



CORTE DEI CONTI

MULTILEVEL COMPETENCIES AND POWER - SIMPLIFYING WITHOUT OVERSIMPLIFYING
Some remarks starting from a report of the Italian Corte dei conti on hydrogeological instability

VII MEETING OF THE EUROSAI WORKING GROUP
ON THE AUDIT OF FUNDS ALLOCATED TO DISASTERS AND CATASTROPHES

16th November 2021



CORTE DEI CONTI

THE STARTING POINT FOR SOME REMARKS



GLI INTERVENTI DELLE AMMINISTRAZIONI
DELLO STATO PER LA MITIGAZIONE
DEL RISCHIO IDROGEOLOGICO

Deliberazione Pl. n. 17/2021/G



The Central Chamber of the Corte dei conti for the Performance Audit on the Management of the State Administrations has recently approved a **Report on “The interventions of the State administrations for the mitigation of hydrogeological risk”** (Resolution no. 17 - 18th October 2021) .

THE STARTING POINT FOR SOME REMARKS

The report no.17/2021 follows a **previous one dated 2019**, where the same Central Audit Chamber examined the management and impacts of the Fund for planning the interventions against hydrogeological instability and assessed the efficacy of the legal framework after the introduction of new rules in 2018 and 2019.

The survey highlighted a number of issues arising from the functioning and monitoring mechanism of hydrogeological risk mitigation interventions, in the governance of structures; overall, an ineffectiveness of measures adopted until then was stressed.

THE STARTING POINT FOR SOME REMARKS

The **report no.17/2021** examined the state of implementation of the National Plan for Hydrogeological Risk Mitigation, Restoration and Protection of the Environmental Resource, so called "Proteggitalia"; the efficiency and effectiveness of resource management; governance, procedures, control and monitoring of interventions; the measures taken to address critical aspects; the evaluation indicators related to the scope of the investigation.

The Corte collected data from the Administrations involved in the implementation of the Plan; the various measures and methods of implementation of the interventions were put under scrutiny so as to assess their efficiency and effectiveness.

THE CRUCIAL RELEVANCE OF THE MANAGEMENT OF THE HYDROGEOLOGICAL RISK IN ITALY

THE PROLIFERATION OF REGULATORY INTERVENTIONS

The issue of hydrogeological instability is felt as crucial, both by the public and in the political agenda. This explains the numerous regulatory provisions enacted in recent legislatures (many contained in the 2019, 2020 and 2021 budget laws). The main innovation was the launch, in 2019, of the **National Plan for the mitigation of the hydrogeological risk**, the restoration and the protection of the environmental resource (so called “ProteggItalia” Plan), with a prospective endowment of 14,3 billion euros in 12 years, from 2018 to 2030.

THE PROLIFERATION OF REGULATORY INTERVENTIONS



The **innovation** was not only the adoption of a multi annual financial programming, aimed at a single objective and carried out through the overall recognition of national and European resources allocated, but in the **systemic approach** with which the problem was addressed: **emergency, preventive, maintenance, organisational and procedural measures, entrusted to several central administrations and coordinated by the Presidency of the Council of Ministers through specific structures.**

THE PROLIFERATION OF REGULATORY INTERVENTIONS

In 2020, among the many “Covid emergency laws”, the **decree law no. 76/2020** introduced **simplification measures**, allowing the use of the instrument of the so called “Conferenza dei Servizi” in connection with interventions aimed at mitigating the risk of hydrogeological failure.

Finally, the **Budget Law 2021** (law no. 178/2020) introduced some **provisions on countering hydrogeological instability** in order to accelerate and implement investments in this sector.

A VULNERABLE TERRITORY

Despite the numerous interventions, the phenomenon of hydrogeological instability continues to be an emergency in Italy. The reason lies obviously in the geomorphological characteristics of the Country.

The hydrogeological instability is particularly relevant in Italy because it affects much of the peninsula, causing impacts on the populace, on infrastructures and on the economy. The national territory for its morphological, lithological and hydrographic characteristics is naturally predisposed to landslides and floods.



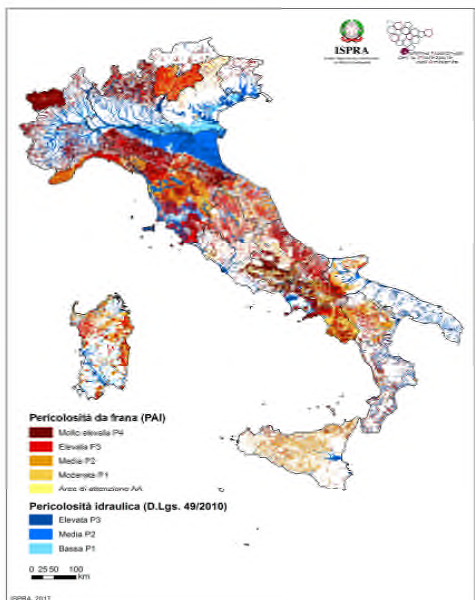
A VULNERABLE TERRITORY

Italy is also a **densely populated country** with almost **8,000** municipalities, **59,459** urban centres, a motorway network spanning **6,487 km**, a railway about **16,000 km** long, a main road network of about **360,000 km** and a population density of about **200 inhabitants/km²**.

Among the primary causes of the instability, land grabbing, in fact, together with climate change, plays a decisive role.



A VULNERABLE TERRITORY



The 2018 Report of the Istituto Superiore per la Protezione e la ricerca ambientale (ISPRA) on "*Hydrogeological instability in Italy: danger and risk indicators*" certified that there are over seven million Italians living in areas at risk of landslides and flooding and highlighted that 7,275 municipalities (91 percent of the total) are at risk of landslides and/or floods, that 16.6% of the national territory is classified as the most dangerous and that 1.28 million inhabitants are at risk of landslides and over 6 million inhabitants at risk of floods.

On 16 November 2021 the new "*Report on flood hazards conditions in Italy and associated risk indicators*" carried out by ISPRA and updated to 2020 will be presented.

WE ARE NOT ALONE...

If it is true that Italy is the European country most affected, for example, by landslides, with about 2/3 of the landslides surveyed in Europe, it is also true that, as a result of the climate crisis, the number of extreme weather events has increased significantly all over the world.

Due to intense and/or long-lasting rainfall, earthquakes as well as a consequence of human exploitation of the soil, landslides now abound also in Slovakia, Czech Republic, Poland, Slovenia, Spain, France, Bulgaria, Ireland, Sweden and Norway, among others.



WE ARE NOT ALONE...

There is a widespread concern regarding the frequency and magnitude of the hydrogeological instability and it is clear that a constant comparison - at all levels of involvement - of experiences and best practices, will be of great use in addressing the problem.

Besides, the **2030 SDGs** and the **European Green Deal** point out the path to be followed with environmentally friendly economy and policies, while exploiting the full potential of recovery measures - such as those of the European extraordinary plan **Next Generation EU** - put in place to tackle the pandemic crisis.

In Italy, the **National Recovery and Resilience Plan (NRRP)** has been modeled to play a key role in the recovery and pursue many challenging structural goals, including that related to mitigation of hydrogeological risk.



THE IMPORTANCE OF NRRP NOT ONLY IN TERMS OF ALLOCATION OF FUNDS BUT ALSO WITH REFERENCE TO THE GOVERNANCE

The **National Recovery and Resilience Plan (PNRR)** devotes specific attention to hydrogeological hazard within the "**Green Revolution and Ecological Transition**" mission, allocating a total of EUR 2.487 billion to this emergency from 2020 to 2026, of which 1,287 will go under the responsibility of the Ministry for Ecological Transition, to be used for projects already in place, with existing resources in the budget and 1,200 billion of Civil Protection, of which 800 million are additional resources.

In terms of **governance**, the structures and decision-making processes **need to be simplified**, reducing the time taken for consultation and assigning clear, streamlined tasks and responsibilities to the structures involved. The governance adopted to counter hydrogeological failure has, so far, fragmented decision-making processes and their responsibilities. The introduction of the new organisational structure for governing the PNRR should help to overcome this problem by simplifying implementation structures and procedures.

CRITICAL ASPECTS OF THE NATIONAL PLAN FOR THE MITIGATION OF HYDROGEOLOGICAL RISK, RESTORATION AND PROTECTION OF ENVIRONMENTAL RESOURCES (S.C. PROTEGGITALIA) DATED 2019

The 2019 Plan aimed, among other things, at pursuing the **objective of simplification** creating a unified, orderly and taxonomic framework of interventions; the synthesis of available financial resources; the distribution of operational loads and the plan of actions; the system of governance and institutional collaborations; the timetable of activities; the expected results, also in terms of social and economic impacts and benefits, more transparent criteria for the selection of interventions; a system of reporting, monitoring and management control, properly enhanced, including by feeding and integrating existing databases.



CRITICAL ASPECTS OF THE NATIONAL PLAN FOR THE MITIGATION OF HYDROGEOLOGICAL RISK, RESTORATION AND PROTECTION OF ENVIRONMENTAL RESOURCES (S.C. *PROTEGGITALIA*, 2019)

Among the critical issues, the report no.17 of the Corte dei conti highlighted the **excessive proliferation and fragmentation of platforms and information systems**. Despite the simplifications introduced, both the **decision-making and the implementation processes**, which are often conditioned by lengthy national and local concertation procedures, are being **slowed down**. Further unresolved problems remain the **planning capability of the Regions**, the **lack of technical profiles** and the **poor planning in land-use**.



CRITICAL ASPECTS OF THE NATIONAL PLAN FOR THE MITIGATION OF HYDROGEOLOGICAL RISK, RESTORATION AND PROTECTION OF ENVIRONMENTAL RESOURCES (S.C. PROTEGGITALIA) DATED 2019

On the governance front, the Corte dei conti report no. 17/2021 highlighted the **multiplicity of structures** (between “Cabine di Regia”, mission structures, technical secretariats, central and regional task forces, etc.) **involved in decision-making**. This state of play has not favored the necessary "change of pace" towards an "ordinary" and effective management of the hydrogeological instability.

SIMPLIFYING WITHOUT OVERSIMPLIFYING

The problem of hydrogeological instability cannot, with all evidence, be separated from a multifactorial and, therefore, multi sectoral approach and at different levels. Hence, the extreme difficulty of a simplification that - if interpreted mainly in terms of "centralization", "decisionism" and "attribution of superpowers" - may not substantiate in a governance appropriate to the complexity of the matter, the subjects and the different territories involved.

On the other hand, there is an urgent need for strengthening skills and technical resources. **The National Recovery and Resilience Plan (NRRP)** seems to be moving in this direction.



SIMPLIFYING WITHOUT OVERSIMPLIFYING

The **governance of the National Recovery and Resilience Plan (NRRP) has been defined**, with a multi-level articulation, by the decree-law 31 May 2021, no. 77, converted with modifications by law 29 July 2021, no. 10.

The PNRR itself provides for a specific reform "Simplification and acceleration of procedures for the implementation of interventions against hydrogeological failure" with the aim of "**overcoming the critical procedural nature, linked to the weakness and absence of an effective system of governance in actions to combat hydrogeological instability**". It is expected:

- i) the simplification and acceleration of procedures for the implementation and financing of interventions,
- ii) the strengthening of technical support structures for extraordinary commissioners;
- iii) the strengthening of the operational capacities of the Basin Authorities and Provinces
- iv) the systemisation of information flows and the interoperability of the different IT systems.

The end of the regulatory review process, in continuity with actions already launched in 2020, is scheduled for mid-2022.

LESSONS LEARNT BY THE PANDEMIC

The Italian Corte dei conti provides several specific reports, among those, the annual **Public Finance Coordination Report**. Some interesting remarks can be taken from the last one (published in 2020).

Even before the pandemic crisis, in the face of other exceptionally serious situations that affected the country (including hydrogeological instability), it was decided to opt for an emergency administration model, which was considered more appropriate to implement effective actions to speed up and qualify spending, and completing the planned investments at least in those areas in which the failure to implement projects would expose the communities concerned to risks that are progressively worsening.

LESSONS LEARNT BY THE PANDEMIC

However, the quantity and quality of situations to tackle which this type of administrative solution has been adopted has also highlighted a **crisis in the traditional model of administration**, which is increasingly struggling to efficiently manage not just the situations linked to truly exceptional events that require extraordinary reconstruction activities (such as the one resulting from the pandemic), but more generally the **social and economic complexity that is a hallmark of public policies today**. Therefore, it is of primary importance, also **on the basis of the experience acquired in the management of emergency situations**, to deeply reform the set of administrative tools and organisation, **aiming at a structural re-engineering of procedures, not just in extraordinary circumstances**, so that the emergency model does not become established as a parallel and alternative model to ordinary governance, seen as a necessary path for overcoming its inefficiency.



Many thanks to all of you

mauro.orefice@corteconti.it

giulio.stolfi@corteconti.it