

Project Management Update from Italy

The National Plan of Recovery and Resilience and Project Management in Italy during the Pandemic ¹

End of May 2021



By Alessandro Quagliarini

International Correspondent for PM World Journal

Rome, Italy

Introduction

This Report focuses on the largest Italian project plan from the second post-war period to the present day, i.e. the National Plan of Recovery and Resilience (NPRR), and on the evolutions of Project Management in Italy during the pandemic situation.

The National Plan of Recovery and Resilience

Since it has been globally recognized that Italy was the first European Country that had to support and to suffer the initial dramatic pandemic impacts, so generating also a quantity of painful lessons learned in a situation characterized by the unavailability of vaccines, specific therapies and medicines, and even the needed quantities of personal protective equipment, the European Union assigned to Italy a substantial amount of funds

¹ How to cite this work: Quagliarini, A. (2021). Project Management Update from Italy: The National Plan of Recovery and Resilience and Project Management in Italy during the Pandemic, report, PM World Journal, Vol. X, Issue VI, June.

(i.e. 191,5 billion Euros, the major part in long-term loans, and a minor part in straight grants) from the European "Next Generation Europe" (NGEU) program, in order to invest in post-pandemic projects. Therefore, in order to have that assignment confirmed, Italy delivered to the European Community its "Recovery Plan" named "National Plan of Recovery and Resilience" ([PNRR](#)).

The PNRR consists of six Missions, which correspond to the six Pillars of the NGEU (i.e. digitization, innovation, competitiveness, culture; green revolution and ecological transition; infrastructure for sustainable mobility; education and research; inclusion and cohesion; health) and of sixteen Components.



The six Missions are as follows:

- **Mission 1 - Digitization, innovation, competitiveness and culture.** It consists of three components and targets the digital modernization of the country's communications infrastructure, both in the public administration and in the production system. A component is dedicated to the sectors that most characterize Italy and define its image in the world, i.e. tourism and culture (total amount is 40,32 billion Euros)
- **Mission 2 - Green revolution and ecological transition.** It is structured in four components and aims to achieve the green and ecological transition of Italian society and economy consistently with the European green deal. It includes interventions for sustainable agriculture and circular economy, investment programmes and research for energy sources, the development of the hydrogen supply chain and sustainable mobility. It also provides for actions to save energy consumption in public and private real estate and, finally, initiatives to combat hydrogeological instability, for reforestation, for efficient water use and for improving the quality of inland and marine waters. (total amount is 59,47 billion Euros)

- **Mission 3 - Infrastructure for sustainable mobility.** It consists of two components and aims to strengthen and extend national high-speed rail and to strengthen the regional rail network, with a particular focus on southern Italy. It promotes the safety and the digital monitoring of viaducts and road bridges in areas of the territory that are considered at high risk. It includes investments for a competitive and sustainable harbor system in order to develop the traffics connected to the great lines of European communication and to add value to the role of the ports of southern Italy. (total amount is 25,40 billion Euros)
- **Mission 4 - Education and research.** It focuses on young people and addresses some of the most important structural issues to relaunch potential growth, productivity, social inclusion and adaptability to the future technological and environmental challenges. It consists of two components, it aims to build up the necessary skills by intervening in school and university courses, and it supports the right to education. It also provides for a substantial strengthening of the basic and applied research system and for the development of new tools related to technology transfer. (total amount is 30,88 billion Euros).
- **Mission 5 - Inclusion and cohesion.** It consists of three components and includes a structural review of active labor policies, a strengthening of employment centers and their integration with social services and private networks. It intervenes to support situations of social and economic fragility, and, specifically, families, parenting (to which the nursery plan, provided for in mission 4, contributes too) and persons with disabilities. Ultimately, the national strategy relevant the internal areas relaunched by the South 2030 plan is strengthened, by intervening on social infrastructure and measures in order to support a scenario of ecological transition. (total amount is 19,81 billion Euros)
- **Mission 6 - Health.** It consists of two components and is focused on two objectives: the strengthening of the territorial network and the modernization of technological equipment of the National Health Service with the strengthening of the electronic health record system and the development of telemedicine. (total amount is 15,63 billion Euros)

In order to make all above enforceable, the investment lines need a reform strategy that has to be developed according to three basic types of actions:

- horizontal reforms, which consist of structural innovations of the legal system that have to be suitable to improve the equity, the efficiency, the competitiveness and, in general, the development of the country. The two horizontal reforms that are needed are the reform of the public administration and the reform of the judicial system, including the reform of tax justice, both to be approved by 2022;

- enabling reforms, i.e. functional interventions that are finalized to support and to ensure the implementation of the Plan and, in general, to remove administrative, regulatory and procedural obstacles that may affect economic activities and the quality of services provided to citizens and businesses, also including measures to simplify and rationalize the legislation and to promote the competition;
- sectoral reforms relevant to each mission, which involve regulatory innovations in the specific areas of intervention, or economic activities, and which are aimed at introducing more efficient regulatory and procedural regimes in their respective sectors (e.g. procedures for the approval of projects on renewable energy sources, safety regulations for the use of hydrogen). Among those reforms, there is also the simplification of the procedures for the admission to the exercise of professions.

Definitively, the implementation of PNRR is an extraordinary opportunity for Italy: in addition, it may become a big break for the Italian project management community, and, in general, for the practice of the project management discipline.

Project Management in Italy during Pandemic

Only recently in Italy we started to experience a substantial reduction in COVID-19 infections – mainly due to the success of the vaccination plan – and, therefore, there is a new hope for a progressive increase of the social activities, including in-person professional meetings, training and exams, which in the last year have been drastically limited in favor of on-line events.

In fact, during the last years, the rise of project management in Italy was continuous, and this was confirmed also by the great success of the last edition of [PMexpo 2019](#); therefore, 2020 looked like a year of further consolidation of the discipline, but, unfortunately, at the beginning of March, the unexpected pandemic tragedy, the last similar experience of which was dated in Italy almost one century before, suddenly stopped quite all the face to face activities, and all of them that were considered “unnecessary” were suspended, or closed completely. Therefore, the impact due to the first lockdown on project management activities was very hard, also because, in general, all available resources were concentrated in facing emergency and in ensuring the continuity of primary goods and services: while consulting activities substantially continued using online communications, training courses and events stopped, and then had a slow recovery in online modes.

In this scenario, the Italian Institute of Project Management ([ISIPM](#)) had to start rethinking about new ways to carry on its activities and to continue to be the reference point for the project management community in Italy, even in this state of emergency. In general, the reaction was prompt and effective, and all activities substantially continued but switched to online modalities. For instance, in less than two months, ISIPM gave the opportunity to start taking online examinations for its basic certifications, in total safety and with high

quality standards: before being released, these online examinations were deeply tested with a group of school students, in order to properly evaluate the additional impacts – also in terms of difficulty – and, then, to make the preliminary adjustments that were needed. Since PMI acted successfully in a similar way too, the total pandemic impact on 2020's total number of project management certifications was limited to a decrease of less than one-third only², and this, considering all lock down periods, may be considered a very good result.

Another basic topic that deeply affected the relations within project management community was the inability of organizing in-person events: in 2020, the biggest event, PMexpo, was inevitably cancelled – but we can anticipate that in 2021 it will take place, surely online, and, if possible, in a mixed form! – and almost all other in-person events switched to the online mode. ISIPM, for instance, increased the frequency of its webinars up to three (sometimes four) online events per months, and this had an extraordinary success in terms of attendance, the number of which quadruplicated in comparison with previous monthly in-person (and, therefore, necessarily locally based) events.

In conclusion, we can say that the project management in Italy reacted promptly to the pandemic disruption, limited the damages, and substantially held its position. In addition, the lessons learned in terms of training, certification, and participation results constitute strong recommendations to also include online modalities in the future, and to integrate them properly with in-person modes in an innovative optimal combination.



² All statistics are a courtesy of ISIPM

About the Author



Alessandro Quagliarini

Rome, Italy



Alessandro Quagliarini, MScEng, PMP, MBA, is an experienced Program Manager, with more than 18 years of experience in the ICT sector. He holds a Master's Degree in Telecommunication Engineering from the University of Rome "Tor Vergata" and a Doctor's degree in Business Administration from the Bologna University Business School. He got both PMP® and ISIPM-Av® advanced certifications in Project Management, and he is also certified as an Information Management Systems Lead Auditor. He is a Member of the Board of the "Italian Institute of Project Management" (ISIPM) for ten years, and he is an Accredited Teacher in Project Management.

Alessandro is currently engaged in the "Digital Transformation" engineering and industrialization programs of the new Italian "Open Fiber" telecommunications network, with particular focus on the engineering of delivery and assurance processes for the provision of retail, business and industries customers, on the operational management and procurement support for the definition of specifications and contracts, on the definition of operating rules/ instructions for maintenance and of requirements for systems development, on the support to the commercial and regulatory lines for the definition of services and processes for customers (Other Licensed Operators and Industries), and on the definition and management of operations compliance with ISO Standards and International Best Practices.

As a Member of the ISIPM Board, he focuses his volunteer activities mainly on the cultural diffusion of the project management to young people – specifically to high school students and also staff, including teachers. As an ISIPM accredited teacher, he has taught project management in public and private institutions, in schools and in universities. He has experience in the organization of events and as a speaker in conferences, and also in proposing and managing EU-funded projects.

Alessandro can be contacted at a.quagliarini@gmail.com