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EVALUATION ANALYSIS ON THE OUTCOMES OF MASTERS (UNIVERSITY AND NON- UNIVERSITY)

ESF OP Basilicata 2014-2020

Abstract

Nucleo Regionale di Valutazione e Verifica Investimenti Pubblici – Regione Basilicata

Object of the evaluation

The evaluation action on the implementation of the support measure for participation in university and non-university masters was conducted in implementation of the Evaluation Plan of the ESF OP, approved with DGR no. 681/2016, which provides for a specific form (R5) aimed at capturing the impact of interventions to support the transition between education and work. The evaluation process relating to the masters had already been the subject of discussion in the Monitoring Committee of the ESF OP in June 2019, during which it was agreed that this analysis should be among the future topics subject to evaluation.

The survey conducted takes into consideration a four-year period (years 2015-2018) and analyzes the measures put in place to support the masters through the OP ESF 2014-2020, trying to identify salient elements and effects produced as well as to gather feedback from participants.

The analysis conducted, based on a sample extraction of the participants, analyzed the trends, within the framework of an acceptable potential variance margin, and highlights data both related to the participatory process and to the post master condition of the beneficiaries in terms of professional positioning .

Methodology

The survey was conducted through a questionnaire managed by telephone to 258 representative subjects of the reference universe consisting of the total number of beneficiaries of the calls for contributions for participation in university and non-university masters under investigation, equal to 780 people (data referring to operations "concluded" at the time of the sample extraction).

In order to take into account various variables (gender, territorial belonging, university master's or non-university master's), a stratified sampling was used, first dividing the population into homogeneous strata with reference to the variables of interest and, subsequently, extracting the sample units are randomized from each layer.

The application of the questionnaires, one for university masters and the other for non-university masters, took place using a specific company specialized in the sector of opinion polls and market research.

The results of the interviews were integrated with desk analysis and with the comparison with the contents of the previous evaluation on the same subject referring to the 2007-2013 programming.

Results

The analysis conducted and the results of the interviews with the participants in the masters allow us to outline some summary considerations with respect to a series of topics listed below:

a. Employment condition

After 6 months from the conclusion of the training, 49.9% of the University Masters (UM) and 45.6% of the Non-University Masters (NUM) are working (the percentage considers both employees and self-employed workers, active both in the region and abroad). It is an occupation that, however, still appears precarious (few permanent contracts, especially among MUs) and underpaid, with very low and incongruous salary levels compared to the level of education. It is no coincidence that among the interviewees who work outside the region the overriding reason for the choice is attributable to greater job stability. Briefly, it could be argued that the master experience is able to guarantee a contribution in terms of employment, but has little impact in terms of its quality.

b. Contribution to advanced training

46.2% of NUM and 40.6% of UM declare that in the absence of regional funding they would not have participated in the master. These data, in addition to confirming a judgment of high relevance of the funding on the choice also attested in the evaluation of the results of the 2007-2013 programming, confirm that the measure significantly affects participation in masters, especially for non-university ones.

c. Satisfaction

The level of satisfaction is medium-high, settling on the highest values (8-10 on a scale of 1-10) for 37.5% for UM and 49.6% for NUM. Overall, the average values are 6.9 for the MU and 7.3 for the MNU. There were no particular differences in the areas on which they were asked to comment (teacher preparation, teaching methods, logistical organization, transfer of skills and improvement of awareness and relationship skills). Judgments on NUM tend to remain better than those on UM, although the difference is not significant.

d. Correlation with production sectors

The judgment concerning the consistency between the object of the training activity and the activity carried out is higher (44.7%) for NUM, while for UM the percentage stands at 31.3%. In the case of UM, in fact, half of the respondents declared a partial connection between the training path attended and the occupation found. The share of those who, on the other hand, tend to lack coherence fluctuates on percentages of 15.6% in the case of the UM and 19.1% in the case of the NUM. As regards the production sectors in which a position has been found from the employment point of view, no substantial differences seem to emerge between UM and NUM. Specifically, the sectors for which there is a greater placement in terms of employment are, for UM, that of cultural, artistic, sports (15.6%), professional activities and public administration, both at 12, 5%, energy and education, both at 9.4%. In the case of NUM, the sector of cultural, artistic and sporting activities is still the first

sector (19.1%) in which there is a greater positioning, followed by services to businesses (14.9%) and public administration (10.6%).

e. Role of Employment Centers

Compared to the method used for the search for employment, the Employment Centers appear to assume a minor role if we consider the declared percentages of use of this method which are equal to 12.5% in the case of UM and 20, 5% in the case of NUM. Moreover, the data made available by "ANPAL Servizi" show that approximately 90% of the CPI in Basilicata record hiring data referring to workers with low / medium skill intensity, therefore the Centers appear less focused on "high skilled" workers. Therefore, most of the job seekers seem to be more reactive to advertisements, a method that is probably also favored by the greater diffusion and use of social networks that allow them to be spread more quickly.

f. Structure of masters and labor market

The structuring of the public calls does not show a correlation with the most significant sectors of the territorial economy or with policies of specific relaunch of productive segments. An exception, for the last two procedures analyzed, is the importance assigned to the Smart Specialization Strategy (S3), which was more marked in 2017, less so in the following one. There are no connections with the analysis of employment needs in a framework of orientation towards potential areas of professional demand.

g. Role of the internship

The internship is configured as a valid tool in favoring the meeting between the companies of the chosen sector of interest and the subjects participating in the MNU. In fact, in half of the cases, contact was favored in this way. Otherwise, for MUs the percentage referring to the internship drops to 23.8% and meetings, interviews and visits to companies prevail with a percentage of 33.3%.

h. Differentiation between University Masters (UM) and Non-University Masters (NUM)

There do not appear to be excessive differentiations between the two types of masters with respect to the conformation of the participants (age, university attended, etc.). Even in terms of employment outcomes, the gap is limited: after six months, about half of the UM are employed against about 46% of the NUM.

The judgments of satisfaction are similar, with an evaluation slightly in favor of the MNU. Differences, on the other hand, are appreciated with respect to expectations: the possibility of finding a job as a motivation for choosing the master is much higher for UM than for NUM, even if the real data subsequent to the course does not justify this differentiation.

Furthermore, the NMU seem to have enjoyed a greater chance of experience in the company, given that an internship was required for them. It can be assumed that this circumstance played an important role for a recovery of "employability" which in the choice phase was judged lower by the participants in comparison with the UM. This circumstance in some way probably also affects the better performance of NUM in terms of "stability" of the employment relationship created, justifiable by the fact that the company was able to "test" the reliability of the worker during the master.

Another differentiation is related to territoriality: almost all NUM took place in Basilicata, and 76.7% in the city of Potenza, while over half of the MU took place outside the region. At the end of the master it is not only the research of the NUM participants that is slightly more oriented on the local context than the UM, but it is above all the built networks that seem to determine effects. It follows that downstream of the experience, the UM show a greater propensity to stay outside the region, also due to the relationships that the master has created in the area of development.

i. Territorial permanence

When asked about the current condition (therefore even beyond 6 months from the conclusion of the master) about 36% of the MU worked outside the region against 42% who instead worked in Basilicata. If we consider that 60% of the UM participants had originally studied in universities outside the region and that a similar percentage had conducted the master outside the region, it is evident that for the UM there was no significant eradication effect developed by the master. Most likely, the initiative has facilitated a significant percentage of participants in the UM to consolidate a choice to leave Basilicata, but the data does not seem to affirm a particular amplification effect in this sense. After all, the causes of these choices are certainly more complex, partly linked to subjective aspirations and partly to the weaknesses of the local labour market.

Tendentially the participants in the MNU attest to a greater tendency to remain in the regional territory, not only by virtue of a greater localization of the NUM in terms of realization, but also by looking at the current residence, which remains for 96.6% in Basilicata, against the '85, 9% of the UM. This last figure is interesting, as it confirms a greater propensity of UM to leave, net of undetected "commuting" phenomena.

j. Relevance of funding in the choice of attendance of the master

A large percentage of the interviewees (40.7% of the MU and 46.1% of the MNU) declared that without the funding they would not have attended the master. This data, also read in association with the high percentage of those who declare that the funding was in any case "quite significant" in the choice (35.9% UM and 41.9% NUM), leads us to consider that the initiative had a weight significant in guiding the choices of graduates, constituting a stimulus to attain a more advanced training level. On the nature of the "relevance" in the choice, the answers provided indicate the economic support as predominant, therefore the ESF measures allow to overcome limits of spending capacity and to support participations that imply a stay away from home.

It is also interesting to consider that, for those who have declared that the financing had a significant impact on the choice, the presence of a subsidy measure would have induced them to participate in a master even if there was no specific interest path (39,1% for UM and 61.5% for NUM). This response leads us to consider that there is a large proportion of graduates who approach the labor market without a specific strategy and who therefore use these opportunities as a "clearing house", having unemployment or inactivity as an alternative. This circumstance appears more pronounced for the NUM, who are more induced to start the experience even probably invited by the proximity of the venue. However, considering the employment outcomes recorded for some of them, the experience is probably able to translate into a path of first entry into the labor market, given that the percentages of judgment on the importance of the master for obtaining the job (declared by who after 6 months had a job) are higher for NUM than for UM.