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Submission

Application

Participant: Italy Team

PRELIMINARY QUESTIONS:

As you consider which initiative to put forward for the Open Government Awards, please consider the following questions:

(1) Does the initiative seek to improve a public policy or service?

● Yes ○ No

(2) If yes, does the initiative seek to improve the ability of citizens to provide feedback and/or to make decisions in the design or implementation of a policy or service? For examples of initiatives, see: http://www.opengovguide.com/topics/citizen-engagement

● Yes ○ No

If you have answered "Yes" to BOTH of these questions, please proceed with your application.

A. THE TEAM

The following information is required to capture a basic understanding of those responsible for your initiative and any partnerships that have helped you to meet your goals.

INITIATIVE NAME (required)

Provide the name of the initiative that your team is submitting for consideration by the judges of the 2014 Open Government Awards (under the inaugural theme, Citizen Engagement). If the initiative is operating under one or more alternate name(s), provide the name that is most commonly recognized.

OpenCoesione-Monithon

THE NOMINATION (required)

Begin by describing how this initiative was selected. For example, mention any nomination or consultation process held with civil society partners or others when selecting the initiative. Please offer your explanation of this process in 200 words or less.

The Italian Department for Public Administration, in consultation with the public administrations involved in the OGP activities, nominated four best practices for the selection of a national candidate to the OG Awards: "La Bussola della Trasparenza", "Partecipa!", "Sportelli in Rete" and "OpenCoesione-Monithon".

A public consultation took place from May 21st to May 28th 2014, through the website of the Presidency of the Council of Ministers www.partecipa.gov.it.

The invitation to vote and send comments was sent via email to Italian CSOs and government representatives.

Information and access to the survey were also available on the Department for Public Administration homepage (www.funzionepubblica.gov.it) and the representatives of the four nominees were invited to give notice of the survey through their networks.

Furthermore, a discussion about the consultation was developed in the Italian OGP online community hosted on the network Innovatori PA (Innovators in the Public Administration, www.innovatoripa.it).

The OpenCoesione-Monithon partnership (www.opencoesione.gov.it, www.monithon.it) was finally selected as the national candidate with 82% of the votes and received many comments of appreciation ("the most innovative citizen engagement project in Italy", "*promotes concretely the active involvement of citizens without the requirement of specific skills*", "praiseworthy because schools are involved").

GOVERNMENT POINT OF CONTACT (required)

Provide the name and title of a single point of contact for the purposes of communicating with your team. The person should be the most senior individual responsible for overseeing the application submission. Provide the phone number(s), email address(es), and physical address of your designated point of contact. You may provide alternate contact information, if it is a direct means for reaching the designated point of contact.

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CIVIL SOCIETY POINT OF CONTACT (strongly recommended)

We strongly encourage applicants to submit a joint application from a government agency and a civil society partner. If submitting a joint application, please provide the name and title of a single point of contact at the partner organization. If not, please be sure to focus on the "validation of claims" in Section B (see pg. A-3).

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OTHER PARTNERSHIPS (optional)

If you are partnering with one or more other government agencies, private sector entities, media, or other organizations, please list each partner. In 250 words or less, provide a brief narrative of the partnership, including the roles that each partner assumes in the initiative.

OpenCoesione and Monithon have been partnering with several non-governmental organizations, media and government agencies and have also been acknowledged by the **World Bank** as one of the most interesting examples of open government platforms worldwide. They are mentioned in the independent report on the **Italian OGP Action Plan** compiled by civil society organizations as highly valuable for improving democracy (www.funzionepubblica.gov.it/media/1082504/ogpitaly_pubbl.pdf) and quoted as best practice in the national guidelines on public sector information re-use released by the **Agency for Digital Italy** (http://www.agid.gov.it/sites/default/files/linee_guida/patrimoniopubblicolg2014_v0.6.pdf).

Main partnerships (selection)

Non-governmental organizations

- **Ahref Foundation**: supporting multimedia data journalism investigations (forthcoming)

- **Libera**: mapping, on the Monithon platform, of the cohesion projects that are directed to re-using properties seized from organized crime

- **ActionAid**: joint project on youth civic engagement and shared methodologies of civic engagement

Public bodies

-

Permanent Representation of the EC in Italy

: involvement of the Europe Direct network in the OpenCoesione School project and provision of material for European civic education lessons

- **Ministry of Education, University and Research**: OpenCoesione School project and publication of additional open data on schools

- **Union of the Chambers of Commerce**: citizen forum for active involvement in control of public expenditure and fight against corruption

- **Italian Association of Municipalities (ANCI-IFEL)**: analyses on the use of European Funds in metropolitan cities and other areas

Training

- **School of Administration of the Ministry of Interior**: training aimed at public servants of the managerial career (directors and vice-prefects)

- Data journalism courses with **Ahref Foundation** and **School of Journalism of the University of Salerno**

B. THE INITIATIVE

The Open Government Partnership (OGP) is prepared to celebrate a range of successful applicants to the Open Government Awards. This year's theme is "citizen engagement." To qualify for recognition, we need to understand the various elements of success for your initiative and its sustainability over time.

PROBLEM DEFINITION (required)

In 200 words or less, please identify the specific problem your initiative intended to solve. Why was this problem important to solve at a particular time and for the particular context in which you are working?

The lack of transparency and accountability on how public money is spent, and the resulting limited control that citizens may enact on the agencies in charge of the funds are among the main reasons for the slow pace in implementing cohesion policy and in understanding whether investment projects actually respond to local demand. Cohesion policy projects can raise the quality of life of citizens and provide a better environment for business to flourish: in Italy the overall cohesion budget, made up of national and European funds, is worth approximately 100 billion euros on 7-year periods, which on a yearly basis account for as much as 1% of GDP.

This explains why cohesion policy is a particularly hot topic in Italy, net contributor to the EU budget and the third biggest beneficiary country of the EU structural funds (after Poland and Spain). It is also among the countries with the lowest absorption rates of the funds.

Since 2012 OpenCoesione-Monithon are addressing these issues within an open government strategy by launching various awareness and citizen engagement initiatives, setting a standard for open data on public investment and also anticipating transparency issues in 2014-2020 EU regulations on the use of cohesion funds.

TARGET POPULATION (required)

In 100 words or less, please identify the target population who may benefit from this initiative. Highlight your understanding of the needs or demands of the target population that were addressed by your initiative.

Cohesion policy is nationwide. Nevertheless, OpenCoesione-Monithon address the following specific target groups:

- **Citizens and Civil Society Organizations** can find out projects of interest, follow implementation through monitoring updates and on-site visits and press forward public administrations towards the expected outputs and outcomes.

- **Public administrations**, as a result of data publication and citizen feedback, are urged to an efficient use of resources and an increased quality of monitoring data.

- **Students** learn how to become engaged citizens and contribute to an open government society.

- **Media** and **researchers** gain better understanding of territorial cohesion and supply shareable knowledge on cohesion policy.

INITIATIVE DESIGN (required)

In 350 words or less, describe your initiative's goals and objectives. Focus specifically on how the initiative was designed to meet those objectives. For example, identify stage(s) of the policy/service design or implementation when you solicited citizen participation. What kind of participation did you seek from citizens (e.g., feedback, consultation, joint decision-making, monitoring of activities, etc.)? Explain why this particular approach was best suited to achieve the initiative's goals. How did you encourage citizens to participate? Describe any innovations in the design of the initiative.

The OpenCoesione initiative started in 2012 as an open government strategy on cohesion policy, jointly operating on **all the three dimensions** of open government: transparency, participation and collaboration.

www.opencoesione.gov.it is the **first national portal** on cohesion policy with transparent information on each funded project: regular bimonthly updates have nurtured open data on almost 800k projects so far, which can be freely re-used (CC 3.0 BY-SA license) and explored interactively on the portal using maps, filters and detailed forms on projects and recipients.

Institutional collaboration went through the establishment of a "Technical Group" for dissemination and re-use of public data and information on cohesion policy, comprising delegates from all 30 public administrations in charge of Programmes, aimed at increasing the quality of monitoring data fed into OpenCoesione according to agreed data standards.

OpenCoesione data are published so as to promote greater public participation and to enable citizens to evaluate whether resources are employed effectively. **Monithon** (www.monithon.it) takes this effort to the next level.

Moni-thon (literally "monitoring marathon"), promotes citizen monitoring of cohesion policy through active involvement of communities and a shared methodology. The monithon idea, initially conceived by the OpenCoesione team, was presented to the "civic hacking" community and soon transformed into a civil society, independent initiative by an enthusiastic group of developers, activists and journalists.

Monithon has rapidly evolved from being an innovative new platform into a transferable civic engagement format. Through “monitoring marathons”, groups of citizens, sometimes under the guide of local CSOs, set out on explorations around their area, to gather information on specific projects of interest. In doing so, participants collect useful material to evaluate the effectiveness of public spending and practice bottom-up modes of control over public policies and collaboration with all the actors involved.

Monithons are also carried out within the OpenCoesione School project (www.ascuoladiopencoesione.it), an innovative course first experimented in 2013-14 school year, aimed at engaging high school students, through practice-based learning that results in a data journalism and storytelling project on OpenCoesione projects' impact. OpenCoesione School stems from the awareness that **education is the "necessary next stage" of open data for engagement**.

INITIATIVE OUTCOMES (required)

In 250 words or less, describe the intended outcomes and the actual outcomes that the initiative achieved. Who were the ultimate beneficiaries, and what benefits did they experience? For example, list any concrete improvements in policy, services, behaviors, or power relations between the government and citizens. Try to present your case from the perspective of the various stakeholders involved (e.g., your agency, citizens, Civil Society Organizations, media, et al.). If there are any baseline indicators or standards to measure the outcomes of the initiative, such as the breadth of depth of engagement, please describe them in detail.

OpenCoesione-Monithon set a standard as a 5-star initiative according to the Open Data Engagement Model.

OpenCoesione regularly receives coverage on printed and online media (www.opencoesione.gov.it/rassegna-stampa), including a prime-time focus with Monithon on TG2, one of the main national TV newscasts and a chapter inside a book by a leading Italian journalist (http://goo.gl/R4WyCa).

This year "OpenCoesione School" students engaged local communities by presenting their project-work in public events, opened new channels of communication with local institutions for closer follow up on projects, and teamed up with local associations for demands of more open data on public services at the local level.

Since its launch in September 2013, Monithon has drawn dozens of national and local communities (some formed on purpose, other based on existing associations) and around 500 people into civic monitoring activities, mostly in Southern Italy, where cohesion funds are more concentrated. Specific activities are carried out by established citizen groups, like Libera, a national anti-Mafia association, who became Monithon partner, focusing their monitoring on the rehabilitation of Mafia-seized properties. Action Aid is now partnering with monithon to promote citizen empowerment. Existing, local groups of activists are using the Monithon methodology to test local transportation systems that benefited from EU funding, while new groups have formed to begin monitoring social innovation and cultural heritage projects.

Now more than 50 "citizen monitoring reports", which take the form of collective investigations on project development and results, are publicly available on the Monithon website, many of which spurred further dialogue with public administrations.

INITIATIVE SUSTAINABILITY (required)

In 200 words or less, please describe any plans for scaling up and/or sustaining the initiative in the future. Base your description of the strategy on information provided in the previous sections, such as how you intend to leverage your current success and increase your reach or capacity. Address any threats or operational challenges to your initiative and describe how you intend to manage those risks on a regular basis.

The initiative's long-term perspective is ensured on three levels: administrative, data and civic sustainability.

OpenCoesione is an institutional initiative of the Italian Department for development and economic cohesion and the activities are carried out by a team of civil servants, reinforced since 2013 with external professionals and new skills, including the OpenCoesione School team, thanks to additional financial support available until 2015, to be confirmed until 2023.

The monitoring system that feeds OpenCoesione will be upgraded in the programming cycle 2014-2020, and flow into the OpenCoesione portal (500k unique visitors since launch and 1,000 visits per day) which is the national website on cohesion policy envisaged for all Member States by 2014-2020 EU regulations.

Monithon, started by a handful of volunteers, has activated a growing number of local communities performing independent civic monitoring activities. Technical improvements of the platform are under way in order to make civic monitoring easier and more inclusive.

OpenCoesione School is ready to scale-up in 2014-2015 and reach a target of 100 schools.

Extending from established partnerships, the 2014-2015 OpenCoesione operational plan sets new initiatives for further involvement of researchers and data journalists and synergies with other data producers for enricheding available information on projects and policy.

VALIDATION OF CLAIMS (required)

While it is strongly encouraged that each initiative includes partners, such as Civil Society Organizations, private sector agencies, media entities, etc., it is not a requirement. However, you are required to secure and upload documents from one or more credible nongovernmental actors who can attest to the veracity of any claims made in your application.

You are only allowed to upload one file. If you have multiple documents, please zip them into a single file first. The file types that are allowed to be uploaded have an extension of .ZIP, .PDF, .DOC, .DOCX, .XLS or .XLSX.

VALIDATION OF CLAIMS.pdf

C. THE PITCH

The following information allows each applicant to make their strongest (and final) case for consideration.

BEST CASE (required)

In 250 words or less, please present the most compelling facts for why your initiative should be recognized. This is an opportunity to distinguish your initiative, based on any factors that you have not had the opportunity to describe in the previous sections. What is your best argument for why your initiative has achieved a meaningful outcome? What elements of the initiative make it different and better than others, that have been tried and tested? Be creative and concise.

The fundamental ingredient for a successful open government initiative is the establishment of a permanent and dynamic synergy between a public mandate for transparency and the collective energy of citizens and civil society.

As a core output, OpenCoesione allows everyone to **find out** what EU and national cohesion policy does and **follow** on a regular basis the development of each funded project: how funds are being spent, on what kind of things, in which places, who is receiving the money, what progress is being made, when they are expected to be completed.

This enabled the generation of a large-scale digital common, a significant public interest and a durable and effective collaboration among administrations. Nevertheless, the awareness that widespread civic engagement requires a stronger connection between governmental information and local communities, triggered the availability of proper tools.

The Monithon platform adds to this dimension as a method and a model whereby citizen monitoring may be initiated and as a tool for civic partners to **press forward**, to report on malpractice, but also to collaborate in making all these projects work, in accelerating their completion and understanding whether they actually respond to local demand.

OpenCoesione empowered by Monithon, reinforces this model with the involvement of the largest and most precious constituency, school students, in OpenCoesione School project: raising a future generation with greater civic awareness and the ability to exercise public debate and scrutiny is the best way to produce durable results for an effective policy.

VIDEO SUBMISSION (recommended*)

OGP does not offer a venue for applicants to meet our judges during the application process. In order to provide the opportunity for making a personal connection, you are encouraged to upload a short video to complement your application. You may also depict an individual participant in your initiative and describe his or her experience. We do not need to know actual names or personal details. Take this opportunity to tell a story, to connect with our panel of experts, so that they might better understand your attention to specific needs.

Video submissions should follow these guidelines:

Maximum length of 3-4 minutes.
Please focus on personal presentations; it's not necessary to develop a sophisticated or polished video.

Here are some logistical and technical suggestions:

Video cameras, digital cameras, and phones are easy ways to record a video.
Laptop and desktop computers can typically record video through Skype or other software.
If possible, set to a low resolution to reduce file size. This will enable an

- easier video uploading process.
- If you are having difficulty uploading the video file, try logging out of the application and logging back in using another Internet browser.

Here are general suggestions for delivering a high-quality video pitch:

- Include the following:
  - Introduce yourself and your initiative.
  - Focus on describing your intended benefits and/or services and how they have been effective.
  - What is unique about your initiative, partners, or technical approach?
- Hone your content:
  - Keep your description and language simple.
  - Demonstrate passion through your words and enthusiasm.

*If the burden of developing a video presentation is either prohibitive or might not reflect the best characterization of your initiative, then you are not required to submit one, and the judges are instructed not to discount your application because it may not include a video. We hope that this option offers a new and inventive way in which you can best express the results of your work.