

GIFT Comments on Italy's draft 3rd OGP National Action Plan 2016-2017¹

The draft third Italian Action Plan appears to be an ambitious set of commitments intended to significantly advance open government in Italy, reflecting a wide public consultation through the National Open Government Forum. The commitments span a range of government activities at both national and sub-national government levels.

GIFT appreciates the opportunity to provide some comments on the draft, while recognizing the late stage in the process and respecting the extent to which the draft reflects an advanced stage of domestic deliberation and consensus.

Our brief remarks focus on the nine commitments, out of the total of thirty three commitments in the draft, that involve elements of fiscal openness.

A number of these commitments involve elements of public participation in fiscal policy.

As you may know, Principle 10 in the GIFT High Level Principles on Fiscal Transparency, Participation and Accountability (which were endorsed by the UN General Assembly in 2012), asserts that citizens have a right to direct public participation in the development and implementation of fiscal policies. To promote this principle, GIFT has developed a set of Principles of Public Participation in Fiscal Policy ([here](#)), which have been the subject of extensive discussion, inter alia, in the OGP-GIFT Fiscal Openness Working Group (FOWG). GIFT has also produced a series of country case studies, and is currently compiling a guide to public participation in fiscal policy which will be released at the OGP Summit in Paris in December.

In that regard, some of the commitments in the draft Italian Action Plan are highly relevant and welcome, including:

- Commitment 5 on a National Registry of public investment projects will introduce a unique project code that will enable different databases to be integrated, facilitating civic monitoring. The commitment will involve data users in designing the initiative and establishes a network of citizens.
- Commitment 9 will establish a Consip tenders dashboard to make more detailed data on tenders publicly available, and will allow the public to monitor the work of Tender Committees and track the progress of individual tenders. The tool will be adapted based on users' feedback.
- Commitment 15, Public works 2.0, will see the development of new public participation tools to enable citizens to contribute to evaluations of projects by the Ministry of Infrastructure and Transport, and to debate the merits of proposed projects. The commitment is intended to result in more integrated and regularly

¹ The draft was provided to GIFT by the OGP Secretariat on August 24, 2016.

updated data, and development of a new participatory platform for co-deciding on works to be planned.

- Commitment 23 is on monitoring of the education service delivery reform "La Buona Scuola", using mobile phone apps to develop accountability between the ministry of education and parents and students so they can monitor and assess the reforms.
- Commitments 24 and 25 contain sub-commitments on participatory budgeting at sub-national government level (in Rome and Bologna).

There is also a general commitment on public participation in public policy: Commitment 14 will see development of tools to support participatory decision-making through guidelines for consultations and appropriate technological solutions. The GIFT Principles of Public Participation in Fiscal Policy referred to above, are at a sufficiently general level that they may be of relevance to the development of these tools in Italy.

This represents an impressive set of commitments that engage citizens directly both in the development and in the implementation of fiscal policies. A number of the commitments reflect an intention to go beyond simple public consultation, and provide for deeper forms of citizen engagement including citizen monitoring and direct involvement in decision making processes.

As noted, GIFT has facilitated, through the FOWG, numerous workshops involving ministries of finance and civil society experts from OGP member countries in discussion and debate on how and when to engage citizens across the budget and policy cycles - <http://www.fiscaltransparency.net/fowg/> In this fast-changing field there is much that officials and civil society practitioners can learn from sharing and discussing experiences and plans across countries. There would appear to be a good basis for collaboration between Italy and the OGP-GIFT FOWG in this area, and we would welcome the opportunity to explore this with relevant officials, including those in the Ministry of Finance and Economy.