

2019 Dataset of Participatory Budgeting in Italy

Abstract: The dataset provides data on Italian Municipalities' policies pertaining to participatory budgeting (PB). The dataset comprises information on municipalities with a population of over 2,000 inhabitants, and is composed as follows: Municipality ISTAT Code (ID), Municipality Name (MN) Province, Region, Population (2011 Census), Researcher (IR), Mapping randomized process (MR), Mapping Method (MM), twenty dummy variables identifying Municipalities running PB in a given year (y1994, y2002 to y2020), Number of years with PB (TOT).

Overall, the dataset comprises 4517 units (with 467 missing), for a total of 4050 mapped municipalities.

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Publication year: 2021

Date of Data Collection: 2020 (May-July, August-December)

Geographic coverage: Italy / IT

Population: Italian Municipalities (inhabitants over 2000), 4517 units

Subject area: Political Science, Political sociology

Codebook: 31/12/2020

Content

Municipality ISTAT Code (ID): Unique identifier ISTAT code (nominal variable)

Municipality (MN): Italian name of the Municipality as per 2019 record (nominal variable)

Province: Two-letter code of the ISO 3166-2:IT standard identifying the province or the metropolitan city where the Municipality is located (nominal variable)

Region: Name of the Region in Italian (nominal variable)

Population: Inhabitants according to the 2011 ISTAT Census (interval variable)

Researcher (IR): Code to identify the researcher who performed the mapping. The code runs from 1 to 12.

Mapping using Random procedure (MR): dummy variable, 1 for municipality mapped via randomization process to the given researcher (IR), 0 if the researcher performed the mapping as a substitute, hindering the randomized process.

Mapping Method (MM): A variable identifying the mapping strategy adopted: stringent mapping (value 1) vs. loose mapping (value 2) – see below for further specifications.

Presence of PB (y1994): Dummy variable identifying municipality running a PB in 1994

Presence of PB (y2002): Dummy variable identifying municipality running a PB in 2002

Presence of PB (y2003): Dummy variable identifying municipality running a PB in 2003

Presence of PB (y2004): Dummy variable identifying municipality running a PB in 2004

Presence of PB (y2005): Dummy variable identifying municipality running a PB in 2005

Presence of PB (y2006): Dummy variable identifying municipality running a PB in 2006

Presence of PB (y2007): Dummy variable identifying municipality running a PB in 2007

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Presence of PB (y2009): Dummy variable identifying municipality running a PB in 2009

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Presence of PB (y2011): Dummy variable identifying municipality running a PB in 2011

Presence of PB (y2012): Dummy variable identifying municipality running a PB in 2012

Presence of PB (y2013): Dummy variable identifying municipality running a PB in 2013

Presence of PB (y2014): Dummy variable identifying municipality running a PB in 2014

Presence of PB (y2015): Dummy variable identifying municipality running a PB in 2015

Presence of PB (y2016): Dummy variable identifying municipality running a PB in 2016

Presence of PB (y2017): Dummy variable identifying municipality running a PB in 2017

Presence of PB (y2018): Dummy variable identifying municipality running a PB in 2018

Presence of PB (y2019): Dummy variable identifying municipality running a PB in 2019

Presence of PB (y2020): Dummy variable identifying municipality running a PB in 2020, this variable is not completely reliable (see methodological caveat)

TOT: Number of years with PB between 1994 and 2020

Sources

ID, Municipality, Province, Region

Official data retrieved from the ISTAT website (April 28, 2020)

Other

Data collected by the “OIBP - Osservatorio Italiano sui Bilanci Partecipativi” research group

Methodology

Sampling frame

The mapping procedure adopted a sampling frame for Italian municipalities based on the ISTAT list

of municipalities in the year 2019 (December 31), setting a threshold limit for inhabitants. The whole list thus comprises some municipalities that later merged into new Municipalities in 2018, 2019 and 2020, along with the latter. The exclusion criterion was set at 3,000 inhabitants (and later decreased to 2,000) and it is based on the assumption of limited PB practices among small municipalities (Sintomer and Allegretti 2009, Stortone 2019). Moreover, we set a time focus on 2018-2020, although the researcher could record all past experiences (i.e. before 2018).

During the period May 1 – July 31, 2020, we divided all municipalities above 3,000 inhabitants into 12 groups via randomized selection. A group of municipalities was assigned to each researcher. By the end of the period, some groups had not concluded because some researchers opted out and thus municipalities were reallocated (see var. MR). During the period September 1 – October 15, 2020, we lowered the threshold to 2,000 inhabitants, by virtue of the work of an additional researcher (IR=5). This feature has to be duly considered when running statistics.

Mapping protocol

According to the 4/2004 law, every municipality has to implement its own website; moreover, PB is a policy which needs to be advertised in all possible form (Bassoli 2010, Bassoli and Amura 2003), therefore we could assume that every recent PB was advertised online. We based our mapping on this assumption and gathered information on the presence of PB using a standard procedure of web-search based on keywords. We opted for the Google™ search-engine because it is the most widely used search engine and the one with a stronger user-led learning algorithm.

We then identified the crucial key words composed of two possibilities for the first mapping level (more stringent) (variable MM=2):

- “Comune di + [name of the municipality]” & “Bilancio Partecipativo”
- “Comune di + [name of the municipality]” & “Bilancio Partecipato”

and two possibilities for the second mapping level (looser) (variable MM=1):

- Comune di [name of the municipality] & “Bilancio Partecipativo”
- Comune di [name of the municipality] & “Bilancio Partecipato”

While the first key-word string produced a limited number of pages, because it forced the web-engine to acknowledge the presence of the Municipality in a rather stringent manner, the second allows the web-engine to produce less relevant and more abundant results. Those researchers following the looser approach previously used the stringent one. Therefore, the loose approach has been used only for some municipalities. Every search produced one or more pages as results.

The methodology then required the researcher to spend 10 minutes on each Municipality to reach a positive result, focusing either on the first page or on the first few pages. Thereafter, either the researcher moved to the next case, or she could dwell on the documentation produced by the PB in the municipality. All the information obtained on the web was inserted in two documents: the database and a second document gathering qualitative information about the experience, which is available upon request (see oibp.bipart.it).

Methodological caveat

The main issue regarding PB relates to its structure as a budget cycle (Sintomer and Allegretti 2009, Bassoli 2012). During PB citizens discuss the allocation of the budget of the following year. The main issue is thus the label used to define the PB. Some Municipalities may use the year of the discussion as “naming year”, others opt for the budget year. Moreover, information (regardless of

the name of the practices) often spans two or more years.

An example may clarify this point. The city of Mantua ran a PB for a couple of years between 2017 and 2020. Information can be gathered online under the label “Bilancio Partecipativo 2017/18” (BiPart 2018) even though the process was decided in 2017, involved the citizens in 2018 and citizens discussed the 2019 budget. The preferred project was implemented in 2019 and inaugurated on the 10th of November (Comune di Mantova 2019a). Similarly, according to the Municipal webpage (Comune di Mantova 2019b, BiPart 2019), the “Bilancio Partecipativo 2019” managed funds allocated to the 2020 budget, but the project was implemented in 2021 (Comune di Mantova 2021).

Publications

The dataset can be found on the webpage of the Osservatorio Italiano sui Bilanci Partecipativi (OIBP): oibp.bipart.it

The dataset was used for the first time in the following publication:

Allegretti, Giovanni, Matteo Bassoli, and Greta Colavolpe. 2021. ‘On the Verge of Institutionalization? Participatory Budgeting Evidence in Five Italian Regions’. *Финансовый журнал-Financial Journal* 13(2).

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Sintomer, Yves, and Giovanni Allegretti. 2009. *I bilanci partecipativi in Europa: nuove esperienze democratiche nel vecchio continente*. Roma: Ediesse.

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