

MANAGEMENT, PRODUCTION AND DESIGN

Measuring Public Administration performance

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Context of the research activity	<p>The project aims to build a framework to assess the actual and potential outcomes of digital transformation of the Italian PA in terms of efficiency, effectiveness and quality of policy implementation (performance measurement), then apply such framework to the social, health and employment services implemented in (selected) Italian regions so as to evaluate their performance, and identify institutional and organizational obstacles to the adoption of digital tools, as well as avenues for reform.</p>
	<p>Over the last decades, in the field of public policy and administration there has been an increasing debate over the use of new technologies in government and policy design and implementation. Central to the analysis is the concept of digital transformation, which “entails the pervasive adoption of digital technologies in production and consumption activities that rely on a significant dimension of data development and data analysis.” (European Commission 2019).</p> <p>Such interest has been prioritized in the aftermath of the recent pandemic crisis. The European Union Recovery Plan sets the digital transition at the core of the recovery and resilience strategy with the identification of important financial resources and programs to increase the digital transformation of the Member States and their public administration (PA).</p>

Objectives

The main arguments in favor of government digital transformation, as put forward by international organizations such as the OECD and the World Bank, mainly point to improvements in efficiency, quality, effectiveness, accountability and trust. The conditions that determine success or failure of e-government strategies concern both the demand side (e.g. digital divide in access and use of ICTs on the part of the citizenry) and the supply side (e.g. implementation context, ICT infrastructure, civil servants' ICT expertise, clarity in government goals).

This project aims to build a framework to assess the actual and potential outcomes of digital transformation of the Italian PA in terms of efficiency, effectiveness and quality of policy implementation (performance measurement), and then apply such framework to the social, health and employment services implemented in (selected) Italian regions so as to evaluate their performance, as well as to identify obstacles of institutional and organizational nature to the adoption of digital tools in the implementation of social policy services and avenues for reform.

Social, health and employment services are chosen as core social policy services, of immediate relevance for citizens' welfare and life chances, involving complex administrative procedures. In both health and employment sectors there is a regulatory framework set out at the national level, within which regions have large room for maneuver in the implementation of policies and organization of service delivery, while social services are typically implemented at the municipal or sub-regional level within the framework of national and regional regulations. Social and employment services are tightly linked by activation of beneficiaries of social assistance benefits. Degree of digitalization of services varies across policy fields (with health policy being more digitalized, e.g. e-health and individual digital registry) and across territorial units (with digital employment services being more advanced in some regions, with the pilot implementation of job-matching services based on AI and the use of big data).

The project will collaborate with and contribute to the Italian Socio-Economic Council (CNEL) ongoing project on "measuring PA performance", which aims to establish performance indicators for the Italian PA. It also matches ongoing research at the University of Amsterdam on the governance of public services.

Within the project activities, the PhD research activity shall contribute to the design of a system of assessment of PA performance in the delivery of services in the social, health and employment policy sectors. In particular, the focus will be on the implementation of digital services, and the assessment of actual and potential improvements brought about by digital transformation of the PA in terms of efficiency, effectiveness and quality of policy implementation. The PhD research activity shall also comprise empirical research to test the framework and evaluate the performance of (selected) Italian regions, and to identify institutional and organizational factors which affect adoption of digital tools in the implementation of social policy services. The external validity and generalizability of such empirical results will be assessed, with an aim to identify avenues for PA reform and put forward policy recommendations.

**Skills and
competencies
for the
development of
the activity**

Background in public policy analysis/public administration
studies/organizational studies