Maturity in Project Management Series
This is the eleventh of a series of articles on PPPMM.

Maturity in Project Management: The Italian Experience
Andrea Fraticelli, Russell D. Archibald and Darci Prado

A research project on PM Maturity was conducted in Italy during 2009/2010 using the same resources already used in Brazil, namely the Prado PM Maturity Model and the web site at http://www.maturityresearch.com/novosite/index.html. The initiative proved successful by achieving a significant number of participating organizations, mainly due to the total dedication of members of ISIPM (Istituto Italiano di Project Management). The average maturity score for Italy for that period was 2.86, a little higher than the Brazilian one, 2.61 for the same period.

1. Istituto Italiano di Project Management® - Who We Are?

The “Istituto Italiano di Project Management®” (“Italian Institute of Project Management®”, or “ISIPM”) is a non-profit association founded in October 2005 in Rome, Italy, in order to create a new entity in the Project Management arena with specific reference to ICT (Information & Communication Technology), Public Administration, and the so-called “Agile” approaches. The board of directors of ISIPM includes professionals from different fields: consulting, Italian and international private companies, public organization and others. ISIPM promotes the growth of Project Management culture among all stakeholders in their different roles: customers, suppliers, sponsors, consultants and participants in projects.

ISIPM is an independent association that promotes all the best practices and methodologies already recognized worldwide (PMI, IPMA, Prince2). Moreover it serves as REP (Registered Education Provider) of the Project Management Institute.

In order to sponsor educational and an entry level approach to Project Management, in 2008, ISIPM introduced a basic certificate in the discipline, with a formal examination and passing test. Until now, ISIPM has published three volumes for supporting its introductory certification policy for developing Project Management in organizations. Several cooperation agreements have been signed with Italian business schools and other learning institutes in order to provide training leading to the ISIPM basic certification “ISIPM-Base®”. As of June 2014, more than 3,743 have obtained this certification, which

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1 The Project Management Maturity series of articles mainly by Russell Archibald & Prof Darci Prado is based on their extensive research on this topic in Brazil, the United States and other countries. Russ is one of the pioneers in the project management field and the originator of the Archibald Project Categorization Model. Darci is the developer of the Prado Project Management Maturity Model which has been successfully implemented by many organizations in Brazil. More about this model and related research can be found at http://www.maturityresearch.com. This month’s article is co-authored by Andrea Fraticelli and incorporates Italian experience with their model.
may be suitable for advancing in further project management qualifications. At the same date, the membership of the Institute is near to 1,000.

2. Discovering the Prado Model In Italy

According to its mission, ISIPM organizes several events and seminars each year and some of these also have international scope, with very recognized speakers. In November 2008 ISIPM had Russell D. Archibald as keynote speaker. The focus of the speech was on the role of Project Management as leverage for developing and improving the performances of Public Administration and related organizations. The international event in 2009 was dedicated to maturity models in Project Management, with Darci Prado as keynote speaker.

The reason to focus the 2009 event on the Prado model was to identify a complete and "agile" model for Italy, following an analysis of the many Project Management Maturity Models (PMMM) on the market. In fact, it’s been recognized that in Italy it is a priority, for many organizations, to start a “small steps route” towards an ever better management of their projects. The Prado model, in addition to be in line with the characteristics mentioned above, also has the great advantage of being scalable, allowing analysis of the entire organization or even a single "function" (or division). The interest in Project Management Maturity Models has derived from the following consideration: why enhance and certify the skills of Project Management of the main actors in a Project Management System if the environment in which they operate remains highly immature? It's recognized that the cultural and educational dimensions, although important, cannot allow the creation and maintenance of a "Project Management System" without simultaneous actions on other dimensions such as the Project Management methodologies, the information system, the organizational structure and skills. It’s also necessary to check if top corporate executives are aware of their own organizations’ current maturity level.

3. Italian Maturity Research

To address these objectives, following the 2009 event, ISIPM launched a nationwide research on the maturity level in Project Management of the Italian organizations2. In collaboration with Darci Prado and Russell Archibald, a maturityresearch.com Italian section was created (http://www.maturityresearch.com/novosite/it/index.html), in order to allow for the maturity evaluation through an online questionnaire, receiving the results in a direct and confidential way. Moreover every organization had access to the results from the researches carried out in Brazil in previous years, permitting them to identify similar areas and to make appropriate comparisons. The objectives of the research, among others, aimed to give the organizations the ability to reflect about their strengths and identify the yet untapped potentiality in Project Management, in relation to their strategic objectives. The research was divided into two phases. The first pilot phase had the objective of verifying the methodological and technological approach validity in order to use them in the next massive research phase. A limited set of respondents, already experts in Project Management, took part in the pilot phase, completed in correspondence with the 2009 international event. After verifying the assessment system solidity and efficiency, ISIPM opened the Italian section of the website run by Darci Prado, containing the online questionnaire and guidelines for compiling it, officially launching the second phase on the national target. During the site opening period, ISIPM

2 ISIPM research team members: Compagnoni Debora, De Trane Flavio, Filosto Barbara, Fraticelli Andrea, Guida Pier Luigi, Introna Vito, Mastrofini Enrico, Minelle Federico (Project Manager), Monassi Maurizio, Rambaldi Eugenio, Salvemini Andrea, Trasarti Graziano.
has provided operational and methodological support to the respondents through publishing on its website (isipm.org) a brief compiling guide and the link to access the questionnaire, activating an email help desk and, if requested, providing direct support to the organizations. The final closure of the research, in addition to the final processing of the data collected, has taken place at the end of June 2010. The final results and the related report of synthesis have been presented in the official closure research event in Italy [Ref. 5] and in the 10th International Workshop in Project & Programme Management & 5th International Research Seminar in Project & Programme Management at SKEMA Business School in Lille, France, 2010 [Ref. 6].

3.1 Results

At the end of the planned six months in which the site was opened, the set of respondents was composed of 62 companies, operating in an environment significantly oriented to projects and belonging to a wide range of organizations, both in relation to the type (private enterprise, government, third sector NGOs), to the industry sector and to the organizational size. The final synthetic result was 2.67, with maximum and minimum values respectively equal to 4.61 and 1.31. The final research value obtained was slightly lower than the 2.86 obtained during the pilot phase, under the specific conditions described above. Figure 1 shows the distribution of the maturity level values, in relation to the corresponding number of respondents included in the specific level of maturity.

The overall maturity analysis shows that about two thirds of the respondents are classified, in order, in levels 2 and 3, while a smaller part is classified in levels 4 and 1. Notice that there are no respondents placed in level 5. The presence of more than 50% of organizations in the levels "Initial " or "Known", highlights a general condition of weak compliance towards the Project Management which would require, in contrast, a more structured approach in order to catch its strategic and
operational benefits. Another important highlight is the nearly symmetrical distribution centered between the level 2 and 3. This configuration shows that the Project Management cultural condition is still close at the initial stage. A culturally advanced environment should indeed position the apex of the symmetrical Gaussian at level 3 or, in the most virtuous cases, moved forward and symmetrical between the level 3 and 4, with a tail to the initial level. It should be underlined, however, the growth trend to higher levels highlighted in subsequent surveys. In these levels the culture of Project Management is rooted and applied daily and successfully in the business processes.

3.1.1 Adherence to Dimensions

Similarly, in Figure 2 is shown an analysis of adherence for each dimension in the Prado Model, detailed for each maturity level. Globally, taking the average of the aggregated values obtained for every specific dimension, it appears that the adherence on “Technical Competence” and “Methodology” turns out to be good (adherence > 40 %). The remaining dimensions placing themselves to a reasonable level (adherence > 20%), with minimum values recorded corresponding to the "Strategic Alignment" and “Behavioral Competence”.

![Figure 2 - Maturity by Dimensions and Levels](image-url)

The results obtained highlight some interesting aspects:

- **Weaker areas**
  - **Strategic Alignment**: Project Managers or Sponsors seem to be not aligned with the business. This fact could be probably derived from the imperfect communication of corporate strategies by the top management;
Behavioral Skills: Project Management seems to act primarily on procedures, methods, tools and facilities, rather than on people and their proper management;

- **Stronger areas**
  - **Organizational Structure**: the corporate organizational structures appear to be flexible and able to adapt to the specific needs of the projects they handle. The functional structure solution is still adopted but mainly in very specific areas;
  - **Methodology**: an organized and systematic approach to Project Management is detected. The methods used by the organizations often are derived from Project Management literature while, in other cases, they use a proprietory and customized methodology in order to manage their specific needs;
  - **Computerization**: the importance of IT is recognized for supporting the projects’ management and the related information. Together with a good mastery of the methodology, the computerization represents an added value;

- **Excellent areas**
  - **Technical Competence**: the key roles of technical and contextual expertise are confirmed as primary elements in order to fulfill properly the business objectives. It’s recognized that the organizations can achieve excellence only through an appropriate integration between the mastery of their own context and the internal and external factors management. Essential element in order to reach this goal, however, remains the participation and the proper management of human resources.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Maturity Level “Known”</th>
</tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Technical &amp; Context Competence</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Remaining dimensions.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Weaker areas</strong>: Behavioural Compet., Strategic Alignment</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
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<tr>
<th>Maturity Level “Standardized”</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Almost all dimensions.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Stronger areas</strong>: Technical &amp; Context Competence</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Behavioural Competence, Strategic Alignment</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Maturity Level “Managed”</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Technical &amp; Context Competence, Organizational Structure, Methodology</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Computerization, Strategic Alignment, Behavioural Competence</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 1 - Dimensions adherence by maturity levels

3.1.2 Deployment by Organization Type and Project Category

The set of respondents is composed for the most part by private sector companies and the organizations that are most represented operate in areas where Project Management traditionally is a consolidated part of the corporate culture, i.e. ICT and consulting services, the latter understood as a provider of Project Management skills for the clients. The project types most represented are included in the information systems area within which, applying the Archibald project categorization definition, the software development projects are closest to the average, but less than other categories such as telecommunications, defense and R&D. Analyzing the data by type of organization, it’s evident that the maturity level of private organizations is superior to other types of organizations. This consideration is particularly true for contexts referring to organizations that qualify themselves as "small", as shown later on, and operating in consulting and training areas.
Conversely the same evaluation index appears to be significantly less than the average within Public Administration organizations. This result, however, should be considered carefully with respect to the limited sample represented by public companies.

### 3.1.3 Deployment by Business Type

Specific considerations can be derived from Figure 5, regarding the maturity level registered by organizations operating in the consulting business. Typically, this sector is the one in which knowledge of industry, product and methodologies (including Project Management) are very detailed and specific in order to transfer them to the customers, although, in general, the typical delivery focus of consulting organizations usually doesn’t allow them to perform in order to fully exploit the advantages of management by projects. A similar consideration can be made for organizations operating in the public sector. Even in this case the culture and knowledge of Project Management principles are adequate, but often do not turn into operational practices. The visible effect on the results shown above, is a very high value at level 2, oriented to the recognition of Project Management cultural aspects in the organization, which doesn’t correspond to an appropriate value in level 3, oriented to the recognition of aspects related to the application of the methodology. This is a point of attention because if Project Management culture doesn’t generate operating practices, it will not be able to affect the organization’s behavior and the maturity level. Another interesting aspect is related to the ICT sector maturity level, which shows results slightly higher than the value registered in the construction and industrial production areas. This fact can probably be explained because in these last two sectors the assessment evaluation can be considered more accurate thanks to the more detailed planning tools and the quantitatively resources and costs estimation that are prevalent there. The Project Manager, in these areas, takes advantage, for example, of the “bill of quantities” that many productions use and that in ICT is almost entirely lacking.
3.1.4 Usage Time

The last series of evaluations, as shown below, concerns the relationship between maturity and, on one side, the period needed for introduction of practices and structures supporting the Project Management approach, and, on the other side, the economic results and the personnel of the responding organizations.

The bubble graphs highlight the following correlations:

- There is a direct correlation between the years of practice in Project Management and the maturity level. The Figure 6 graph, in fact, shows that the organization average maturity level is much greater if the Project Management function has been implemented for over 5 years. This evidence allows to sustain that the application of Project Management principles positively affect the organization business and its overall efficiency over time;

- A similar consideration can be made by considering the years of specific support structures establishment such as the PMO, and Governance Committees. Specifically, the average maturity level results are much greater if the PMO and/or the Governance Committees have existed for at least 5 years (Figure 7 and Figure 8). This temporal threshold, empirically measured, could be set as the minimum time that allows the organization to be aware of Project Management and more generally of its importance and its interoperability. It is observed, however, that many companies don't have internal structures of PMO and Governance Committees.
In general, it appears evident that the benefits of Project Management techniques implementation require a minimum time period of application, necessary to assimilate them and to get a real effect on the maturity level.

3.1.5 Organization Size

Finally there can be observed an inverse correlation between billing classes, number of employees and maturity level. In particular, it appears that organizations with less financial turnover and fewer employees have reached a greater maturity degree. This evidence is certainly justified by the fact that organizations with limited resources must necessarily make efficient their processes and methodology, in order to take advantage of their reference market opportunities.
3.2 What We Learn From These Results

The trends and data correlations described above, could be used by each organization to compare their own assessment results with respect to the average performance recorded in the specific reference sector or in comparable maturity conditions. If the organization recognizes some weak areas that need to improve, it’s considered important to adopt an orderly approach to the improvement, in order to achieve a sustainable level of maturity over time. In this sense, the first step of an organization that wants to improve should be to bring all the dimensions of analysis values mutually consistent and uniform as much as possible, and then subsequently to grow in an orderly and incremental way. This method allows the benefits distribution resulting from an improvement at all organization levels, without creating areas of excellence in an average insufficient or poor organizational condition. The organization can decide if the maturity level reached is admissible and corresponds to its needs. If not, it should identify and analyze its own strengths and weaknesses (Project Management SWOT Analysis), which will contribute to build up an improvement plan aligned to the overall organizational strategy and business objectives. The experience gained in some improvement simulations carried on by voluntary organizations adopting the Prado model, has highlighted three key elements to reach success on the improvement path:

- Keep the management committed;
- Plan and communicate widely;
- Be persistent.

The experience of this research has allowed us to highlight lessons learned and "systemic errors", whose improvement can add value to potential new future research or simply during the maturity assessment according to the model Prado. Here are some considerations:

- **Respondents tend to be optimistic**: the final result, when possible, should be derived from a debate in order to bring out different points of view and different experiences;
• **Background and reliability of the assessment**: to obtain meaningful results the organization respondents should define clearly the scope of the assessment and customize the terminology and concepts found in the model with their own context;

• **Awareness of questions**: although the model Prado is basically self explanatory, it’s useful to support the questionnaire with operating compilation instructions. Alternatively, it is possible to carry out the assessment with qualified personnel.

Although at this time a second research phase is not planned in Italy, a growing interest in the Prado model for the evaluation of the organizations maturity level has been observed. ISIPM is directly and indirectly involved in activities of experimental implementation of the Prado model such as:

• Evolution of the aforementioned research with a limited sample of organizations in order to more deeply analyze the assessment results to build up an improvement path;

• Scientific and methodological support in the implementation of the improvement plan based on the Prado model;

• Assess the organization’s or specific unit’s maturity level, through interviews or assessments carried out directly by them, and subsequent production of a synthesis result report.

It is also interesting to note the emergence of initiatives not directly related to ISIPM regarding the evaluation of the maturity of managing projects according to the Prado model [Ref. 10].

### 4. CASE STUDY

Among the direct application experiences of the Prado model in Italy we consider particularly interesting the assessment carried on by ISIPM assessors at the Italian Customs and Monopolies Agency ⁴ (referred to in the following case study only by the “Agency” or the “Organization”). In fact the results obtained, combined with the strategic mission of the industry involved and the complexity of the organizational context, make this case study an example of excellence in the application of Project Management.

The Italian Institute of Project Management® was requested by the Organization to support the assessment of its Project Management maturity level according to the Prado model, with the only focus on the Customs area. The organization operates in the Public Administration sector and can be categorized as “large size”, counting about 10.000 people. The Agency’s main activities are to:

• Control, investigate and check on the goods movement and the related internal taxes on international trade in order to verify the compliance with EU rules. These activities require controls on commercial traffic in real time. To ensure this, the Agency has adopted advanced management tools, developing a system of controls based on the most advanced techniques of risk analysis, such as the customs clearance service online which processes an average of an operation every 2 seconds;

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⁴ We want to thank for the great professionalism and availability the people who sponsored the initiative at the Agency (listed below) and all the people who kindly participated in the assessment.

**Teresa Alvaro:** Head of Central Directorate Technologies for Innovation  
**Antonio Romano:** Responsible of Management and Monitoring Office  
**Laura Calisti:** Project Manager (Management and Monitoring Office)  
**Luciano Rao:** Project Manager (Management and Monitoring Office)
• Check and monitor the trade, production and consumption of products and natural resources that are excisable;
• Illegal activities surveillance, such as traffic in drugs, weapons, cultural heritage assets, or counterfeit products not meeting the regulations about health and safety, as well as international trade in specimens of animal and plant species threatened with extinction, protected by the Washington Convention;
• Collection of statistical data for the preparation of the balance of trade reports;
• Commodity analysis for institutional purposes and offering services on the market in the industrial products, organic and inorganic foods, including genetically modified products and gemological materials.

The overall structure is composed of 2 Corporate Control Offices, 12 Central Departments, 1 Autonomous Service, 12 Regional Directorates, 80 Custom Offices, 175 Local Operative Sections and 15 chemical laboratories. There’s also a decision making group, not included in the official organization, which can be compared to a PMO. This “function” is established at the operative level, in order to improve the Project Management and the ICT decisions support.

The scope of the evaluation concerned 5 of the 12 Central Departments, so the results shown below must be read as overall aggregate values, with a specific focus on the cross department ICT projects. The implementation of ICT projects is usually supported by a unique technology partner, according to the rules laid down in the operating procedures established by the Organization, not included in this analysis by work hypothesis.

The correct application of the Prado model required a preliminary mapping of the terminology used in the organization and the one commonly used in the Project Management literature. The synthesis of the above activity is reported in Table 2.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Italian Customs and Monopolies Agency</th>
<th>Project Management Literature</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Project</td>
<td>Program</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sub Project</td>
<td>Project</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Point of Plan</td>
<td>Sub Project</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Objective</td>
<td>Task</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Operating Manager (RO)</td>
<td>Project Manager</td>
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<tr>
<td>IT manager (RI)</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

Table 2 – Terminological mapping

Similarly, it was necessary to define unambiguously the scope of the evaluation. To accomplish this, the following basic assumptions were set:

• Set the "Sub Project" as the minimum unit of reference. The “Point of Plan”, in fact, does not always have the complexity and dimension to be considered a real project;
• Analyze the ICT projects delivered within the Agency, excluding the interactions with the technological partner.
The assessment has been performed following the Prado model maturity evaluation methodology, and answering all 40 questions proposed by the questionnaire.

As a reminder, listed below are the specific topics that characterize each maturity level of Prado model:

- **Level 2**: acceptance of Project Management, basic training of human resources, organizational structure;
- **Level 3**: methodology (project planning, execution and control) and processes standardization;
- **Level 4**: lessons learned, quantitative performance analysis, processes continuous improvement, soft skills, strategic alignment;
- **Level 5**: recognition of excellence in adopting best practices.

### 4.1 Assessment Methodology

It should be noted that the assessment is strongly influenced by the organizational scope analyzed and by the extension of the evaluation, by considering the entire organization or a part of it. This, of course, depends on the purpose of the maturity detection activity, whose main objectives are:

- An evaluation summary of the Project Management maturity state;
- Identification of an improvement baseline plan, in line with the organizational development strategies.

In the present case study the assessment method has been driven by the following guidelines:

1. ISIPM assessor introduced the questionnaire clarifying the evaluation aspects and criteria, the working hypotheses and the scope delimitation. This has been done for every involved Department;
2. A single Project Manager (PM) with senior profile and experience in this role, introduced his own Department, with specific focus on organizational structure and business processes;
3. Every single Director compiled the questionnaire in presence of the PM, contextually doing a responses joint depth analysis;
4. Definition of a shared final answer for each question;

The assessment results are summarized as follows:

- The assessment resulted in a final convergence to the value 3.98;
- The substantial convergence of individual evaluations of PMs and Directors, may be considered positive as to the applicability of the method;
- The presence of figures with identifiable roles as “Project Manager”, broadly recognized by the Organization, appears aligned to the final outcome of the assessment.

In summary, the results provided by the questionnaire are graphically reported below (Figure 11 and Figure 12), respectively organized for Levels and Dimensions of analysis, with the overall maturity
level equal to 3.98. This index must be evaluated related to the preliminary nature of the assessment and the systematic permanence of a certain tolerance range of qualitative methods. In particular it’s considered a probable error of about ± 5%.

![Figure 11 - Maturity adherence by levels](image1)

![Figure 12 - Maturity adherence by dimensions](image2)

It is observed that the Agency demonstrates a consolidated and applied experience of Project Management fundamentals: the discipline is positively recognized and used by internal and external stakeholders. Even in a situation that can be defined "mature", there are specific areas to be improved in order to do a "quantitative leap", to get an incremental level of maturity and pursue a structured and spread growth of the discipline. In fact, a full value of level 4 would permit to acquire full advantage of a quantitative management of project performance by triggering a mechanism for continuous improvement of Project Management and the processes of the specific context.
4.2 Results Analysis and Recommendations

The final result is far superior to the average of the organizations operating in the direct public administration\(^4\), and shows specific areas of improvement for contributing to the development of Project Management discipline in the individual Departments and in the Organization itself. The analysis by level should be compared with the results of adherence provided by the method, as summarized in Figure 11. In particular it’s noted that, getting a synthetic index of maturity approximately equal to 4 and resulting the contents of Level 4 still potentially be improved, should be identified as a growth possibility by structuring and institutionalizing the factors corresponding to the same level. In this regard, for example, a potential improvement plan will allow to raise the actual maturity level to 4,30. This improvement path, possibly to be conducted with distinct phases, as shown in Figure 13, will enable the Organization to reach a similar configuration recorded for the other levels.

\(^4\) The assumption is based both on past ISIPM assessment experiences carried out in comparable contexts, and the results obtained by Darci Prado in Brazil, a country considered structurally and culturally comparable to Italy.

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**Figure 13 - Example of improvement plan**

**Improvement steps detail**

\(0 – I\): Technical-Context/Behavioural Competences  
\(I – II\): Methodology  
\(II – III\): Organizational Structure
In particular, the analysis by dimensions, to be compared with the results reported in Figure 12, permits us to go in depth in the following main points:

- **Technical & Context Competence (↓):** The Agency results show it to be extremely experienced on their own context and on Project Management topics. This is definitely true in the assessment scope analyzed (ICT projects), in which it’s highlighted a high level of efficiency in the application of these skills. This is not completely confirmed by other types of projects such as “business projects”, in which it was found a not yet complete or total diffusion of Project Management. This situation sometimes prevents achievement of the full potential of management by projects.

- **Methodology (↑):** Apparently to be improved in aspects like the collection and storage of data relating to the history of completed projects, lessons learned analysis and project failure causes analysis. These processes can be supported by the Project Management System (PMIS) currently implemented and perfectly working, in order to ensure the project performance quantitative management. It could be useful, as well, to compare the methodology currently adopted with custom models and methodologies available in the literature to get integration and enhancement opportunities.

- **Computerization (↑↑):** Aligned with the Agency, internal customer and technology partner mission. The management system tool of ICT projects has been implemented and regularly used by all stakeholders and is in charge of reporting the projects economic/time, rescheduling the activities and tasks, archiving projects document and used as a project collaboration platform. This has a positive effect on the cross directional projects management and control.

- **Organizational Structure (↓):** Potentially to be improved through the integration of the current "technical" PMO, devoted mainly to the governance of projects, with a structure or an organizational function, more oriented to the collection, synthesis and diffusion of procedures, organizational assets and tools related to each Agency Department or specifically to Project Management. It is also possible to suppose the "technical" PMO competencies extension, providing powers and tools in order to monitor and control the leveling of the resources allocated to the projects. This configuration will enable a greater internal costs optimization and more strategic alignment.

- **Behavioral Competence (↓↓):** Apparently to be improved through update training in soft skills disciplines applied to the Project Management. At the same time, people are adequate to complete successfully their own tasks, thanks to occasional training sessions and on personal experiences matured over time. In this way it could be improved this specific training level (internal and external to the Organization), that could result in an increased knowledge base, exportable to other Agency Departments involved in common projects.

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5 The symbology shown below has the purpose of synthesizing graphically a qualitative judgment of the maturity degree detected for each dimension, in order to associate the potential opportunity for improvement:

\[ \begin{array}{c|c|c|c}
\text{Symbol} & \text{Very High} & \text{High} & \text{Medium} & \text{Low} \\
\hline
\downarrow \downarrow & \downarrow & \uparrow & \uparrow & \uparrow \uparrow \\
\end{array} \]
Strategic Alignment (↑↑): It’s almost perfectly in line with the Organization requirements. This fact is mainly due to the constraints imposed by its institutional mission. The pursuit of an adequate level of strategic alignment is however strongly supported by the recognition, consolidation and implementation of Project and Program Management principles.

In general it is also useful to highlight the following additional aspects:

1. The level of standardization, documentation and execution of management processes related to ICT projects is heavily consolidated, as noted by the score registered in level 3. Such a condition is undoubtedly facilitated by the high degree of Project Management knowledge and awareness (level 2) within the Departments and the Organization itself. However, although not within the scope in this assessment, some aspects related to the standardization of non-ICT project management appear to be improvable. This objective could be fulfilled through the introduction of guidelines, methods and tools most recognized, structured and participated by the Organization.

2. The weakest values of “Organizational Structure” and “Behavioral Skills” dimensions can be interpreted as a signal of a potential need to renew the “management by projects” approach. In particular it’s pointed out that a typical Public Administration contractualistic approach exists towards external actors, and a procedural approach towards the internal actors. Maybe the application of a much more focused leadership/sponsorship approach and on widespread recognition of shared roles within the project, could bring more added value overall results.

3. There are moderate opportunities to improve to very high indices of maturity, as seen in the example. This could be obtained by consolidating a state which is already satisfactory and setting in aspects of performance quantitative management as catalysts of the continuous improvement process.

4.3 Lessons Learned

The assessment experience highlighted some lessons learned that could be useful to the continuous improvement of the maturity detection process. Two of the most interesting evidences are:

- Without prejudice to the essential validation of the responses performed by the Directors or the sector Manager, it’s considered fundamental to have a preliminary questionnaire compilation carried out by directorate operational staff involved in managing projects. It was find out from ISIPM previous assessment experiences that the heterogeneity of the profiles involved in the compilation turns out to be a good thing, because it allows to analyze the Project Management maturity from both points of view: those directly involved in managing the projects, and the recipients of the project deliverables.

- The presence of a “tutoring” figure inside the organization, combined with the sponsorship of the executive figure of the reference sector, constitute essential prerequisites to achieving the initiative success.
5. Conclusions

The most important experimental evidence that has emerged from the research is that the results and the related considerations seem to validate the applicability of the Prado model even in the Italian context, and ISIPM is proud to be the first organization in Italy to sponsor such a type of research. The good number of participants registered in 6 months is an index of a latent interest in this specific Project Management branch. This statement is enforced by in the maturity assessment activities carried on by ISIPM in a number of organizations. In particular, the case study described above shows a real application of a Project Management maturity assessment session, highlighting the Prado model’s full potential and ease of use. Our experience proved that the Prado model is definitely an excellent tool to have a first overall organization maturity screening and to get awareness of your own potential. It’s also a reliable monitoring instrument during the improvement path, in order to measure the micro and macro enhancements achieved by the organization.

References

2. http://www.assirep.it/
3. www.maturityresearch.com

This is the eleventh of a series of articles on PPPM Maturity. Click on these titles to read the previous ten articles:

Feb. 2014: The Importance of Knowing Your Project, Program, and Portfolio Management Maturity
Mar. 2014: Foundations of the Prado-PM Maturity Model
Apr. 2014: PM Maturity for Project Categories
May 2014: Maturity, Success and Competitiveness
June 2014: The Brazilian Experience: General Results
July 2014: Impact of PPPM Maturity on the Success of Software Application Dev. Projects in Brazil
August 2014: Impact of PPPM Maturity on the Success of Construction Industry Projects in Brazil
Sept. 2014: Impact of PPPM Maturity on the Success of Organizational Change Projects in Brazil
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