ITALY
The Compass of Transparency

What did the commitment seek to achieve, and why is this important?

The Compass of Transparency (www.magellanopa.it/bussola) is an automated online portal, which gives citizens the ability to monitor, in real time and in a uniform manner, whether the websites of various public administration (PA) bodies are complying with the transparency requirements mandated by law. The Compass verifies the presence of about 70 sections and contents that, according to the Italian laws, must be published. The contents to be searched for can be easily specialized for any typology of administration, since the laws require different obligations according to the kind of administration. The Compass of Transparency has been designed around the idea of the centrality of citizens in improving the quality of online and digital services provided by the government. The system puts the citizen first, both as a user of transparency and as a contributor to the increase of transparency in public administrations.

How did you go about implementing the commitment? Who were the key advocates both within and outside of government during the implementation phase?

The Compass was created by the Department for Public Administration (DPA) and became operational from May 2012. The heart of the system is a validation mechanism, composed of software sensors and mathematical algorithms, with the ability to analyze public administration websites in both real-time and at certain intervals. The analysis is performed by comparing the data in the websites with contents defined and standardized by the laws of transparency and guidelines on websites. Data are then collected in a data warehouse which, through dedicated interfaces, is able to provide users with an assessment of the level of transparency compliance of all institutional web sites.

What were the key factors in allowing this effort to succeed? What are the emerging opportunities as a result?

From a sustainability point of view, the Compass has been designed to operate without substantial maintenance or user assistance activities. It finds the information with a "pull" operation and consequently, doesn't require any information to be sent by the PAs. Every administration can also perform a real-time assessment of the transparency compliance of its website before it is opened up to the public. The system also operates without user authentication. The only authentication required is for the "give your opinion" functionality, but it is performed through a social platform, which means there

are no additional costs for the DPA since the user provisioning activities are not executed inside the Compass.

How have citizens benefitted from this reform? If possible, please include evidence of results or uptake.

Citizens can express their opinion about the quality of the published information, which are made available online in social mode. These inputs, especially from the experienced public, are very valuable. Another aspect that should be considered is the high number and heterogeneity of administrations that are monitored by the Compass. In these circumstances, the opinions of people that best know the single administrations (e.g. the citizens of a local authority) are extremely valuable, since they have a unique knowledge of the administrative context.

The initiative focuses on the continuous improvement of transparency compliance in more than 10,000 Italian public administrations. The sites are analyzed by the Compass engine, both during the periodical complete scans, and real-time, when requested by the users. A report is automatically generated for each administration, that states which contents have been found on the website, in addition to providing direct links to the contents themselves. The rankings and the dashboard are updated in real time and this also allows for friendly competition among PA's to score higher in the Compass. As a result, it is possible to know how the transparency process is evolving in Italy. In summer 2012 the average percentage of published contents was 11 percent. This has been constantly growing, where the last measure taken in January 2013 stood at 25 percent.

Since its launch in 2012, the Compass has been drawing attention by the media. Below are a few summaries of media articles:

Il Sole 24 Ore – The most important Italian newspaper on economics and politics.

***Budgets and politicians' salaries are 'off line'*, 31 December 2012**
The article presents the results of the Compass of Transparency's monitoring at national level, with a focus on 2 out of the 42 contents to be published on line – i.e. budgets and salaries of politicians and PA managers. Piedmont is the only region going beyond the 10% level of published information (35%), with all other regions scoring poorer results. The situation changes as far as other and less sensitive information is concerned: in these cases the national level of compliance to Websites Guidelines is higher, on average. The article also reports quotes from the Head of the Department of Public Administration, Antonio Naddeo, who stresses the usefulness of the Compass as an instrument to favour a healthy competition towards transparency between PAs. The article gives an overview of the way the Compass works, adding a comment by Davide D'Amico, the officer of the Department in charge for the project.

Italia Oggi – A national political, legal and financial daily newspaper.
***Defense and Interior at the top for transparency on the web**, 15 April 2013*
Making use of and presenting the Compass of Transparency, the article praises the performance of the Ministry of Defense and the Ministry of Interior, which are at the top of the ranking for the Ministries, scoring 100%. Relevance is given also to the functioning of the Compass, which provides users with a data warehouse that can be easily accessed, and which allows for free download of statistics and tables in open data format. The rankings of the Compass are user-friendly also because of the emoticons that the system uses to assess the degree of online transparency of public administrations in an intuitive way. The monitoring of transparency online involves also other administrations, such as Fiscal Agencies, Social Security Entities, hospitals, provinces and regions, among others.

What is the unfinished business and how might you take this work forward in your next OGP action plan?

The Compass of Transparency has been designed and developed so that it can be easily transferred into different administrative contexts, e.g. in other countries. This is because the Compass uses a simple methodology - to define inside a simple XML configuration file the rules and the indicators that the Compass should use during the automatic checks. This means that it would be possible to create an international federated system of "transparency compliance" that would eventually evolve into a more cohesive one, characterized by a multi-language ontology giving the possibility to perform real-time automatic benchmarks between countries. This evolution of the Compass would represent a substantial leap forward for the effectiveness of the tool and could be taken into consideration in the next OGP action plan.