

Fermo Retail Experience

1. The project context



The municipality of Fermo has a population of about 38.000 inhabitants. A leading city of the Fermo province, it is a reference point for 39 other municipalities, located in the Marche Region (Center of Italy). Fermo, once a Roman colony, has always been the most important centre of the entire district for its abundant history, for the presence of historical-artistic evidence, for its industrial activities (shoes, hats, fashion), agrofood production and for its tourist and cultural initiatives. Fermo territory is characterized by a strong entrepreneurial vocation (12,8 enterprises over 100 inhabitants 2013 - the highest level in the Marche Region). The manufacturing and agriculture sectors are higher than national average. The manufacturing sector is focused on shoes district representing 63% of the active enterprises; however, R&D level is very low and very few innovative start ups are present at the provincial level (5 in 2014).

Regarding the city centre population, as many other medium-size cities in the last decades, Fermo has seen its population decrease since the 80s. In 2014, the percentage of inhabitants of Historical City Center was lower than 10% of the entire city population (37.663).

The loss of city vitality has resulted in a strong decline in the number of commercial activities and to a fragmentary nature and poor quality of the retail offer. The historical city centre on the top of the hill, with all the monuments and history



attractiveness, hosts traditional retailing, which consists of small convenience shops and where retail units are too small to accommodate major brands. In 2016, Fermo registered 632 active retail enterprises, down from previous years. In fact, data from local Chamber of Commerce showed, though, that in one year (from 2014 to 2015) 62 retail enterprises stopped their activities. Furthermore, the accessibility to the city centre is not so easy due to its morphological nature, so accessibility is an issue that needs to be addressed.

To face this situation, the local authority started a process to revitalize the city centre developing integrated actions from commercial, economic, cultural and touristic points of view.

Thus, the key challenges for the City of Fermo now are to increase the daily footfall in the city centre, increase its attractiveness and make the historic centre more vibrant through joint actions by retailers, leisure and cultural activities that can add value for both tourists and residents.

Fermo should be, after all, the main attraction pole given its territorial context, so ways must be found to increase the value of doing business in the city, together with a wider approach to boost the economy of the entire territory. Its historical industrial activities linked to “Made in Italy” shoes, hats and fashion products and the excellent agro-food production represents a good start.

To build on this, it is of a paramount importance for the Municipality to help create investors’ confidence, starting with retailers who can promote the city centre as a space for a rich and diversified experience including shopping and the full enjoyment of Fermo’s cultural and artistic city heritage.

This can be a great opportunity to improve the way the local authority cooperates with residents and main stakeholders involved in city centre business developments and improve the public-private partnership.

2. The Action Plan

The focus of the Local Action Plan is to deliver a medium-term programme for the economic development of the city centre, supporting the vision of the city centre as a place to experience high quality shopping, valorizing, in turn, the territory’s industrial production, while enjoying its cultural and artistic attractiveness.

The plan will focus on actions concerning the setting up of monitoring and evaluation programme for the retail sector, sustainable mobility actions to improve accessibility to city centre, inclusion of retailers in the planning of cultural and promotional events of the city and training and specific support for business innovation and technological development.



Also, the plan builds on an integrated approach, which aims to foster cooperation between the different interventions and stakeholders engaged in the make up and implementation of local development policies.

The main objectives of the LAP:

1) To improve the city centre mobility and accessibility to the city centre

The action is necessary to offer quality and a smoother shopping experiences both for residents and tourists. An improved mobility programme is also necessary to connect the coastal area and the city centre particularly desiring the summer where city beaches are full of tourists.

- **Action 1.1)** Improvement of mobility system and parking to reach the city centre.
- **Action 1.2)** Improvement and harmonization of the road sign in the city centre.
- **Action 1.3)** Deployment of specific services for tourists to reach the city centre.

Time:

- Action 1.1 - By the end of 2021.
- Action 1.2 – By the end of 2018.
- Action 1.3 – Pilot testing by the end of 2018.

Key municipal areas involved: Public works, commerce and tourism

Funding: For the improvement of the mobility system some actions are already included in projects funded under the ERDF ROP Programme 2014-2020 of Marche Region.

The improvement and harmonization of road sign is already highlighted as priority action for the Municipality as well as the deployment of specific services for tourists during the summer. Financial resources will be allocated within the Municipality budget.

2) To set up a co-planning and co-design system for the City Promotion

A joint design and planning system of city cultural and promotional events is necessary for the proper engagement of the city centre business activities and to provide consumers with a clear focus on thematic events held in the City of Fermo.



Co-planning system also should include better coordination and communication with the surrounding Municipalities.

- **Action 2.1)** Setting up of a “permanent table” for the co-design, joint organization and management of the city centre promotional and cultural events.
- **Action 2.2)** Setting up of a “shared timetable” for the main events foreseen every year in the city centre. Yearly scheduling and programming for the city centre is of a paramount importance to allow retailers to contribute in a proactive way. The shared events calendar will be discussed and set during the month of October for use in the following year.
- **Action 2.3)** Testing of mechanisms for enhancing cooperation between Fermo cultural activities and retailers (promotion and discount to access Fermo museums, exhibition or cultural events for residents or tourists purchasing and enjoying the city centre).
- **Action 2.4)** Creating synergies with the Fermo Schools (e.g. School of art and design involved in the events organization, historical re-enactments).

Time: The actions from 1 to 4 are already in progress and started in the framework of the Fermo Local Action Group activities within the RetailLink project.

Key municipal areas involved: Culture, Commerce and Tourism working together for the definition of the city events shared timetable.

Funding: Financial resources for the setting of permanent table, cooperation mechanism schools and cultural projects have been made available by the “Fermo Shopping Experience” project funded by the Local Chamber of Commerce. Once established, the permanent table and the cooperation mechanisms described could be self-sustained with the cooperation of the Retailers Association work.

3) Increase the retailers offer quality in the city centre

The actions foreseen intends to provide retailers of the City Centre with new tools and knowledge to improve their offer and their innovation capacity. The twin focus is on increasing their cooperation with the out-of-town factories and enhancing their contribution to the economic revitalization of the city.

- **Action 3.1)** Development of the “Fermo Shopping Experience”* project in cooperation with the Local Chamber of Commerce.
- **Action 3.2)** Training, tutoring and capacity building actions for the city centre Retailers (effective use of on-line communication, social media, e-commerce



strategies, English language to welcome and properly communicate with tourists).

- **Action 3.3)** Development of a paper and digital map showing the retail offer of the Fermo City Centre.
- **Action 3.4)** Implementation of joint branding and marketing activities of city centre shops.
- **Action 3.5)** Setting up a concertation process which includes retailers on many relevant issues: public works, rules for street furniture and public lighting, opening hours in special occasions, etc..
- **Action 3.6)** Monitoring and evaluation activities of city centre footfall by means of Wi-Fi access and of customer satisfaction by means of specific questionnaires.
- **Action 3.7)** Setting up of retailers' partnership for the joint purchasing of common services e.g. internet services, lighting, energy, etc.

Times: Actions from 3.1 to 3.5 started with a first pilot experience in the framework of the project "Fermo Shopping Experience".

Action 3.6 includes the monitoring of city centre footfall by means of Wi-Fi connection. This calls for the improvement of Wi-Fi connection in all the city centre, which is foreseen by the end of 2020 with the use of national and regional public funds. Training and capacity building activities for the retailers may also be funded in the framework of the ESF (European Social Funds) ROP 2014-2020.

Key municipal areas involved: Commerce, Tourism, Culture and Public Works

Funding: financial resources for the starting of the operations, have been available in the framework of the "Fermo Shopping Experience".

The project "Fermo Shopping Experience" has been the first concrete output of Fermo LAP deriving from the cooperation set up within the RetailLink Project. The initiative has received funding from the Local Chamber of Commerce and foresees the possibility for city centre retailers to host within their shops the "Made in Italy" fashion products thus improving the shops quality and contributing to increase the knowledge of Fermo's productive district. Furthermore, the project foresees, in cooperation with the Retailers Association the setting-up of local multi-brand store providing joint branding and marketing activities. The initiative also makes available for the retailers the support of the "Local friends", young professionals who get involved in a work-experience project, helping the city centre shops to promote their products and their history by taking advantage of social media and by helping to improve on-line communications and e-commerce possibilities.

Different local policies and municipality areas are involved in the development of the Fermo Local Action Plan. Any of the interventions described above requires a combination of different policy areas linked to Urban Planning, Economic



Development, Marketing, Branding and Communication and improved city centre Mobility, together contributing to the attractiveness of the City Centre.

The revitalization of Fermo's city centre depends on the creation of a strong pole of attraction to be able to convince potential consumers to come to the city centre and thus increase catchment areas. In Fermo's case, such a pole of attraction should be linked to the excellence and diversification of the city centre, to a retail offer based on quality, innovation, offering different values and experiences compared to wide commercial centre they should compete with and to an innovative model based on integration with culture, recreational activities and aggregation spaces.

3. Conclusion

Delivery of the Local Action Plan has already begun. In fact, some of the actions have been in progress since the retailers pushed forward the development of the first initiatives during the stakeholders' meetings early on in RetailLink.

Furthermore, the transnational exchanges with the other network Municipalities has enabled participants to generate and transfer at local level a significant amount of learning and new knowledge the administrators, the municipality officers and to wider audiences of local retailers, who could benefit from this knowledge and know-how.

The Municipality increased its capacity to actively engage stakeholders in the policies and strategies development process and acquired new knowledge on strategic issues for retail innovation, such as:

- Innovative tools for monitoring footfall and vitality score of the city centre.
- Evaluation of the city image and work to improve reputation and place branding.
- Innovative public-private partnership (e.g BID) to improve city centres areas.
- Exploitation of social media for place branding.
- Compacting city centre, innovative urban planning and use of space to attract footfall.
- Innovative temporary use of vacant buildings to enhance local businesses.
- Innovative Retailers partnership and cooperation model.
- Mobility solutions in support of people flows to the city centre.

In sum, the development of the Local Action Plan has enabled the Municipality, together with stakeholders, to better identify the key challenges and priorities related to the city centre economic development. It has also strengthened public-private partnership at the local level and helped stakeholders to focus on specific actions.



4. Contact information

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5. Roadmap

Objective	Action	Delivery lead/team	Key partners involved	Time	Resources / Assets	Output indicator
1) To improve the city centre mobility and accessibility						
1.1 - Improvement of mobility system and parking to reach the city centre		Municipality – Public Works and Urban Planning	Municipality Commerce and Tourism Department	2018-2019	ERDF ROP Programme 2014-2020 of Marche Region. The	% of Footfall increase in the city centre
1.2 - Improvement and harmonization of the road sign in the city centre		Municipality - Public Works and Urban Planning	Municipality Commerce and Tourism Department; Fermo Museums Manager; Public Works Department; Retailers Association	2018 - 2019	Financial resources will be allocated within the Municipality budget.	N. of new road signs in the City Centre
1.3- Connections by public bus to the centre		Municipality Tourism Department	Local Transport Society Private Sponsorship	2018 first testing	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Municipal Resources • Sponsorship 	% of Increase of tourists from the coastal areas
2) Enhance the multi-functionality of the city centre						
2.1 - Mapping of the vacant buildings and new forms of cooperation between owners and space seekers for its temporary and permanent use		Municipality – Public Works and Urban Planning Department EU funding and Retail Department	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Retailers and SMEs Associations • City Cultural and Citizens Associations, property owner Associations 	From 2018 onwards	Municipal Resources	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • % of decrease of the empty spaces in the city centres • Number of new Business/Economic and/or cultural, social activities in the City Centre



2.2 - Establish a Town Centre Management Unit	City Council	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Municipality Departments • Retailers Associations; • Cultural Associations; • Consumers Associations; • Property owner association 	2018 – 2019	Municipal Resources	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Appointment of City Centre Manager • Town Centre Management work plan
2.3 - Renovation of the “old market” as a space for business incubators and centre for research and innovation.	Municipality EU funding and Retail Department Municipality Public Works Department	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Municipality Cultural Departments • Universities, Research Centres, Schools • SMEs, handicraft and Retailers associations • Creative entrepreneurs 	2018 - 2021	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Market renovation resources derive from the ITI Project for Urban Development funded by the ROP ERDF and ESF project. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Number of Start-up established and operating within the old market • 18 work-experience and 25 research grants for new businesses within the market
2.4 - Involvement of schools and Universities to attract young researchers in the City Centre and provide them space to develop new business ideas	Municipality EU funding and Retail Department	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Universities, Research Centres, Schools • Young entrepreneurs • Vocational Training Schools 	2018 – 2021	Financial resources from ROP ESF 2014 – 2020 (Marche Region)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Number of training, orientation meetings organized with schools, University and Researchers • Number of Students and researches involved • Number of Business Idea Developed • Number of Business established and operating
3) To set up a co-planning and co-design system for the City Promotion					



<p>3.1- Setting up of a “permanent table” for the co-design, joint organization and management of the city centre promotional and cultural events</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Municipality EU funding and Retail Department • Municipality Culture and Tourism Department 	<p>Chamber of Commerce; ULG coordinator; Fermo Museums Manager; Cultural Associations Business Associations (SMEs, Retailers, etc), Sport Associations, Citizens/Residents Associations</p>	<p>Started during the RetailLink Project - from 2017 onwards</p>	<p>Municipal resources/Chamber of Commerce contribution</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Number of meeting organized • Number of Programming documents for city events
<p>3.2 - Setting up of “shared timetable” for the main events foreseen yearly in the city centre.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Municipality EU funding and Retail Department • Municipality Culture and Tourism Department 	<p>Municipality Retail, Culture and Tourism work together for the definition of the city events shared timetable; Chamber of Commerce, ULG coordinator; Fermo Museums Manager; Cultural Associations Business Associations (SMEs, Retailers, etc), Sport Associations, Citizens/Residents Associations</p>	<p>2018 onwards</p>	<p>Municipal resources</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Number of shared timetables for city events approved • % increase of private contribution for events organization • Number of Retailers involved in city centre events • Number of Associations involved in City Centre events
<p>3.3 - Testing of mechanism to enhancing cooperation between Fermo cultural activities and retailers</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Municipality EU funding and Retail Department • Municipality Culture and Tourism Department 	<p>Chamber of Commerce, ULG coordinator; Fermo Museums Manager; Cultural Associations Business Associations (SMEs, Retailers, etc), Sport Associations, Citizens/Residents Associations</p>	<p>2018 onwards</p>	<p>Municipal Resources</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Number of cooperation mechanism tested • % of increase of Footfall and city centre vitality during the events



3.4 - Creation setting up of synergies with the Fermo Schools	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Municipality EU funding and Retail Department • Municipality Culture and Tourism Department 	Chamber of Commerce, ULG coordinator; Schools and Universities, Business Associations (SMEs, Retailers, etc),	2018 onwards	Municipal resources	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Number of schools involved • Number of events with schools' cooperation organized
4) Increase the retailers offer quality in the city centre					
4.1 - Development of the “Fermo Shopping Experience” project in cooperation with the Local Chamber of Commerce	Municipality EU funding and Retail Department	Chamber of Commerce, Retailers Associations, Retailers	2018 – 2019	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Chamber of Commerce contribution • Municipal resources 	Number of Retailers involved in the project
4.2 - Training, tutoring and capacity building actions for the City Centre Retailers	Municipality EU funding and Retail Department	Chamber of Commerce, Retailers Associations, Retailers	2018 – 2019	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Chamber of Commerce contribution • Retailers Association Contribution • ROP ESF 2014-2020 (Marche Region) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Number of Training Actions activated • Number of Tutoring Actions activated • Number of Retailers participating to the training and tutoring activities
4.3 - Development of a paper and digital map showing the retail offer of the Fermo City Centre	Municipality EU funding and Retail Department	Retailers	2018 onwards (First map developed in the framework of the	Municipal resources for updating	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Number of Updating of the digital map • Number of new retailers joining (each 3 months)



			RetailLink Project)		
4.4 - Implementation of joint branding and marketing activities of City Centre shops	Municipality EU funding and Retail Department	Chamber of Commerce, Retailers Associations, Retailers	2018 – 2019	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Chamber of Commerce contribution • Municipal resources 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Number of joint marketing activities implemented • Number of retailers participating to the activities
4.5 - Setting up a concertation process which includes retailers on many relevant issues	Municipality EU funding and Retail Department	Municipal Departments, Retailers Associations, Retailers	2018 onwards	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Municipal resources • Retailers Associations contribution 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Number of meetings organized yearly
4.6 - Monitoring and evaluation activities of City Centre footfall by means of Wi-Fi access and of customer satisfaction by means of specific questionnaires	Municipality EU funding and Retail Department	Municipal Departments, Retailers Associations, Retailers	2019 onwards	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • EU and national funds for improving Wi-Fi in the city centre • Municipal resources for specific surveys 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • monitoring system linked to Wi-Fi set up • Number of questionnaires submitted • % of footfall increase in the city centre
4.7 -Setting up of retailers' partnership for the joint purchasing of common services	Retailers Associations	ULG coordinator	2019 onwards	Resources from Retailers, Retailers Associations	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Number of Joint purchasing services activated • % of savings for the Joint purchasing of Common Services