideas. Then, for the project ideation, design, and application they usually involve external consultants. If projects are funded, they use a combination of internal staff / clerks and external experts to implement, manage and report these projects.

4. How important is for your city/region to receive EU funding?

In the opinion of most interviewees EU funding is either “fundamental” or “very important” as these funds permit to implement actions that cannot be financed by local public funds. Some also underlined that besides the funding, these projects are essential to activate a global vision of the local actions which should be carried out and to develop new relationships that create new opportunities. Most interviewees refer to EU funding also linked to ERDF, European Social Fund and other funds managed at regional or national level.

5. To what extent do you consider significant the impact of the EU funds managed in the development of your city/region?

EU funds are fundamental even though the impact is not always measurable, especially considering that many public works are supported by EU financial tools managed at national and regional level (e.g. ROP Regional Operational Plan). The main concern is related to the possibility to guarantee the long-lasting duration of the project outputs and the possibility to systematise project initiatives with those of the local public administrations.

6. Which are the main obstacles (if any) for the participation of your institution in EU funded projects?

A series of obstacles limit or exclude the possibility for institution to participate in EU funded projects: the insufficient number of clerks that can dedicated to working on the project, the incompetence in writing competitive project proposals, lack of competencies in EU financial reporting and project management, the difficulties of adapting the bureaucracy and the rules of a public administration to the methods and timing requested by European Programmes, weakness in terms of a network of potential European partners.

7. Which are the preferred areas or fields of activity that your institution would like to explore through EU funding opportunities in the near future?

In the near future most interviewees consider the preferred sectors those that reflect the tasks of local public administrations: Sustainable tourism and tourism governance, Culture, Environment, Energy, Sustainable Mobility, Innovation (3S), Digitization, Social and migration (including brain drain), young people, work and leisure balance and quality of life, Public Works, Social movements and alternative forms of consumption.

8. Which information would you like to receive from each EU funding opportunity? Do you prefer to receive information about the funding opportunities generally speaking or practical information about how to get involved and how to write a project proposal?

Both the funding opportunities and practical information about how to get involved and how to write a project proposal can provide useful information. However, considering that the information usually present in general and introductory terms is already exhaustive, for most interviewees it is more useful to focus on practical information on how to participate, how to create a partners network, and how to write a project proposal and how to design the budgets. In addition, since we are in the start-up phase of the new programming period, it would extremely useful to receive information on the new European programmes 2021-2027.

9. Do you think it would be helpful for your daily work to have a Guide dealing with how to manage these opportunities? If yes, which format would you prefer?

For most interviewees, the idea of having a “guide dealing with how to handle EU opportunities” sounds especially useful, especially if extremely operational with detailed technical and organisational information. The preferred modalities differ notably, ranging from PDF documents to interactive format consultable digitally, from mailing to workshops, from online tutorials to helplines easy to reach and other easy-to-share formats to be distributed to many clerks in different offices of public administrations. However, some underlined that there is a problem of “overcrowding” in information/tools/guidelines and, therefore, a ‘less is more’ approach would be preferable.