

# Italy



## Background

The lack of strong national coordination and organisation regarding urban security policies at a local level and the absence of adequate research procedures and methodologies make it impossible, despite obvious interest, to relate local safety audits to almost any of the crime prevention programmes implemented in Italy over the years.

There is no tradition of financing local safety audits. It is left to the willingness of the municipalities with no obligation of the state or regional level. Furthermore, local safety audits appear to be particularly laborious in Italy due to the nature and limits of available sources. The problems usually faced at the local level are related to official crime statistics that do not directly refer to specific geographical areas. The crime data is in fact gathered at a municipal and provincial level, and is then compared with the data gathered during the previous six or twelve months.

For a long period of time, certain cities (mostly located in the north and centre of Italy) took on more responsibility and autonomy with regards to their urban security and policing strategies. The development of local initiatives in this field, and occasionally regarding local safety audits, in particular between the mid-1990s and the second half of the 2000s, was promoted by the cities and supported, in a negotiated, non coercive framework, by regional governments.

Cities have found support – resources, technical assistance, and political empowerment – from regional governments, which have sometimes tied public funds, devoted to municipalities, to the implementation of local safety audits.

## Organisation

In Italy, security and public order (*sicurezza e ordine pubblico*) are as per the Constitution under the jurisdiction of the national State. However, since the beginning of the 1990s and following a common European trend, cities and regions responsible for a new field of local public policy defined as “local urban security” have tried to play a role in this domain. For a long time, they had considerable success. Results included a new framework for local crime prevention and community safety initiatives and new methods of policing urban space sometimes accompanied by local safety audits. These were planned at the local level, coordinated and funded in many cases by the regional governments, with no involvement from the national State.

A seminal initiative was the signing of the first agreement on urban safety in Modena, between the Mayor and the Italian Ministry of the Interior, in 1998. This act seemed to sanction, at least on a symbolic level, the end of the State's monopoly in safety policies and gave rise to a new phase of collaboration between cities and the State.

Since the late 1990s, there has been a significant increase in local prevention activities and a consolidation of the cities' structures and organisations that are responsible for urban safety. This unification phase of local experiences is again not supported by a coherent national policy. In fact, some Regions are the ones that provide regulations and provisions as well as concrete support for the development of urban safety policies, including local safety audits.

It was the Emilia-Romagna Region that adopted in 1999 the first law on urban safety at a regional level, a significant legislative innovation at the time. This was quickly imitated by other Regions.

Nowadays, eleven Regions have a regional law (Abruzzi, Campania, Emilia-Romagna, Latium, Liguria, Lombardy, Marches, Piedmont, Tuscany, Umbria, and Veneto) as well as the Autonomous Province of Trento.

## Resources

### State level

In Italy, crime data consists of the “crime statistics” that the State Police, the Carabinieri and the Financial Police transmit to the judicial system. These statistics are published each year by the Ministry of the Interior and the National Institute of Statistics (ISTAT).

It seems obvious that a successful local safety audit must depend on the quality and nature of the available information. Also, we must stress that the number of official crimes only represents part of the crimes that have actually been committed. This would therefore make victimisation surveys essential in local safety audits. However, at the local level, this only happens very rarely because gathering this type of data is extremely costly and time consuming.

Specific national victimisation surveys were conducted in 1997-98, 2002, 2008-09 by ISTAT with the aim of understanding the actual amount of crime, compared to the official statistics recorded by national police forces. Furthermore, two specific national surveys on violence against women were carried out by ISTAT in 2006 and 2014.

Emilia-Romagna is the only Region that carried out a specific regional victimisation survey, which was published in 2006 in the *Quaderni di Città sicure* (the journal of safe cities).

The Campania, Emilia-Romagna, Latium, Liguria, Lombardy, Tuscany, Piedmont, Marches, and Veneto Regions have implemented systems to monitor and study in detail criminality

and the social need for safety. Once again, the Emilia-Romagna region stands out: an annual survey (1995/2014), centralised archiving of crime data (1984/2014), participation in national victimisation surveys (1997 and 2002) and using regional sampling are some of the most important initiatives in this area of activity.

## Outlook

At the end of the 2010s, the national government increasingly reduced local governments' powers in the field of urban security, opening a new era of national activism by the Ministry of the Interior and its apparatuses. As a consequence of this new national strategy, a remarkable change occurred in the infrastructure of local security policies.

They are now mostly ruled by a national law (Law 15/2009 on provisions on public security - *Disposizioni in materia di sicurezza pubblica*) and by related decrees of the Ministry of the Interior that impose guiding principles for local authorities in operating crime and urban disorder programmes, and, more recently, in the organisation and duties of the municipal police.

In this new framework, the national government has clearly moved towards a tougher approach to crime, which entails notably an increase in control measures, the criminalisation of certain behaviours, including those that were in the past considered as the expression of social deprivation and marginality, and more severe laws punishing street crime and violent behaviour.

