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SUMMARY

Evaluation of the implementation and results of the actions of the Operational Programme for Youth Employment (POEJ) in the period 14-20 financed in Galicia and managed by the Xunta de Galicia.



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1 Introduction:

Purpose of the evaluation: The report evaluates the Operational Programme for Youth Employment (POEJ) in Galicia from 2014 to 2020, managed by the Xunta de Galicia, analysing its effectiveness, efficiency, relevance and internal coherence, as well as its effects until September 2023. It is structured in nine chapters that address issues such as the economic, social and territorial diagnosis, the implementation, effectiveness and efficiency of the programme, progress in achieving objectives, impact analysis, conclusions and recommendations, and an annex with indicators. This comprehensive analysis offers a complete overview of the implementation of the EYOP in Galicia, identifying areas for improvement and providing recommendations for future actions in youth employment.

Scope of the evaluation: The evaluation of the Operational Programme for Youth Employment (POEJ) in Galicia between 2014 and 2020 aims to analyse progress in reducing youth unemployment. This programme focuses on improving skills and promoting youth employment, aligned with the EU 2020 Strategy. Operational objectives were established to channel financial resources and comply with specific recommendations. The actions were structured in lines of action covering Thematic Objectives, Investment Priorities and Specific Objectives at national and regional level, with modifications to adapt to regional needs in Galicia.

The target audience is young people aged 16-30 who are not in employment, education or training, registered in the National Youth Guarantee System. Modifications were made to the YEOP, including specific objectives to address the COVID-19 crisis and budgetary adjustments. These adaptations were reflected in reprogramming of the programme to mobilise additional investments and redeploy funds. There were significant variations in the initial and final programming of the EYOP in Galicia, with adjustments to meet the objectives within the available budget.

Methodology: The evaluation of the Operational Programme for Youth Employment (POEJ) in Galicia covers the programming period 2014-2020 until September 2023. It focuses on aspects such as context, structure, processes and results compared to what was planned. It uses a methodology that combines documentary analysis, official statistics, the EYOP and its reprogramming, and telematics interviews with representatives of managing and intermediate bodies. These semi-structured interviews validate the information gathered. Databases are used to detail financial and physical indicators at the operational level. Limitations related to the reliability of the data are mentioned due to their constant revision and updating, preferring official data up to 2022 and provisional data up to September 2023 for a more qualitative analysis of the programme implementation.

2 Economic, social and territorial diagnosis:

The Operational Programme for Youth Employment (POEJ) in Galicia focuses on young people aged 16-29 who are not in employment or training, a crucial stage that influences their future prospects. Between 2013 and 2023, significant changes are observed in the employment situation of this group: while the total number of young people has decreased, unemployment has fallen considerably, albeit with a spike in 2020 due to the pandemic. Although the unemployment rate in Galicia remains below the national average, it is still high compared to the EU. Despite improvements, gender differences in the NEET and unemployment rates persist.

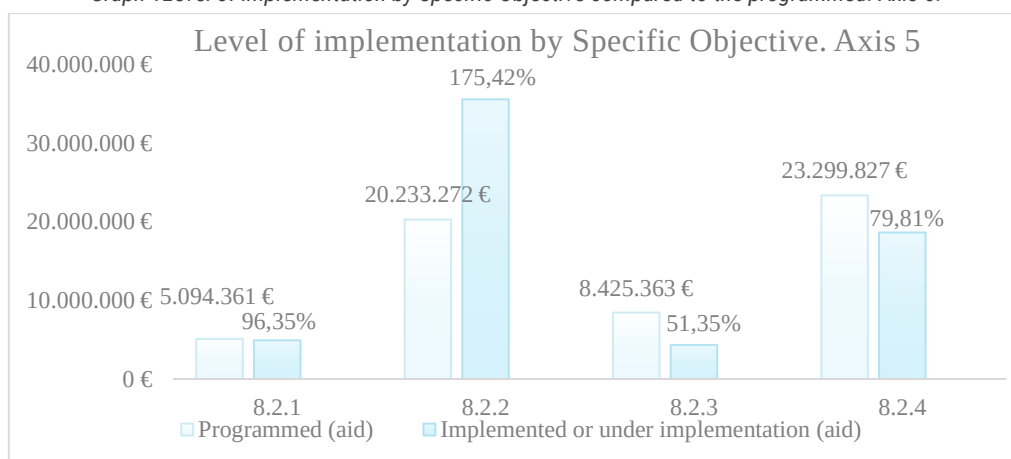
From the review of the diagnosis it can be said that there has been a considerable decrease in the magnitude of this problem, in line with the economic recovery since 2013 and that the reaction of young people after the previous crisis, whose most negative moment was reflected in the high unemployment between 2013 and 2014, has been more positive than on previous occasions, devoting more effort to training. It should also be noted that this improvement allows Galician women to show more positive rates even than those corresponding to the EU27. It is likely that the development of initiatives such as the POEJ Galicia have helped this positive evolution.

The analysis of the relevance of the EYOP in Galicia examines the extent to which the actions have responded to the needs and challenges identified. Three levels of relevance are distinguished: positive, medium and low, according to the alignment with the programme's objectives. Although adjustments have been made during implementation, in general, the operations are aligned with the objectives. The measures focus on improving employability, promoting entrepreneurship and increasing youth recruitment, which has resulted in an improvement in youth employment statistics in Galicia, although this cannot be directly attributed to the programme. **Galicia's 2014-2020 EYP achieves a positive level of relevance, determined by a high linkage between the objectives set out in the programming and those deduced from the operations implemented or under implementation.**

3 Analysis of implementation, effectiveness and efficiency:

With regard to the implementation of the EYOP, up to September 2023, a total of €66,227,598 in aid was executed, exceeding the programmed amount for the period. The expenditure is mainly distributed in Priority Axis 5. If we take into account the Specific Objectives, the 8.2.2, which exceeds 50% of execution in the whole EYOP, shows a successful implementation. Some actions, such as the employment and training programmes, have been implemented in an agile manner, while others have contributed to objectives not initially programmed. However, Specific Objective 8.2.4 has not been implemented due to its absorption by other programme operations. In summary, the EYOP in Galicia has achieved a satisfactory implementation, with expenditure exceeding expectations and a focus on key objectives to improve youth employment in the region.

Graph 1 Level of implementation by Specific Objective compared to the programmed. Axis 5.



Regarding the effectiveness of the operations co-financed under the Operational Programme for Youth Employment (POEJ) in Galicia, a system of indicators is used to assess effectiveness at three levels: financial, outputs and results, establishing a scale of assessment according to the degree of implementation of the indicators. The contribution of the programme strategy to the general and specific objectives is examined, as well as the targeting of support to the most disadvantaged groups.

Overall, financial efficiency is high both in terms of what has been implemented or is being implemented at 30 September and in terms of the degree of progress in certifying operations. Axis 5, which bears almost all the weight of the programming, has already exceeded the planned expenditure and in the other axes, although the percentages are lower, the absolute figures are not significant and, therefore, there is no risk of non-compliance with the forecasts.

With regard to the effectiveness of the indicators and focusing on Priority Axis 1B, a low degree of progress is observed, which can be explained by the fact that there are indicators pending communication, such as those of the Driving Licence (2022) action, the Comprehensive Training and Mentoring Programme 2022-2023, the Youth Mentoring Programme in the Company 2023 and the Individual Galeuropa Programme 2022. These actions were originally included in Axis 5 and the reason for the low degree of progress in this Axis is due to the fact that the expected value of the indicators has been contemplated for the action as a whole, while the productivity values only correspond to those of the last year. To solve this distortion, the degree of progress has been recalculated by grouping the data of these actions together without taking into account either the Axis or the Specific Objective, the overall result being an effectiveness of more than 70% for indicator CO01.

Priority Axis 5 of the EYOP presents four Specific Objectives, in the EO 8.2.1 the training and professional orientation programmes, the GALEUROPA training practices programme, the initiative to obtain the driving licence and the mixed employment and training programmes, as well as employment workshops, among other actions, stand out. Specific Objective 8.2.3 focuses on the promotion of self-employment, while 8.2.4 focuses on subsidies for the recruitment of young people in collaboration with non-profit entities, in this action it is noted the difficulty in finding young people with the right profile, which led to adjustments in the requirements for recruitment. Indicator CO01: Unemployed persons, including long-term unemployed has a high effectiveness and CO04: Inactive persons not integrated in education or training systems has a low effectiveness.

The **efficiency analysis** of the EYOP in Galicia is carried out by comparing the financial resources planned with those consumed to achieve the results. The degree of efficiency is calculated by dividing the programmed unit cost by the unit cost finally realised, establishing three levels of achievement of

indicators. It can be seen that in Axis 1, the degree of efficiency can only be measured for the specific objective 8.2.2, with inconclusive results due to the diversity of actions. In Axis 5, efficiency levels are mainly average, with some cases of unit cost increase over what was planned, suggesting an individualised analysis and the use of consolidated data for a more accurate assessment.

4 Progress in achieving objectives:

The analysis focuses on assessing the contribution of the Youth Employment Initiative (YEI) to the achievement of specific objectives related to the labour market integration of young people and the reduction of unemployment among NEETs. It investigates whether funds were adequately allocated to those in need and whether the intended target groups were reached. It examines whether participants are employed or in continuing education after the programme, the quality and origin of the job opportunities offered, and whether they benefited from the Youth Guarantee. Progress towards sustainable jobs and quality education is analysed, as well as the impact on the activation of young jobseekers and their employability. It assesses whether barriers to entrepreneurship were removed and self-employment was effectively promoted. The results of interventions such as counselling, dual training and recruitment support are studied, using a scale to assess progress in the achievement of results according to the indicators defined for each specific objective. The results of Axis 1B cannot yet be adequately assessed due to insufficient data.

In Axis 5 and in Specific Objective 8.2.1 most of the indicators show a medium or high degree of effectiveness, with the Integrated Training and Mentoring Programme standing out for its positive contribution. It provides details on the situation of each participant at the end of the intervention, allowing to assess whether they are actively seeking employment, integrated in education or training, or whether they have obtained qualifications. Although the results are mostly positive, there are long-term indicators yet to be consolidated.

On the other hand, in Specific Objective 8.2.2 of the same Axis, focused on strengthening the employability and professional skills of young people who are neither employed nor integrated in education or training systems, the results are mostly satisfactory, with a medium or high degree of progress. Successful indicators show that the majority of participants completed the intervention, especially in the GALEUROPA Programme, where 90% did so. Obtaining a driving licence is also considered positive, improving the mobility and employability of young people. A survey of Youth Guarantee beneficiaries confirms that obtaining a driving licence has significantly improved their employability, mobility and autonomy. These results show how these actions contribute to improving the employment opportunities and quality of life of a vulnerable population.

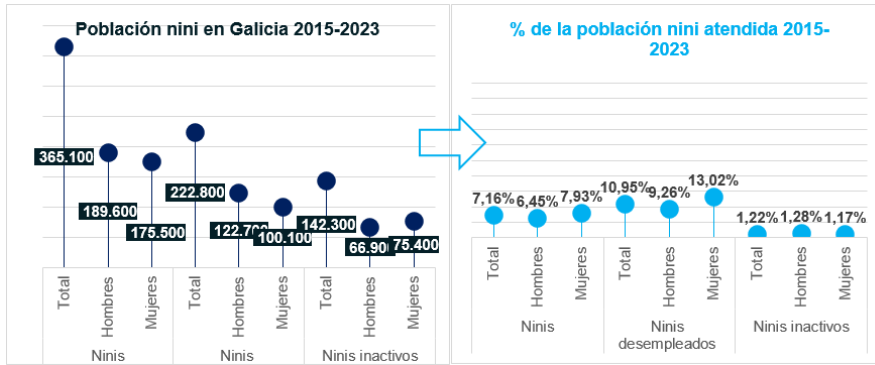
The result indicators of Specific Objective 8.2.3 of Axis 5B, focused on increasing the entrepreneurship of young people who are neither in employment nor integrated in education or training systems through the creation of companies, show a high degree of progress, exceeding expectations in some cases. The Self-Employment Programme stands out, with 70% of participants completing the intervention, suggesting that the actions are effectively contributing to fostering youth entrepreneurship.

On the other hand, the result indicators of Specific Objective 8.2.4, which seeks to increase the permanent or stable hiring of young people through intermediation and economic incentives, although in the long term they show a low degree of effectiveness due to the lack of comparison between information, are generally satisfactory in the short term. The high percentage of people who complete the intervention in the subsidies for the recruitment of young people in collaboration with non-profit organisations stands out, reaching 80%. However, the long-term indicators are not assessed due to the continuation of some actions. This degree of progress is consistent with the final phase of the programme, close to its conclusion, suggesting that the actions are aligned with the objectives set.

5 Impact:

It is not possible to calculate the impact of the Programme or any of its actions with the data available, but it is interesting to add a quantitative approximation of its scope with respect to the total population of NEETs accumulated between 2015 and 2022.

Graph 2. Scope of the POEJ GALICIA on the total NEET population between 2015 and 2023



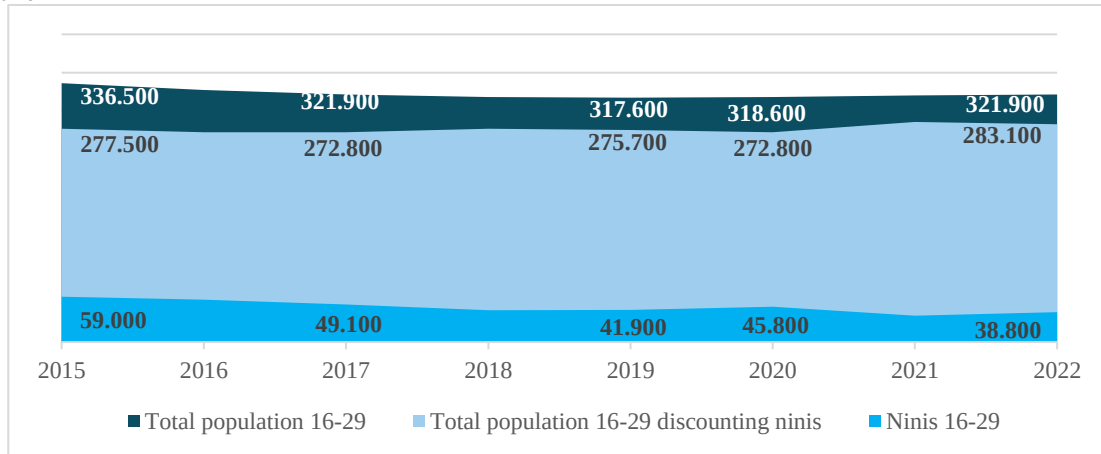
Source: IGE-INE. All persons are counted in all years, which is why the figures are so high.

On the one hand, the programme has supported 26,141 people since 2015, of whom 24,402 are unemployed and 1,739 are inactive. According to the IGE-INE, the total number of NEETs between 2015 and 2022 was 365,100 (counting all NEETs during the period, so it does not reflect the reality in each year, but it is useful for this analysis), a figure composed of 222,800 unemployed people and 142,300 inactive people. The programme has therefore served 11% of unemployed NEETs and 1.2% of inactive NEETs. Disaggregating by sex, it can be seen that the programme has had a greater reach among unemployed women than among men in the same situation (13% compared to 9.3%), a difference that is not observed among inactive NEET men and women.

Next, the population transfer that has taken place in the target group is analysed. The aim is to quantify which part of the NEET population has left this situation since they have found a job or have entered the education system ("non- NEET").

To do so, we first look at the evolution of the population between 16 and 29 years of age over the last few years. The youth population has gone from 336,500 people in 2015 to 321,900 in 2022, a reduction of 14,600 people (-4.3%). The NEET population has also fallen, from 59,000 to 38,800 people over the same period, a reduction of 20,200 people (-34%). If we analyse the same evolution of the entire youth population, but discounting each year the neet population, this has gone from 277,500 in 2015 to 283,100 in 2022, an increase of 5,600 people (+2%).

Graph 3. Transfer between the "neet" population and the "non- neet" population between 2015 and 2023



Source: IGE-INE.

The difference of 36 p.p. between the variation in the "neet" population and the "non- neet" population during the period analysed corresponds to a differential behaviour between the two populations and reflects a transfer of population between the two, highlighting the improvement in the situation of Galician youth. However, in order to calculate the net effect of the Programme on this improvement, it is necessary to apply statistical techniques such as those mentioned previously in this section.

The Galicia EYP evaluation report presents five key hypotheses addressing the consistency of the programme with the challenges identified, the adequacy of the resources allocated, the effectiveness of the activities, the relationship between the outputs generated and the expected results, and the need

to assess the long-term impact. The impact of the programme on the "neet" population between 2015 and 2023 is highlighted, with significant support to unemployed and inactive people, although the exact effect remains difficult to estimate due to the lack of precise data. A larger impact is observed among unemployed women than among unemployed men. The change in the "neet" to "non-neet" population between 2015 and 2022 is analysed, with a notable reduction in the number of "neet", indicating an improvement in the youth situation in Galicia. However, additional statistical techniques are required to calculate the net impact of the programme on this improvement. In summary, the report provides a detailed assessment of the EYOP, highlighting both its achievements and the areas that require further attention and study.

6 Conclusions and recommendations:

In terms of conclusions and recommendations, the evaluation report of the 2014-2020 EYOP in Galicia highlights several aspects.

In terms of **relevance**, there is a high degree of coherence between the programme's objectives and the operations implemented. There is an improvement in youth employment, although no direct causal link can be established with the EYOP measures.

The **implementation of the programme** was successful until September 2023, exceeding the planned budget by 8%, although there were disparities in implementation by Axis, especially in Priority Axis 1B and 5B. Implementation is uneven when considering data at Axis level. In Priority Axis 1B, the achievement rate is 73%, mainly due to budget carry-over. For the same reason, Priority Axis 5B exceeds the target by 11%.

This represents a loss of weight of Axis 1B after successive reprogramming, except that from 2022 onwards there was a transfer from Axis 5B due to the lack of budget availability on this axis as all programmed resources were exhausted.

The **overall effectiveness of the programme** was high, although uneven across axes. Thus, the degree of progress of indicators is low in Priority Axis 1B, mainly due to the fact that there are still operations in which the indicator data have yet to be communicated and also because there are three actions that come from Axis 5B and which, for reasons of budgetary availability, were transferred to this Axis 1B. This causes some distortion in the analysis by taking as a reference value the value of all these actions regardless of the Axis, while the value of what has been implemented is analysed by Axis.

For this reason, it is advisable to take the data as a whole and, above all, prioritising those of Axis 5B, as this is the Axis on which the entire weight of the Programme falls, both at the budgetary level and in terms of implementation and indicators.

In Axis 5B, the degree of effectiveness is high for the specific objectives 8.2.1, 8.2.2 and 8.2.4 when looking at the data for indicator CO01 Unemployed persons, including long-term unemployed. In the case of indicator CO04 Inactive persons not integrated in education or training systems, the degree of effectiveness observed is low, which means that the actions are mostly targeted at the unemployed.

The **degree of efficiency has been uneven** across the different specific objectives and axes. Most of the cases show a medium degree of efficiency (between 50% and 80%), although in the case of Axis 1, only one specific objective can be measured because either there was no programming and therefore the necessary data for the analysis are not available (8.2.1) or the measure was not implemented (8.2.4).

As for Axis 5B, the efficiency levels are all average except for the one calculated for the specific objective 8.2.1.

The **results were considered satisfactory**, with a significant number of unemployed people completing supported interventions and accessing job or training offers. The thematic and action concentration of the Operational Programme has allowed it to contribute directly to the achievement of results in some of the main ESF areas such as employment, including training for employment, as well as training.

It is recommended to implement complementary interventions to improve monitoring and implementation, and to conduct further studies to analyse the net effect of the YEOP on youth employability. The difficulty of reaching inactive young people is highlighted and it is proposed to explore strategies such as using social networks as a communication channel.