

SCHEDA DI PROGRAMMA 2

Title of the research program (ENG):

"Reforming local government revenue collection mechanisms to prevent local governments financial distress."

Description (MAX 5000 CHARACTERS EXCLUDING SPACES):

The condition of economic and financial crisis now seems to be a distinctive, almost congenital trait that characterizes an ever-increasing number of Italian municipalities. To investigate and tackle the problem, it is necessary to initiate processes of knowledge and critical analysis of the causes, knowing that financial aid, however desirable, does not solve problems or eradicate the genetic causes of crises which, if not adequately addressed, may become a cyclical phenomenon.

The (worrying) element of novelty lies in the fact that numerous indicators of a financial, economic and social nature seem to converge in identifying increasingly vast areas of suffering in the municipalities, and no longer only in the southern or in the smaller ones.

The pandemic has undoubtedly altered the reference scenario, causing a change in variables with respect to which municipalities, especially those already in precarious conditions, will not be able - on their own - to cope with its effects. On the other hand, the chronic shortages of staff, the repeated stabilization mechanisms, the "regulatory bulimia" and the differences found between national, regional and sectoral regulations regarding local public services personnel - just to mention the most striking cases - constitute further distorting factors in the economic-financial equilibrium of the Sicilian municipalities and are a source of serious unease.

Nonetheless, it is necessary to bear in mind the epochal challenge / opportunity that the National Recovery and Resilience Plan (PNRR) offers to local authorities. A challenge which, based on the current organizational conditions of many entities, appears almost insurmountable.

In this context, a substantial investment in infrastructural equipment (human capital) and digital technologies is indispensable (Antulov-Fantulin et al., 2021; Spano et al., 2020), which makes it possible to equip public administrations with tools that increase capacity predictive of corporate information systems with respect to situations of financial pathology of local authorities (Padovani, Iacuzzi, 2021).

An area of extraordinary importance in the economic-financial recovery process of local authorities is that of managing the collection of local revenues. The municipalities, in fact, complain of serious delays and difficulties of technical-organizational nature in managing the collection procedures (ordinary and compulsory), whose effectiveness impact on the ability of the public company to restore its economic-financial balance.

This research program is part of public management studies and aims to investigate, also in a comparative perspective at an international level, the effectiveness of local revenue collection systems and possible regulatory, technical-accounting and management solutions that favor the strengthening of these systems and the reduction of the so-called tax gap at the local level, not only in terms of contrasting tax evasion but also in the perspective, sometimes overlooked, of the "collection gap".

The topic of active management of municipal revenues, therefore, also in the light of recent regulatory innovations, assumes central importance in view of the construction of a structure of real financial autonomy of the Municipalities which, at present, presents high burdens for citizens and efficiency far below the standards.

To meet the research objective, the program will be divided into distinct activities: i) critical review of the literature on local finance, public accounting and financial vulnerability of local public administrations; ii) the analysis of the state of the art - also in regulatory terms - regarding the crisis and financial recovery of local authorities in Italy and in the main EU countries; iii) focus on the management of local revenues based on qualitative surveys, multiple case studies and of an empirical-quantitative type aimed at identifying the main relationships existing between the main variables considered.

For the purpose of developing the research project, the student will be asked to participate in training activities in the context of some modules provided in the doctoral program of the University of Messina,

(Statistics, Introduction to STATA and Engaging in Research, Taxation and Redistribution, Models for financial data). The training provided by the Messina University will then be accompanied by additional training activities provided by external parties (in the form of workshops, seminars and / or summer schools). The training period abroad will allow the doctoral student to acquire useful elements of comparison with systems adopted in other countries where some best practices have been found on the subject; nevertheless, the collaboration with the research center (IFEL-ANCI Foundation) represents a further element of great importance in the training course of the student.

PERIOD IN BUSINESS - RESEARCH CENTERS - PA:

The research program will be carried out in collaboration with the following subject:

Company name: Institute for Finance and Local Economy (IFEL, Research Body) – Foundation established by the National Association of Italian Municipalities (ANCI).

Registered office: Rome, P.za di San Lorenzo in Lucina, 26

Legal representative: Alessandro Canelli

References for the Research Program: Dr. Andrea Ferri - Dr. Fabrizio Fazioli

PERIOD ABROAD:

The research program provides for a period abroad of min 6 max 18 at the following institution: Facultad de Ciencias Económicas y Empresariales - Universidad de Sevilla.