

Improving the Performance of the Justice System

'Miglioramento Performance Giustizia' (MPG)



Published On: 17 June 2014

Organisation: Department of Public Administration

Country: Italy

Level of government: Central government

Sector: General public services, Public order and safety

Type: Digital, Organisational Design

Launched in: 2013

Overall development time: 5 years

Link to the innovation's website

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Description

"Improving the Performance of the Justice System" (MPG) is an initiative launched by the Public Administration Department in 2011 in order to support the Convergence Regions (ROC) and the judicial offices of these territories in the implementation of the interregional/transnational project "Dissemination of best practices in the Italian judicial offices" (DBP – started in 2008).

MPG, funded under the European Social Fund 2007-13, specifically monitors, evaluates and disseminates the results and the good practices implemented by the judicial offices involved in the DBP project, also comparing the evidences of ROC offices with those of other judicial offices (nationwide) involved in the DBP project.

A specific online platform "RisorseperlaGiustizia" was developed within the MPG initiative in order to present and promote all evidence in terms of offices involved, projects activated, practices and materials. The platform accessible at www.qualitapa.gov.it is freely available.

According to the last data (April 2014), the number of judicial offices involved in the DBP project and monitored by MPG is about 200 with more than 1 300 operative projects.

Why the innovation was developed

The problem before the implementation of the innovation can be described in terms of the length of the judicial trials, especially in the civil sector, as well as the level of the backlog. Connected with that situation is the modernisation gap of the judicial offices, first of all in terms of information communication technology (ICT) diffusion, and the lack of managerial competences. In this respect and taking into consideration that the critical items concerning the Italian civil justice have been often outlined by the European Commission and other international organisations, the DBP project aims at improving organisational competences in the judicial offices and developing the quality and efficiency of the judicial work processes, financing technical support to implement management innovations.

Objectives

Develop staff capacity, Improve effectiveness, Improve efficiency, Improve service quality

The objectives of the DBP project are:

- To increase the administrative and managerial competences of magistrates and administrative staff.
- To improve efficiency in terms of speediness of specific phases of the trials and in terms of total days needed.
- To increase the quality of the services, in terms of:
 - Accessibility for professional and the general public (e.g. accessibility via ICT).
 - Involvement of users and stakeholders in the quality evaluation of the services and adoption of citizens' charters.
 - Quality management improvement via the use of self-evaluation instruments (e.g. CAF model) and the adoption of ISO 9000 standards.
 - Social accountability through the publication of data regarding the performance of the offices.

In this framework, the MPG project aims to:

- Monitor the overall DBP system in its different stages.
 - Evaluate the implementation of the innovation projects in the judicial offices involved.
 - Analyse and disseminate good and leading practices in the judicial sector, both in the area of results for users and in the area of capacity building.
 - Build up communities of practices among magistrates/judges as well as administrative staff.
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Main beneficiaries

Government bodies, Government staff

- Direct beneficiaries of DBP: Judicial offices.
- Direct beneficiaries of MPG:
 - Judicial offices.
 - Regional and nationwide administration of the convergence objective.
 - Ministry of justice.
 - Other stakeholders such as the Bar Association.

Results

Efficiency

In terms of value for internal users, there is evidence of improved:

- Efficiency after the reorganisation of procedures and the optimisation of ICT instruments, inside and among internal units.
 - Efficacy of internal phases after the reengineering of inter-organisational procedures.
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Service quality

Accessibility:

In terms of value for citizens and companies, and professional users (lawyers), there is evidence for improved accessibility for the different categories of users, both in physical terms (e.g. user guides, service user offices, customer relationship management procedures, etc.), and in terms of e-government solutions.

Reliability:

In terms of value for internal users, there is evidence of improved quality in the management and repository of cases (reduction of errors, rapidity in finding cases, etc.).

Other:

Improvement of capacity of magistrates and staff in terms of:

- Monitoring of work processes and performance indicators analysis.
 - Project management techniques.
 - Organisational self-evaluation models and processes.
 - Change management techniques and processes.
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Other improvements

- The implementation of the DBP project is showing the realisation of a relevant number of good/ leading practices, and the improvement of organisational capacities in the offices.
- Regarding the MPG project, currently in the implementation phase, the main (preliminary) results are:
 - About 200 judicial offices and more than 1 300 operative projects involved in DBP have been monitored (data April 2014).
 - Four progress reports have been published at www.qualitapa.gov.it.
 - About 40 case studies on innovative practices in the justice sector have been published at www.qualitapa.gov.it.
 - An online platform www.risorseperlagiustizia.it has been released. The platform contains an updated database of the offices/ operative projects as well as interviews, news, case studies and other materials developed by the judicial offices involved in the DBP project.
 - Ten seminars/ workshops on the topic of innovation in the justice sector took place which involved magistrates and administrative staff.

Development

Design

As far as the MPG project is concerned, the problem of the lack of information about the progress of the DBP programme and the opportunity of disseminating the results and the lessons learned were underlined by the Department of Public Administration in close collaboration with the Ministry of Justice. The MPG project was launched in 2011 and is financed by EU structural funds.

Design time: 6 months

Testing

- Monitoring on the progress of the projects.
- Identification and subsequent dissemination of the experiences.
- Field surveys, face to face interviews and focus groups with magistrates and administrative staff.

Testing time: 6 months

Implementation

Tools used:

- The DBP project (financed under the European Social Fund 2007-13) was developed thanks to an institutional collaboration among the European Commission, the Italian Ministries of Labour and Justice, the Italian Public Administration Department and all Italian regions and autonomous provinces.
- For the monitoring and evaluation of the DBP project, a number of qualitative tools are used: Case studies analysis with on site visits and face to face interviews with judicial offices chiefs, magistrates, staff, consultants and users; content analysis based on the face to face interviews to the chiefs of the judicial offices; social mechanism analysis regarding the strategies sustaining the innovation processes.
- Draft of documents on international experiences about the evaluation of the judicial organisations' performance (instruments and processes).

Resources used:

- Direction: 2 public officials of the Public Administration Department.
- Technical Staff: 1 project leader (senior); 1 expert in programme evaluation (senior); 2 experts in methodology of social research (1 middle management staff, 1 junior); 3 researchers (2 middle management staff, 1 junior); 1 expert in communication (junior).
- Administrative staff: 3 people (1 full time equivalent).

Implementation time: 2,5 years

Diffusion

- Website and online database (Risorse per la giustizia www.risorseperlagiustizia.it).
- Developing and continuously updating an online database. The database contains data about the projects developed by single judicial offices financed by the national programme DBP. Users can find information using keywords or selecting projects in terms of type of offices, geographical area, themes, etc.
- Initiatives for the dissemination of good practices: National and local conferences, online publication of case studies, documents, and interviews.
- Online publication of a monthly newsletter.
- Forum PA, the Italian national exhibition of public administrations: Organisation of seminars concerning the presentation of experiences and good practices.
- Presentations during the training courses of the Italian School for Judicial Administrative Staff (Scuola per il personale del Ministero della giustizia) and the Italian National School of Magistrates (Scuola superiore della magistratura).

Diffusion time: 2,5 years

Challenges and solutions

- The DBP project encountered many challenges:
 - The difference in the organisational capacities among the judicial offices due to the prevalence of a juridical culture, and the differences among territories in terms of institutional cooperation.
 - At the beginning, the weak competencies of the consultant companies with regard to the organisation and the specificities of the justice system; after a first period, companies improved the capacity to adapt managerial ideas to juridical offices.
 - The difficulties of coordination between the central and regional administration.
 - The identification of leaders inside the offices committed to the project and with an innovative orientation.
- The MPG Project, currently in its third year of implementation, is dealing with these challenges:
 - Change the juridical culture, introducing managerial and customer based perspectives, mainly connected with a policy cycle framework, a project management framework and a change management framework.
 - The involvement of magistrates and administrative staff in organisational innovation.
 - The adoption of theoretical models to explain change and diffusion of innovations in the public sector and the judicial system.
 - The diffusion of information to beneficiaries who are located all along the national territory.
 - The constitution of communities of innovators to foster a culture of organisational change.

Lessons Learned

Lessons Learned

The monitoring and evaluation of the DBP is showing evidence for the:

- Relevance of management and organisational capacities to sustain change efforts in the local offices.
 - Relevance of the leadership role of the offices' chief.
 - Relevance of a strong cooperation between magistrates and administrative staff in the management of trial procedures.
 - Relevance of a process management with an inter-organisational perspective involving all actors of a work process (public prosecutor, court of first instance, court of second instance, lawyer, other institution).
 - Relevance of a customer perspective for the management of judicial services, selecting specific parts of functions that can be conceptualised as direct services to users, both professional users and general users.
 - Relevance of triggering specific strategies to foster the innovation process (positive feedback, naming and shaming, promoting experimentation and attitude towards change, promoting a common syllabus about a new framework that is useful to describe organisational characteristics and opportunities, cumulative learning/learning curve, providing direct assistance, conducive environment, teamwork with leaders and co-workers, endorsing performance promoting subjects, etc.).
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Conditions for success

- Constitution of 'communities of practices' to improve the exchange of knowledge among management disciplines and both magistrates and administrative staff.
 - Improvement of monitoring and evaluation studies to foster coordination and partnership among the actors involved.
 - Mixed strategy to maintain both central coordination and local autonomy to develop innovative ideas.
 - Analysis of the conditions to foster the sustainability of good/ leading practices, and specific projects to improve diffusion and transferability because of the important differences between Italian territories offering different opportunities in involving partners in innovation processes.
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