

# **PUBLIC STRATEGIC PLANS IN ITALIAN LOCAL GOVERNMENTS: A SUSTAINABILITY DEVELOPMENT FOCUS?**

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## **ABSTRACT**

Internationally there is an increasing relevance for the concept of sustainability development (SD), since the Brundtland report has been published. The European commission (EC) has published a variety of documents that encourage to adopt SD strategies.

The article analyses fourteen voluntary contemporary on-line published strategic plans (SPs) in Italian local governments (LGs), in order to verify if there is a sustainability development focus. Strategic planning is still in its initial stage. Even though, the study concluded that the group of SPs analysed shows to be aligned with EC recommendations.

**Keywords** – Sustainable Development; Strategic Plan; Italian LGs; Content Analysis; European Union.

## **INTRODUCTION**

In 2000 the European Union committed 'to become the most competitive and dynamic knowledge-based economy in the world capable of sustainable economic growth with more and better jobs and greater social cohesion' (Lisbon European council, Presidency conclusions, 2000, para. 5).

In order to pursue the Lisbon strategy, the European Union issued a variety of documents that encourage public sector organisations to adopt sustainable behaviours. These documents supply a framework to develop sustainability development (SD) strategies that arise from the Brundtland report definition, that introduce a SD long-term perspective by making reference to available resources and their maintenance. For this reasons the European commission (EC) focuses on the SD strategic planning (Evans, Joas, Sundback, and Theobald, 2006).

Only a few studies have been developed considering organisations' strategic planning in public sector (Bebbington, 2007, p. 6), while it can play a crucial role in public sector organizations.

Several reasons are advanced for this (Moore, 1995 and 2000). First, it supports policy-makers in defining policies that endure public value. Second, it suggests how to address territory issues and community needs. Finally, it explains how to put in practice policies.

In order to introduce this way to think, act and above all learn, public sector organizations have to gather information coming from external and internal environment, clarify the mission that want to pursue, individuate specific issues to be addressed, explored all possible strategic alternatives and try to anticipate future implications of present decisions (Bryson and Alston, 2005).

With regard to SD, strategic planning should focus on internal decision-making processes and in particular on strategy implementation, capital allocation, and how organisations may incorporate demands for SD performance. This is important because one could have more faith in organisations SD commitment if one can find evidence of SD being incorporated into strategic planning process (Bebbington, 2007, p.7).

Within the Italian context strategic planning is not mandatory required, rather than, recent studies demonstrated that Italian local governments (LGs) issued about seventy strategic plans (SPs) from the end of last century (Mazzara, 2009; Sangiorgi, 2009; Rur Censius, 2007).

The purpose of our article is to investigate what Italian LGs consider as SD in their contemporary voluntary on-line SPs. Particularly, it explores a selection of LG SPs, observing what has been and has not been reported in comparison to the *Urban cohesion policy and cities* (com(2006) 385 final). This communication lists a series of items (policies, actions and guidelines), that are suggestions to promote SD at the local level, and are not mandatory. Particularly, each local government is stimulated to chose relevant items in accordance to its specific context. The study therefore uses content analysis (Unerman, 2000; Krippendorff, 2004; Guthrie and Abeysekera, 2006) to identify what items are considered relevant by Italian LGs. For this purpose it was developed an original coding instrument based on the EC framework (com(2006) 385 final).

The research questions are the following:

- What has been included in contemporary Italian LG SPs?
- What has or has not been reported in terms of SD, basing on the EC framework for urban cohesion policy and cities (com(2006)385 final) items?

The analysis of Italian LGs SPs established that SPs in Italian LGs are still in their initial stage. Even though, since EC framework for SD just suggest items to be chosen according to the LGs context, the study concluded that the group of SPs analysed shows to be aligned with EC recommendations.

The article is organized as follows: section 2 provides the background about organisations strategic planning focusing on Italian LGs strategic planning process and tools, section 3 gives an insight into public sector organisations SD strategic planning literature, section 4 describes the European Union commitments in terms of promoting the SD agenda, section 5 presents the research questions

and the research method applied, section 6 describes the results of the analysis, section 7 summarises findings and draws some conclusions.

## **STRATEGIC PLANS IN ITALIAN LOCAL GOVERNMENTS**

The last decades witnessed an increasing of uncertainty and complexity in public sector organizations' context, partially due to an increased number of interconnections among public sector, for profit and not-for profit organizations (Kickert, Lkijn, Koppenjan, 1997; Grossi and Mussari, 2008). In such a network system, the concept of ownership of public services and the way to deliver them is quite changed: 'public services are progressively seen by policy makers to be as significant as the commercial sector in the context of wider economic and social development' (Broadbent and Guthrie, 2008, p. 130).

This context required a radically change of the public sector organizations traditional role, with a moving from the policy-maker and public services supplier tasks to a local public services network management task (Grossi, 2001; Padovani, 2004; Mazzara, 2009). The increasing complexity and reducing resources trend and the citizen demand for new and high quality services, require public sector organizations to adopt a strategic long-term shared perspective in delivering of public services to pursue a (Cheney, 1993 and Bryson, 2004).

As it is well known, strategic planning was introduced and developed in the private sector (see Chandler, 1962; Ansoff, 1980, Glueck, 1980; Rumelt, 1980; Wheelen and Hunger, 1993, Mintzberg, 1978, 1987 and 1994; Porter, 1996; Quinn, 1980; Abell, 1980; Drucker, 2005).

In the public sector the earlier application of strategic planning were applied to military strategy and the practice of statecraft on a grand scale (Quinn, 1980; Bracker, 1980). From 1982 something changed: Olsen and Eadie (1982) argue strategic planning applications began to be used in a broader range of public sector organizations.

According to Olsen and Eadie (1982), and Bryson (1988), strategic planning is considered as a disciplined effort to produce fundamental decisions and actions that shape and guide about *what an organization (or other entity) is, what it does, and why it does it*. In order to introduce this way to think, act and above all learning, public sector organisations have to gather information coming from external and internal environment, clarify the mission that want to pursue, identify specific issues to be addressed, explore all the possible strategic alternatives and try to anticipate future implications of present decisions. Only by implementing a circular way to analyze the information (*where you are?; where you want to be? and how to get there?*), it is possible for public sector organisations circumscribing strategic issues to be pursued, and promoting local stakeholders collaboration (Bryson and Alston, 2005).

In the Italian context the relevance of having clearly defined strategies is actually one of the critical aspects to be considered by LGs. This is because, first, the traditional politicians view prefers short term decisions against longer horizon vision, second LGs are the most important actor involved in the local development network (Mazzara, 2009).

A possible definition for the strategic planning process in Italian LGs may be as ‘a sequences of choices aimed at influencing the way by which an urban area can development coherently with limits and opportunities offered by local environment, in a long period horizon’ (Mazzara, 2006). The result of this process is the issuing of strategic plans (SPs). SPs represent a sort of guide that include mission, vision, values, strategic objectives, decisions, resources allocation and people involved (Bryson, 2004; Mazzara, 2009).

In Italy, LGs law provides all the typical steps of the planning and controlling system, but it does not require the issuing of SPs (Mazzara, 2006 and 2009). Despite there is not a mandatory requirement for producing SPs, since the end of ‘90s about seventy voluntary SPs have been issued. Starting form 2005 the number of voluntary LGs SPs have been increased. This is because of the European and national financial incentives given to promote a long-term territorial planning, notably, European structural funds (Rur-Censis, 2007, Varotto, 2006).

Finally, it is necessary to note the crucial role that LGs SPs plays in achieving SD (Brugmann, 1996). ‘Public agencies create and follow sustainable development plans to manage scarce environmental resources, environmental impact, and organizational efficiency’ (Leuenberger, 2006, p. 8). This is because of the long-term perspective that SD actions required to be fulfilled. Also, SD planning can steer multiplicity of partners with differing and conflicting values towards the achievement of shared long-term objectives or targets (Rees, 1988).

## **SUSTAINABILITY DEVELOPMENT STRATEGIC PLANNING**

Despite the increasing relevance of SD planning over public sector organisations internationally, little attention has been paid to practical application at the organisational level (Leuenberger, 2006; Counsell, 1998).

Ball (2002) suggests the idea to build ‘sustainable communities’, emphasising the crucial role to adopt SD strategies at the local level, as most of European people live in urban settlement. In the past, these urban settlements had been the engine of economic growth, but at the same time guilty to the massive throughputs of fossil fuel and other natural resources. As consequence, urban settlement development has been the main cause of the increasing in inequity among developed areas and cities that have been excluded from the economic wealth benefits. Moreover, the study discusses the main UK SD public sector frameworks, that entitle local authorities to be direct agents in delivering SD. In doing so the research point out the necessity to ‘find a new lens through which to focus on issues of sustainability and the necessity of a community-level response’ (p. 5).

According to Leuenberger (2006) sustainability planning can help public sector organisations to meet their goals and benefits from the surrounding system. In doing so, the study highlights risks and opportunities for SD SPs. First, it needs to identify links among inputs, outputs and outcomes to steer the planning decision process. Second, it is necessary to identify clear goals and pre-established outcomes measurement to include in SPs. Third, SPs must link resources expended to

specific outcomes. Fourth, since actions by one party may have unintended consequences for others, planning must consider relationships between organisations. For the last reason the article suggests public sector organisations to engage stakeholders in the planning process.

Regardless of the requirement of embedding LGs SPs with SD in England and Wales, Bruff and Wood (2000a and 2000b), Counsell (1998) and Jones (1999), show as there is a ‘general failure’ in developing adequate policies and actions plans with quantifiable targets and performance indicators. Within the Italian context SD studies published concern twofold: first, the urban city planning; second, the environmental sustainability dimension. Cristoforo *et al.* (2004) maintain that SPs are the tools to put urban sustainability in practice under LGs. In doing so, they allow to promote the cities development compliant with a long-term natural resources efficiency allocation, distribution efficiency, intra and inter-generational equity, and a participative perspective. Also, the study proposes a grid analysis aimed at assessing the Italian SPs urban sustainability compliance. Zoppi (2008) maintains strategic environmental assessment is a possible tool to frame LGs SPs in term of SD.

The Malerba (2004), and Bratti and Vaccari (2006)’s studies focus on the Local agenda 21, maintaining that it gives advantages both to the planet and in the economic and social terms, and describe a series of LGs environmental reporting practices. Finally, Varotto (2002, 2005, 2007) outlines financial European policies aimed at promoting urban SD.

## **THE EUROPEAN UNION COMMITMENT ON SUSTAINABILITY DEVELOPMENT**

The European Union commitment on SD starts in 1972 during the Stockholm *United Nations Conference on the Human Environment*, and then has been embedded in the European Union policies and strategy. Based on these commitment the EC issued a series of documents aimed at promoting SD policies under the Union and encouraging national governments and LGs to adopt SD strategies and actions.



The first main stream for European Union SD strategy is the communication *A Sustainable Europe for a Better World: A European Union Strategy for Sustainable Development* (com(2001) 264 final), issued in 2001. It commits the European Union to draw up strategies for SD. SD is defined recovering Brundtland report as the ‘development that meets the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs’ (World commission on environment and development, p. 2).

The EC issued then four communications addressed to the European Union, the com(2002) 82 final intended at promoting a global partnership for pursuing SD, the com(2005) 161 final that provides a series of actions to monitor the implementation of the European Union SD strategy, and the com(2005)37 final aimed at providing an initial assessment of the advances on SD and lists future orientations for the review of the SD strategy. Finally, in 2005 the EC issued the *Commission on the review of the sustainable development strategy - A platform for action* (com(2005) 658 final), that starts a SD strategy revision aimed at maintaining ‘a momentum that mutually reinforces economic growth, social welfare and environment protection’ (p. 3).

According to the SD strategy the EC has defined a series of instruments<sup>1</sup> and policies<sup>2</sup> addressed to national governments in order to promote the SD implementation within each territory. One of the policies is ‘Actions concerning specific geographic regions’. This policy promotes the definition of ‘Strategy on urban environment’, whose purpose is to encourage cooperation measures under territories and set out guidelines aimed at improving the urban environment (European Union, 2009).

Furthermore, the EC issued the *European communication on thematic strategic on the urban Environment* (com(2005) 718 final), that provides the mainstream of the European union strategy on urban environment, in order to implement an integrated urban management approach aimed at promoting the SD commitments in national governments. In fact, according to the com(2005) 718 final:

‘it is widely recognized that the most successful local authorities use integrated approaches to manage the urban environment by adopting long-term and strategic action plans (...). Obligations imposed at local, regional, national or european level (e.g. land-use, noise, air quality) can be more effectively implemented at the local level when integrated into a local strategic management framework’ (p. 3).

In order to pursue this objective EC lists five measures<sup>3</sup>. Out of the five measures there is ‘drawing on the Community support programmes in the context of cohesion policy or research’, that provides a set of tools addressed to reduce structural disparities between European regions, and promote a balanced development and equal opportunities for all (European Union, 2009).

Finally, in 2006 EC issued the *Cohesion policy and cities - the urban contribution to growth and jobs in the regions* (com(2006)385 final) addressed to LGs in order to promote local actions aimed at implementing European SD strategy at the local level. For this purpose the communication lists a series of items to support a sustainable urban economic growth, as well as reduce poverty, social exclusion and environmental problems. Notably the list of items is not mandatory: each local government is required to chose relevant items in accordance to its specific context.

The communication lists six main policies that represent headings to steer LGs development planning aligned with European sustainability and cohesion strategies. The policies identified are: (A) attractive cities, (B) supporting innovation, entrepreneurship and the knowledge economy, (C) more and better jobs, (D) disparities within cities, (E) governance; (F) financing urban renewal. Thus, the paper utilises content analysis and its policies to examine and collect data according to specific recording instructions.

Each policy lists a series of actions (in total seventeen) that indicate specific topics included in this area. For each action a series of guidelines (125) is provided, in order to define items that can be considered for achieving actions. For example, policy A - action ‘natural and physical environment’ - provides guidelines synthesized as follows (com(2006)385 final, p. 6):

– renovation of public spaces and derelict brown field sites rehabilitation;

- co-ordination of land use policies to make attractive urban areas and city;
- investments aimed at accomplish European Union laws on air quality, waste-water treatment, waste management, water supply and environmental noise;
- active management of public transport in order to improve air quality, reducing noise and encouraging physical activity;
- promotion of energy efficiency and renewable energies.

## **RESEARCH METHOD**

This article investigates what Italian LGs consider as relevant items for pursuing SD in their SPs, as for the *Urban cohesion policy and cities* (com(2006) 385 final) suggestions. The study therefore uses content analysis (Unerman, 2000; Krippendorff, 2004; Guthrie and Abeysekera, 2006) to determine the pattern and extent of SD strategies in a group of Italian LGs. For this purpose an original coding instrument was developed to analyse the SD into SPs in comparison to com(2006) 385 final guidelines.

Content analysis is a research technique that ‘classifies textual material, reducing it to more relevant, manageable bits of data’ (Weber, 1990, p. 5). It ‘assumes frequency indicates the importance of the subject matter’ (Guthrie *et al.*, 2004, p. 287).

Content analysis was chosen as this was the main method used in similar studies (Bruff and Wood, 2000; Cousell, 1998), and it allows us to achieve the main aim of the paper.

An original coding instrument has been developed (see table 1). To decrease the possibility of coding errors, and increase the reliability of the instrument developed the content codes was identified and defined basing on well-grounded relevant document issued from the EC (com(2006) 385 final). There has been a sufficient period of training for the coder due a pilot study sample. Also, there has been a reliability check developed from two authors (one of them is an expert on

content analysis), while the coding was still an early stage. No major issues of difference were reported, showing that the coding is of sufficient reliability.

**[Insert TABLE 1 HERE].**

Under the literature there is not agreement about the most appropriate unit of analysis to be used for content analysis (Steenkamp and Northcott, 2007). Different opinions have been expressed by the authors. Gray *et al.* (1995) suggest to use in written communication words, sentences and pages. In addition Guthrie *et al.* (2006) consider portions of pages. Finally, Unerman (2000) considers as unit of analysis words, phrases, lines, sentences, charters and pictures.

The coding instrument applied in this paper record the presence of specific disclosures as per the guidelines in table 1; this is called an *incidence* of SD into SPs. Moreover a total index was constructed to show the percentage of guidelines of the com(2006) 385 final disclosed. The index was determined by the total observation from the SPs analysed, out of the total possible observations. Also, the analysis recorded the type of information disclosed (declarative, monetary, non-monetary), basing on a common classification in the literature (Guthrie *et al.*, 2004).

This current research analyses Italian LGs<sup>4</sup>, both provinces, municipalities and associations of municipalities<sup>5</sup>, from all Italian territories. The analysis considers fourteen contemporary on-line available Italian SPs issued in 2008. They have been identified basing on previous research that took a census of Italian LGs' that published SPs (Mazzara 2006 and 2009; Rete delle città strategiche, 2009; Rur Censis, 2007). SPs issued in 2008 was chosen because they were expected to be influenced by com(2006) 385 final items.

The analysis has been applied to SPs listed in table 2. The horizons of the plans are very vary. They start from one year (financial year 2008, which in Italy means 1 January 2008 – 31 December 2008), to thirteen years (2008/2020). Also, five SPs have a not-defined horizon of time (referred to 'at least ten years').

**[Insert TABLE 2 HERE].**

The next section reports on the results of the analysis developed, as well as the main findings.

## **RESULT OF THE ANALYSIS**

The analysis developed for the Italian LGs SPs is reported by *what* has been disclosed i.e.: (1) how many (percentage) policies and actions of the com(2006) 385 final have been reported; (2) the frequency (percentage) of any recorded policies and actions; (3) the type, in terms of quality, of information disclosed (declarative, monetary, non monetary).

Table 3 shows what percentage of policies of the com(2006) 385 final was disclosed, basing on the number of total possible guidelines observation in the fourteen SPs examined.

**[Insert TABLE 3 HERE].**

In the first column of table 3 are listed the polices (n=6). The second column shows the sum of the guidelines within the com(2006) 385 final coding instrument (n=125). The third column gives the amount of SPs potential observations. The total index, is reported on the last column. It shows the percentage of the coding instrument guidelines that have been reported within the SPs analysed. Out of the total 1750, only 303 disclosures have been reported, which gives a figure of 17,3 per cent of the guidelines reported by the fourteen organisations.

As shown on table 3, all six policies were disclosed, with a stable trend. However the disclosure index is generally low. Particularly, the more disclosed policies are ‘governance’ (20,9 per cent) and ‘attractive cities’ (20,8 per cent), followed by ‘support innovation, entrepreneurship and the

knowledge economy' (16,8 per cent) and 'financing urban renewal' (16,8 per cent). Just a little disclosure is given to the policy of 'disparities within cities' (7,9 per cent).

The following table 4 presents the incidence of actions recorded basing on the number of total guidelines observations in the fourteen SPs examined.

**[Insert TABLE 4 HERE].**

A general result that raises from table 4 is that all actions are recorded with reference of each policy. However the incidence of actions disclosed is vary. Policy A mostly reports on natural and physical environment (42,3 per cent) and culture (24,8 per cent), while, little disclosure has been given to mobility (5 per cent). Policy B provides an overall disclosure on issues related to the SMEs enterprise (72,2 per cent), rather than actions aimed at the innovation and knowledge economy promoting growth (27,8 per cent). Policy C focuses on actions related to fighting unemployment (61,9 per cent), less disclosure has been given to the level of unemployment reduction (38,1 per cent). Policy D offers a significant disclosure on actions aimed at promoting social inclusion and equal opportunities (92,3 per cent), while it is low considered actions aimed at increasing security for citizens (7,7 per cent). Finally, policy E gives a relevant disclosure on the sustainable urban development (67,0 per cent), whilst there is a little disclosure on the governance relation among different level of local authorities (15,4 per cent), networks management (12,1 per cent), and citizen participation (5,5 per cent).

Organisation K, with regard to the action 'natural and physical environment' included into the policy A, for example disclose actions aimed at (SPs organisation K):

'-creation of sustainable tourism based on the use and enjoyment the ecological network. The main actions for the recovery and preservation of heritage natural and actions to enable the sustainable

use of natural through infrastructural interventions is lightweight (footpaths, visitor centre, areas facilities, etc.), and through awareness raising and promotion' (p. 16D);

'- definition of uniform regulations for promoting environmental sustainability and energy savings in the implementation of public works and private construction consistent with the regional standards for sustainable housing' (p. 80D).

Table 5 indicates that the type of information, with regard to the guidelines recorded, was commonly declarative (79.9 per cent), followed by monetary (15,5 per cent), non-monetary (3,3 per cent), and finally monetary & non-monetary (1,3 per cent).

**[Insert TABLE 5 HERE].**

## **CONCLUSIONS**

This article has examined SPs by a group of Italian LGs with the aim of observing what has been disclosed in these organisations as SD.

Several comments raise from the analysis. First, the findings show that in Italy there is an absence of mandatory requirements for Italian public sector organisations to produce SPs and related frameworks. Although there are not mandatory requirements, some Italian LGs issued SPs.

Second, it was found that there are not mandatory requirements to consider SD strategies in public sector organisations. Nevertheless, European Union has issued a series of documents to promote SD strategies under governments and LGs. Moreover, some Italian LGs started to included these issues in their voluntary SPs.

Third, when we studied Italian LGs SPs by content analysis, it was found that all policies, basing on the coding instrument developed, were disclosed. Particularly, among the six policies there were a

stable disclosing (about 20 per cent), except the policy ‘disparities within cities’ (7,9 per cent).

Nonetheless the disclosure index is generally low. A possible explanation of this low compliance with EC SD framework can be linked to the novelty of the com(2006) 385 final.

Fourth, it was found that under policies the incidence of actions disclosed were vary. Most recorded actions were aimed at ‘promoting social inclusion and equal opportunities’ (92,3 per cent), ‘related to the SMEs enterprise (72,2 per cent), and ‘sustainable urban development’ (67,0 per cent). While, little disclosure has been given to actions related to ‘increased security for citizens’ (7,7 per cent), ‘citizen participation’ (5,5 per cent), and ‘mobility’ (5,0 per cent). A possible explanation of these instability could be linked to the fact that com(2006) 385 final suggests a lists of items to promote SD at the local level, but it allows each organisation to chose relevant items in accordance to their specific context. The last finding aligns to Counsell (1998), Bruff and Wood (2000), that found that local SD planning’s contribution is limited to certain issues and areas of policy concern.

Five, with regard to the type of information disclosed, it was found that guidelines recorded were mainly ‘declarative’ (79,9 per cent). Less disclosure has been given to ‘monetary’ (15,5 per cent), ‘non-monetary’ (3,3 per cent), and ‘monetary’ and ‘non-monetary’ (1,3 per cent) information. This substantially differs to studies concerning public sector organisations’ sustainability and social reporting (Guthrie and Farneti, 2008; Guthrie, Farneti and Siboni, 2008), that found a ‘non-monetary’ and a ‘monetary and non-monetary’ preponderance disclosure. Whilst, it is consistent to Italian literature which indicates a lack of monetary and non monetary values under the strategic management (Mazzara, 2003 and 2009; Mussari, Grossi, Monfardini, 2005).

There are a number of possible explanation for this result. First, it is easier to report on quantitative data, rather than to plan them previously. Second, there are cultural resiliencies inside LGs to establish target, because it will affect ex post staff evaluation (Borgonovi, 1988; Rebor, 1999).

Third, there are not defined frameworks and metrics to set strategic goals. Finally, while quantitative reporting data is required by Italian regulation, currently there are not mandatory



requirements with regard to strategic planning. As consequence of the scarcity of quantitative data on SPs, on one hand there will be a little tension on achieving results. On the other hand, there will be an absence of guidelines for the implementation during the development of activities. Also, it will be hardly to demonstrate the missing on goals achievement (Farneti *et al.*, 1996).

The paper concludes that SPs in Italian LGs is still in its initial stage. Even though, since EC framework for SD just suggest items to be chosen according to the LGs context, the documents analysed shows to be align with the EC proposes for SD.

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## **NOTES**

<sup>1</sup> Instruments concerns: environmental actions; strategy on the sustainable use of natural resources; strategy on the prevention and recycling of waste; action plan in favour of environmental technologies; competitiveness and innovation framework programme (2007-2013); a programme for clean and competitive SMEs; promoting corporate social responsibility; the global energy efficiency and renewable energy fund.

<sup>2</sup> Policies concerns four main areas: (1) a strategy for integrating the environment into European Union policies; (2) internal policies; (3) external policies; (4) actions concerning specific geographic regions.

<sup>3</sup> The measures listed are the follows: (1) publication of guidelines for the integration of environmental issues into urban policies; (2) publication of guidelines for sustainable urban transport plans; (3) support for the exchange of best practices; (4) broadening the range of

information for local authorities via the internet and of training on urban management issues for people working in regional and local governments; (5) drawing on the community support programmes in the context of cohesion policy or research.

<sup>4</sup> In Italy there are 8,101 municipalities and 101 ordinary provinces. Ordinary provinces are ordained by the State and they must have more than 200,000 inhabitants. There are actually 109 provinces but two out of eight are 'autonomous' and have region-like powers, and six out of eight are created by regional law, so they do not have state offices; these eight provinces can also have fewer than 200,000 inhabitants.

<sup>5</sup> Municipality associations are voluntary agreement among LGs that cooperate to develop a specific project that affect their territory.

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**Tab. 1: The coding instrument**

<i>Polices (6)</i>	<i>Actions (17)</i>	<i>Guidelines (125)</i>
<b>A. Attractive cities</b>	A1. Transport	A1.1, A1.2, A1.3, A1.4, A1.5, A1.6, A1.7, A1.8
	A2. Mobility	A2.1, A2.2, A2.3, A2.4, A2.5, A2.6, A2.7, A2.8
	A3. Accessibility	A3.1, A3.2, A3.3, A3.4
	A4. Access to service facilities	A4.1, A4.2, A4.3, A4.4, A4.5, A4.6, A4.7
	A5. Natural and physical environment	A5.1, A5.2, A5.3, A5.4, A5.5, A5.6, A5.7, A5.8, A5.9 A5.10, A5.11, A5.12, A5.13, A5.14
	A6. Culture	A6.1, A6.2, A6.3, A6.4, A6.5, A6.6, A6.7
<b>B. Supporting innovation, entrepreneurship and the knowledge economy</b>	B1. Actions for SMEs and micro-enterprises	B1.1, B1.2, B1.3, B1.4, B1.5, B1.6, B1.7, B1.8, B1.9, B1.10, B1.11, B1.12, B1.13, B1.14, B1.15, B1.16, B1.17
	B2. Innovation and the knowledge economy promoting growth	B2.1, B2.2, B2.3, B2.4, B2.5, B2.6, B2.7, B2.8, B2.9
<b>C. More and better jobs</b>	C1. Reduction the level of unemployment	C1.1, C1.2, C1.3, C1.4, C1.5, C1.6, C1.7
	C2. Improving employability by raising levels of educational achievement and training	C2.1, C2.2, C2.3, C2.4, C2.5, C2.6, C2.7, C2.8, C2.9
<b>D. Disparities within cities</b>	D1. Promoting social inclusion and equal opportunities	D1.1, D1.2, D1.3, D1.4, D1.5, D1.6, D1.7, D1.8, D1.9
	D2. Increased security for citizens	D2.1, D2.2, D2.3, D2.4, D2.5, D2.6, D2.7, D2.8, D2.9
<b>E. Governance</b>	E1. Cities and regions	E1.1, E1.2, E1.3, E1.4, E1.5
	E2. The integrated approach to sustainable urban development	E2.1, E2.2, E2.3, E2.4
	E3. Citizen participation	E3.1, E3.2, E3.3
	E4. Networks and exchange of experience	E4.1, E4.2
<b>F. Financing urban renewal</b>	F1. Urban renewal	F1.1, F1.2, F1.3

**Tab. 2 Strategic plans characteristics**

<i>Organisations</i>	<i>Time horizons of the plan</i>
<b>B</b>	2008
<b>H, M</b>	2013
<b>E</b>	2015
<b>A, D</b>	2016
<b>F, G, J</b>	2020
<b>C, I, K, L, N</b>	At least ten years

**Table 3: The policies disclosure**

<i>Policies</i>	<i>Number of guidelines (A)</i>	<i>Total observations from all plans (B)</i>	<i>Total possibility observations (14 x A = C)</i>	<i>Total index (B/C)</i>
<b>A. Attractive cities</b>	48	140	672	20,8%
<b>B. Supporting innovation, entrepreneurship and the knowledge economy</b>	26	61	364	16,8%
<b>C. More and better jobs</b>	16	34	224	15,2%
<b>D. Disparities within cities</b>	18	20	252	7,9%
<b>E. Governance</b>	14	41	196	20,9%
<b>F. Financing urban renewal</b>	3	7	42	16,7%
<b>Total</b>	<b>125</b>	<b>303</b>	<b>1750</b>	<b>17,3%</b>

**Tab. 4: Incidence of recorded actions**

<i>Policies</i>	<i>Actions</i>		
<b>A. Attractive cities</b>	<b>Total observations for A = 298</b>	<b>Absolute Value</b>	<b>Percentage</b>
	Transport	33	11,1%
	Mobility	15	5,0%
	Accessibility	24	8,1%
	Access to service facilities	26	8,7%
	Natural and physical environment	126	42,3%
	Culture	74	24,8%
<b>B. Supporting innovation, entrepreneurship and the knowledge economy</b>	<b>Total observations for B = 90</b>	<b>Absolute Value</b>	<b>Percentage</b>
	Actions for SMEs and micro-enterprises	65	72,2%
	Innovation and the knowledge economy promoting growth	25	27,8%
<b>C. More and better jobs</b>	<b>Total observations for C = 42</b>	<b>Absolute Value</b>	<b>Percentage</b>
	Reduction the level of unemployment	16	38,1%
	Improving employability by raising levels of educational achievement and training	26	61,9%
<b>D. Disparities within cities</b>	<b>Total observations for D = 26</b>	<b>Absolute Value</b>	<b>Percentage</b>
	Promoting social inclusion and equal opportunities	24	92,3%
	Increased security for citizens	2	7,7%
<b>E. Governance</b>	<b>Total observations for E = 91</b>	<b>Absolute Value</b>	<b>Percentage</b>
	Cities and regions	14	15,4%
	The integrated approach to sustainable urban development	61	67,0%
	Citizen participation	5	5,5%
	Networks and exchange of experience	11	12,1%
<b>F. Financing urban renewal</b>	<b>Total observations for F = 8</b>	<b>Absolute Value</b>	<b>Percentage</b>
	Urban renewal	8	100,0%

**Tab. 5: Type of information disclosed**

<i>Quality</i>	<i>Absolute value of observation from all reports</i>	<i>Percentage</i>
<b>1 - Declarative</b>	242	79,9%
<b>2 - Monetary</b>	47	15,5%
<b>3 - Non-monetary</b>	10	3,3%
<b>4 - Monetary and non-monetary</b>	4	1,3%
<b>Total</b>	<b>303</b>	<b>100,0%</b>