

## Chapter 15

# A Country Level Evaluation of the Impact of E–Government: The Case of Italy

**Walter Castelnovo**  
*University of Insubria, Italy*

### ABSTRACT

*Despite considerable investments made worldwide in e-government initiatives in the past years, whether e-government succeeded in achieving the expected benefits in terms of increased efficiency, effectiveness and quality in the delivery of services is still under discussion. This chapter proposes an evaluation of the outcomes of the National Action Plan (NAP) for the diffusion of e-government at the local level in Italy. The evaluation considers whether the implementation of the projects funded under the action plan determined positive effects at the country level in terms of an increase in the value generated for different stakeholders. The discussion of data from both national and international secondary sources shows that during the period in which the benefits of the NAP should have become apparent no positive effects have emerged with evidence. The chapter argues that this depends on some of the principles the NAP has been based on that limited its capability of achieving the expected results.*

### INTRODUCTION

During the last two decades considerable resources have been invested worldwide in supporting innovation in public administration. Most of these resources have been devoted to e-government, which is the use of Information and Communication Technologies (ICT) to achieve better policy outcomes, higher quality services and greater

engagement with citizens (OECD, 2003). In the countries of the European Union, the policies for the diffusion of e-government have mainly been coordinated at the Community level within the frameworks defined by the member governments and implemented by the action plans set up by the European Commission. The more recent ministerial declaration on e-government is the Malmö declaration in which the joint vision is stated that by 2015:

DOI: 10.4018/978-1-4666-4173-0.ch015

*European governments (...) use e-government to increase their efficiency and effectiveness and to constantly improve public services in a way that caters for users' different needs and maximizes public value, thus supporting the transition of Europe to a leading knowledge-based economy. (EU, 2009a, p. 1)*

In order to achieve these objectives, in the Malmö declaration some priorities have been defined; namely:

- Citizens and businesses empowerment by means of e-government services,
- Implementation of seamless e-government services to support mobility in the single market,
- Achieve efficiency and effectiveness through the use of e-government to reduce the administrative burden and improve organisational processes,
- Establish the legal and technical preconditions that make possible the implementation of the policy priorities (EU, 2009a, p. 2).

All these priorities, as well as some of the specific actions devised to achieve them, were already included in the previous EU action plans for e-government. Actually, citizens' centrality, efficiency, effectiveness, transparency, responsiveness and accountability of governments have been at the centre of the e-government initiatives from the very beginning. However, under the current global financial crisis, the achievement of those objectives is even more crucial than in the past. Indeed, according to a survey run by the Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) in 2009, almost all the member countries report that e-government is seen as a contribution to the economic recovery (OECD, 2009; Ubaldi, 2011). This is mainly due to the expectation that e-government investments will provide significant cost-savings both directly, in terms of improved efficiency and effectiveness

of government organizations, and indirectly, in terms of better quality of the services delivered and reduction of administrative burden on citizens and enterprises. However, this expectation is uncertain; indeed, after more than a decade of investments in e-government a discussion is still going on worldwide concerning whether the policies for the diffusion of e-government implemented so far succeeded in achieving the expected results.

This chapter discusses this problem by considering the case of Italy, with a specific focus on the evaluation of the outcomes of the policies for the diffusion of e-government at the local level established in the Italian National Action Plan for e-government (NAP). The evaluation is based on a holistic approach and it is performed at the country level using secondary data sources (Alalwan & Thomas, 2011; Srivastava & Teo, 2007; 2010), including surveys conducted by both national and international organizations and data provided by the Italian National Institute of Statistics (ISTAT) and the European Institute of Statistics (EUROSTAT). On the basis of the data considered, in the chapter it is claimed that at the moment no positive effects at the country level have emerged with evidence yet as a result of the NAP, neither for the citizens as such (in terms of an increase of the country's global wellbeing), nor for citizens as taxpayers (in terms of the reduction of the global cost of local government), for citizens as public servants (in terms of the increase of their human capital) and for citizens as entrepreneurs (in terms of the reduction of the administrative burdens on enterprises).

The chapter concludes that this scarce impact of the NAP depends on some of the principles it has been based on rather than on the way the funded projects have been implemented.

## **BACKGROUND**

In broad terms, e-government aims at the transformation of government through the pervasive use of ICT. As such, e-government should be considered

20 more pages are available in the full version of this document, which may be purchased using the "Add to Cart" button on the publisher's webpage:

[www.igi-global.com/chapter/country-level-evaluation-impact-government/76645](http://www.igi-global.com/chapter/country-level-evaluation-impact-government/76645)

## Related Content

---

### Factors Affecting e-Government Technology Adoption Behaviour in a Voluntary Environment

Chowdhury Golam Hossanand James C. Ryan (2016). *International Journal of Electronic Government Research* (pp. 24-49).

[www.irma-international.org/article/factors-affecting-e-government-technology-adoption-behaviour-in-a-voluntary-environment/155186](http://www.irma-international.org/article/factors-affecting-e-government-technology-adoption-behaviour-in-a-voluntary-environment/155186)

### New Directions for IT Governance in the Brazilian Government

Fabio Perez Marzulloand Jano Moreira de Souza (2011). *Applied Technology Integration in Governmental Organizations: New E-Government Research* (pp. 313-334).

[www.irma-international.org/chapter/new-directions-governance-brazilian-government/49351](http://www.irma-international.org/chapter/new-directions-governance-brazilian-government/49351)

### Institutional Arrangements in E-Government Implementation and Use: A Case Study From Indonesian Local Government

Nurdin Nurdin (2018). *International Journal of Electronic Government Research* (pp. 44-63).

[www.irma-international.org/article/institutional-arrangements-in-e-government-implementation-and-use/211202](http://www.irma-international.org/article/institutional-arrangements-in-e-government-implementation-and-use/211202)

### Government 2.0 in Korea: Focusing on E-Participation Services

Hee Jung Choand Sungsoo Hwang (2010). *Politics, Democracy and E-Government: Participation and Service Delivery* (pp. 94-114).

[www.irma-international.org/chapter/government-korea-focusing-participation-services/42576](http://www.irma-international.org/chapter/government-korea-focusing-participation-services/42576)

### Do Social Media and e-WOM Influence M-Government Services?: A Citizen Perspective From India

Sunith Hebbarand Kiran K.B. (2022). *International Journal of Electronic Government Research* (pp. 1-27).

[www.irma-international.org/article/do-social-media-and-e-wom-influence-m-government-services/294891](http://www.irma-international.org/article/do-social-media-and-e-wom-influence-m-government-services/294891)