

## **The Costs of the Prolonged Crisis of Government: The Legislative Performance of the Fourth Berlusconi Government Two and A Half Years into the Legislature**

Francesco Marangoni  
*University of Bologna*

*Abstract: Abstract In this article we return to an analysis of the legislative performance of the fourth Berlusconi government two and half years after the start of the sixteenth legislature. We do so at a highly unusual moment, in the middle of a government crisis which began in the spring of 2010 and which saw a component of the majority break away – while the executive itself faced crucial and dramatic votes of confidence held in the two branches of the legislature. The current moment is one of transition between a period of government that began with the centre right’s victory in 2008, and a new period – one still marked by a large number of unknowns concerning the composition of the majority, the possible emergence of a new government, or even early elections. The data we shall present thus represent a stock taking of the initial period. More importantly, they provide useful empirical ground on which to assess the impact of the prolonged crisis on the effectiveness of government performance.*

Keywords: Berlusconi government, government crisis; legislative performance

Anyone who, like us, examined the affairs of the fourth Berlusconi government at the end of the first two years of its mandate would probably not have foreseen a government crisis as deep and as acrimonious as the one that affected the internal stability of the centre-right coalition in the spring of 2010. We finished writing this article at a time which coincided with the crucial event representing the culmination of this crisis, that is, a few hours after the two branches of the Italian parliament had confirmed their support for the government in office through confidence votes, the one in the Chamber of Deputies passing with a majority of just three. Besides the seemingly irresolvable crisis of governability, what seems certain is that the current conjuncture marks the end of that period of government which began with the centre-right coalition’s victory in the elections of 2008, and the beginning of another period – a new political situation, the consequences of which are difficult for the time being to discern.

At the end of this initial period it therefore seems necessary to examine again, and to evaluate, the data relating to the incumbent government's performance. We will do this by updating, about two and a half years from the start of the legislature, our usual indicators of the activity and legislative performance of the executive. The figures we discuss here seem especially relevant for an initial assessment of the impact the lengthy period of crisis has had on the power and effectiveness of the Government's decision-making capacity.

It is worth recalling that what our indicators are designed to measure, from the point of view of legislative activity empirically considered, is the institutional performance of the Government: in other words, the capacity of the Government, as an institution, to "function" and specifically, to produce, and to secure the implementation of, binding decisions. We are not therefore measuring the "quality" or effectiveness of the Government's public-policy decisions. We are attempting, rather, to assess the Government's capacity to formulate and win support for such decisions.

### **Government legislative initiatives**

During the course of the 117 meetings held between the start of the legislature, and 30 November 2010, the Cabinet passed and presented to Parliament, 236 bills – an average of about 7.6 proposals per month. If we confine the analysis to measures having the most direct influence on public-policy choices – and if we therefore exclude bills ratifying international treaties and agreements – the legislative proposals passed by the fourth Berlusconi government come to 142, for a monthly average of 4.6. Table 1 disaggregates the set of government initiatives still further, distinguishing between five types of measure: the ratification of international treaties; decree laws; proposed laws of delegation; ordinary bills including one or more provisions delegating powers to the Government, and ordinary bills containing no such provisions.

We have already considered, in part, the relative weight of treaty ratifications, and we can now see their numerical size, equivalent to 40 percent of the entire volume of legislative initiatives taken by the Government. The large number of bills providing for treaty ratification means that analysis of the activity of individual government departments shows the Ministry of Foreign Affairs (which is always the sponsor of this type of measure) to be the most important promoter (at least numerically) of the Government's legislative activity. We can see this in Table 2, which shows the percentage of bills signed or co-signed by each ministerial component. Having considered the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, by far the most significant promoter of bills of ratification, we note that of the ministers seeming to influence the Government's legislative activity the most, there is a central nucleus composed of three: the Prime Minister (the

signatory or co-signatory of over 35 percent of the proposals) and the ministers for the Economy and for Justice (involved in about 19 and 20 percent of the cases).

**Table 1: Bills passed by the Cabinet (as of 30 November 2010)**

Type of bill	N	% of total bills
Bills	75	31.8
<i>Ordinary bills</i>	53	22.5
<i>Proposed laws of delegation</i>	14	5.9
<i>Bills including proposals for delegation</i>	8	3.4
Ratification of international treaties	94	39.8
Decree laws	67	28.4
Total	236	100

Source: CIRCaP database on Italian government's legislative activity

The figure for the Prime Minister is particularly significant. Not only does it tell us how many measures have involved the Prime Minister's office directly or indirectly in a supervisory capacity, but it may be a good empirical indicator of the capacity (or of the leadership style) of the head of government in leading and coordinating the work of the executive (and of the single individuals and parties that compose it). Excluding treaty ratifications, the proportion of government initiatives involving the current Prime Minister rises to 56 percent – a percentage that is eloquent about the markedly interventionist style of Silvio Berlusconi and the office he leads. To give a directly comparable figure: at the end of the second Prodi government, the corresponding percentage, excluding ratifications, came to just 38.2.

If we consider the figures in the table disaggregated by type of measure, we discover that the percentage of initiatives involving Palazzo Chigi rests to a large extent on the many decree laws presented to Parliament (such urgent decrees in fact always require the signature of the Prime Minister). More generally, then, this figure is symptomatic of the overall strategy pursued by a government that has often chosen to speed up the approval of its legislative initiatives by Parliament, precisely through the massive use of urgent decree-making.

This was already apparent from the figures in Table 1: decree laws counted for about 29 percent of the legislative measures presented by the Cabinet in the first two and a half years of the legislature. The proportion rises to over 47 percent if bills ratifying treaties are excluded. On the one hand, such percentages seem to underscore the weakness of the executive as an institution faced with parliamentary procedures and a legislative process that remain in need of streamlining (Della Sala Giuliani and

Zucchini, 2008). On the other hand, the relative frequency with which the fourth Berlusconi government has had recourse to urgent decree-making is so great that it needs to be seen in relation to the political “weight” of the executive – that is, an executive which, precisely because of the difficulties created by the ordinary legislative process, and in virtue of the size and (initial) cohesion of its majority, has often chosen (and could allow itself) to “force” the ordinary procedures of Parliament precisely by having recourse to such exceptional legislative tools as decree laws<sup>1</sup>.

**Table 2: Government bills by type and sponsoring (or co-sponsoring) department**

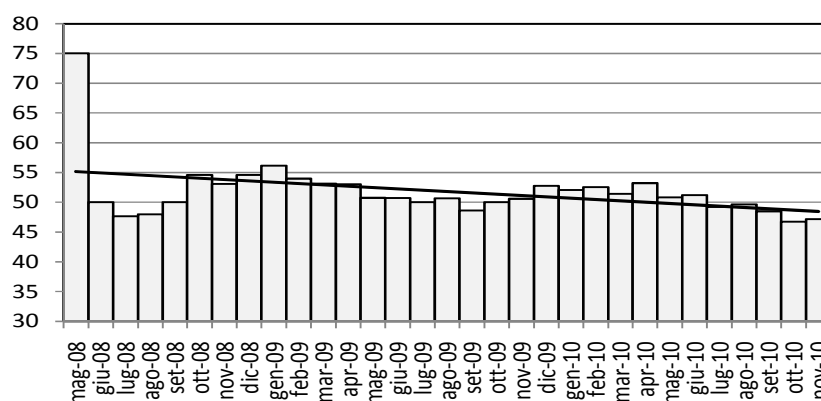
	<i>Ordinary bills</i>	<i>Proposed laws of delegation</i>	<i>Bills including proposals for delegation</i>	<i>Ratifications</i>	<i>Decree laws</i>	<i>Total*</i>	<i>% of bills</i>
Foreign affairs	1	3	0	94	8	106	44.92
PM's office	11	3	1	1	67	83	35.17
Economy	15	1	1	1	29	47	19.92
Justice	8	4	2	13	16	43	18.22
Defence	3	1	0	14	8	26	11.02
Home affairs	2	1	3	2	14	22	9.32
Environment	2	0	1	2	5	10	4.24
EU policy	1	3	3	0	1	8	3.39
Administrative simplification	1	3	1	0	3	8	3.39
Infrastructure	1	0	0	2	4	7	2.97
Agriculture	2	0	0	2	3	7	2.97
Economic development	0	1	0	0	6	7	2.97
Equal opportunities	4	0	0	2	1	7	2.97
Education	2	0	0	0	4	6	2.54
Public administration	1	2	0	2	1	6	2.54
Labour	1	2	0	1	2	6	2.54
Culture	2	0	0	2	1	5	2.12
Health and social security	2	0	0	1	1	4	1.69
Reforms	1	1	1	0	1	4	1.69
The regions	0	1	1	0	1	3	1.27
Relations with Parliament	0	0	0	0	2	2	0.85
Youth	1	0	0	0	0	1	0.42
Tourism	1	0	0	0	0	1	0.42

\* A bill often carries the signatures of multiple sponsors. The total for the number of bills sponsored by the various departments is therefore higher than the 236 presented by the Government

Source: CIRCaP database on Italian government's legislative activity

In the light of this it is interesting to note, in Figure 1, that emergency decrees, as a proportion of all the initiatives of the fourth Berlusconi government, show a progressive tendency to decline during the course of the legislature (amounting to 51.4 percent just six months ago excluding, as always, bills of ratification). This is also to be interpreted, in all probability, as the consequence of a tendency for the Government's strategy to "settle down" over time as the urgent matters and the priorities the new executive set itself at the beginning of the legislature have declined. If what was said above is valid, however, the relative contraction of urgent decree-making can perhaps be read as an initial symptom of the progressive weakening of the majority (above all in the last six months of 2010). A less cohesive majority, then, has left the Government with ever decreasing room, decreasingly exploitable, to "force" the ordinary legislative process.

*Figure 1: Changes in urgent decrees as percentages of all government bills since the start of the legislature (excluding ratifications)*



Source: CIRCaP database on Italian government's legislative activity

### **Legislative initiatives and the government's programme**

That recourse to urgent decree-making has long been a specific strategic choice on the part of the Government in the search for rapid implementation of measures deemed to be priorities, is confirmed by the way in which it has used the tool to further provisions linked to the objectives set out in its programmatic platform. Before considering this issue, however, it is worth recalling the assumptions of our analysis. What we are doing is classifying government bills as programmatic when their purpose is to implement (wholly or in part) the commitments made in the programme for government presented to the electorate at the time of the general election of 2008. The programme that was presented by the centre right is divided into seven general aims (for example, "To Re-ignite

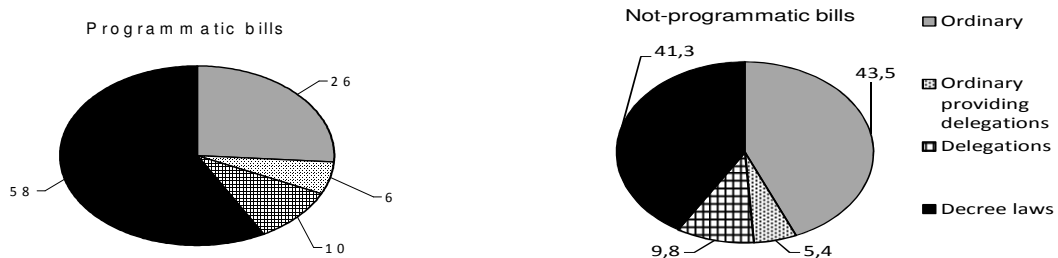
Economic Growth”) which are outlined in a series of objectives to be achieved (for example: “A new tax regime for enterprises”) each of which sets out a number of specific measures to be taken (for example: “Tax exemption for one-off payments, merit awards and incentives linked to increases in productivity”).<sup>2</sup>

In applying our classification we first used the results of the Government’s own monitoring activities, undertaken by the Department for Implementation of the Programme, which show, for each proposal passed by the Cabinet, the general aim to which it relates, as well as the programmatic objectives and the actions to which it is to be attributed. However, we use classification criteria that are more stringent and selective than the simple identification of the programmatic aims to which measures are linked. That is, we regard as programmatic only those initiatives for which it is possible to identify not only a generic programmatic aim, but also a more immediate, and in some sense more tangible and “measurable” programmatic objective.

We can now turn our attention to Figure 2 which shows that the Government has had a greater propensity to resort to urgent decrees when the measures to be piloted through Parliament have had to do with programmatic initiatives, than it has when the measures have not been directly linked to the election platform. We can see, in fact, that 58 percent of the initiatives of a programmatic kind have been embodied in proposals to convert decrees into ordinary laws, as against 41 percent of the non-programmatic proposals (ratifications being once again excluded). Besides urgent decree-making, we can see that programmatic initiatives have often been subject to procedures of an “exceptional” kind – such as the delegation of powers to the Government (or provisions for delegation contained in ordinary bills) – more generally. Thus, whereas ordinary bills account for 43 percent of non-programmatic measures, they account for only 26 percent of the measures designed to achieve the Government’s programmatic objectives.

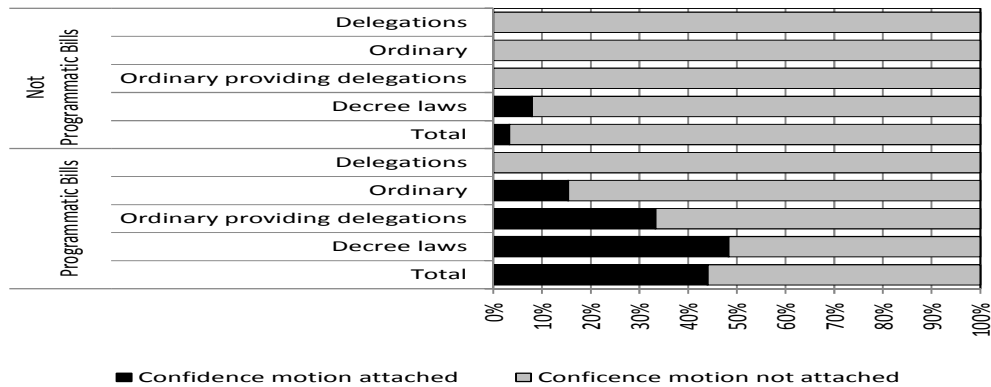
The executive has therefore maintained a rather “aggressive” attitude towards Parliament as it has attempted to achieve the passage of measures it considers as priorities and thus as significant enough to make up the electoral platform. Figure 3 provides important confirmation of this by showing that at least in relative terms, the programmatic initiatives have much more frequently than non-programmatic measures been subject to votes of confidence on the part of the executive: in 44 and 3.3 percent of the cases respectively.<sup>3</sup>

**Figure 2: Percentage distribution of bills among types of legislative instrument used by the Government, by the programmatic nature of the legislative initiative (excluding ratifications)**



Source: CIRCaP database on Italian government's legislative activity

**Figure 3: Bills made subject to confidence votes as percentages of the total: programmatic and non-programmatic bills (excluding ratifications)**



Source: CIRCaP database on Italian government's legislative activity

The figures in Table 3 show, aside from the procedures and the legislative tools used, how much of the legislative activity undertaken by the fourth Berlusconi government during the legislature has been of a programmatic nature. Excluding bills of ratification, slightly more than 35 percent of the legislative initiatives pursued by the executive in the two and a half years of the legislature have fallen into this category. We thus find confirmation of the tendency towards a relative decline in programmatic activity that we had observed at the end of the second year of the legislature when the percentage of legislative proposals directly linked to the Government's programme had amounted to 45.7 percent as compared to 52.2 percent at the end of the first twelve months of the Government's life. In the period from May to November 2010, therefore, the proportion of the Cabinet's legislative activity that was programmatic declined by about ten

percentage points. If a certain progressive deceleration in such activity as the legislature “ages” must be regarded as inevitable,<sup>4</sup> then the slow-down apparent in recent months appears too great to have been caused solely by the normal “mechanics” of a government’s life cycle.

**Table 3: Government bills linked to programmatic objectives as percentage of total (excluding ratifications)**

Type of bill	N	%
Bills	21	28.8
<i>Ordinary bills</i>	13	24.5
<i>Proposed laws of delegation</i>	5	35.7
<i>Bills including proposals for delegation</i>	3	37.5
Decree laws	29	43.3
Total	50	35.2

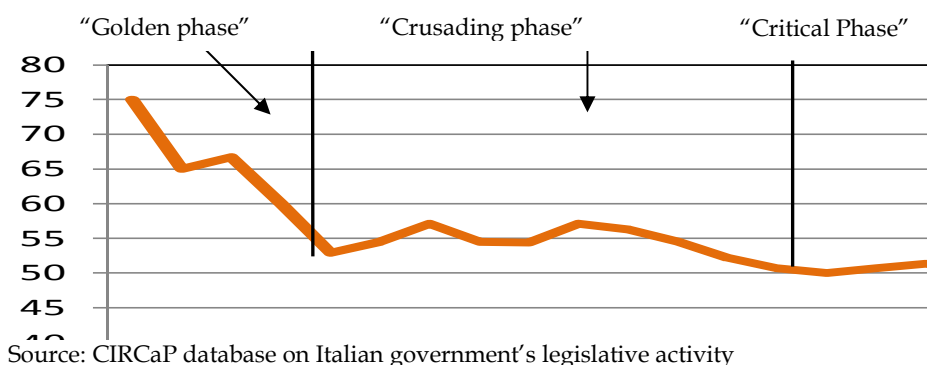
Source: CIRCaP database on Italian government’s legislative activity

A diachronic analysis of the executive’s capacity for programmatic legislation offers us an initial opportunity to establish whether, and to what extent, the events and conflicts within the majority in the second half of 2010, have influenced the work of the Government and had an impact on the overall levels of performance of the executive. In fact, what we can do here is to observe how the proportion of bills of a programmatic nature changes over time and to establish when, and to what extent, this proportion has shown significant oscillations.

Figure 4, which shows the over-time change in programmatic measures as a percentage of the total number of government initiatives (excluding ratifications) is from this perspective particularly suggestive. We can, in fact, distinguish three principal phases. An initial phase, which we shall call “golden”, coincides with the first four months of the legislature, immediately following the centre right’s election victory: months in which the proportion of Government activity that was programmatic exceeded 60 percent. The subsequent phase, which we can call “crusading” – one in which programmatic initiatives settled down at between 55/57 and 50 percent of the Government’s activity – lasted until the early months of 2010. This was succeeded by a phase that we will call “critical”, during which the percentage of programmatic initiatives declined to below 50 before reaching 35.2 at the end of November 2010. This phase is one whose timing largely coincides with the prolonged crisis that has affected political relations within the governing majority in recent months.



*Figure 4: Change in programmatic bills as percentage of total Government bills (excluding ratifications)*



Has the crisis within the majority thus diminished the decision-making capacity of the executive? Or is it, rather, that a reduction in the decision-making capacity of the Government has accentuated and accelerated the crisis (as many within the centre right itself have argued, not least those belonging to the component led by the president of the Chamber, Gianfranco Fini)? It is not for us, obviously, to choose between or advance one or the other of these two possible interpretations. What we certainly can say, however, is that in the most recent phase the executive seems to be showing real and growing difficulty in pursuing an agenda consisting of its own priorities.

On what programmatic objectives has the Government's activity been most heavily concentrated in the two and a half years of its mandate? The answer is given in Table 4, which shows the percentage of initiatives linked to each of the objectives contained in the programme for government. Here, a legislative initiative is associated with a specific objective (the first column of the table) when for at least one of its articles (or sections) it is possible to identify a link with the objective in question (so that a single initiative can thus be associated with more than one objective).

From the table we can see that most of the programmatic proposals presented to Parliament in the two and a half years of the legislature are associated with the objectives "A better system of justice" (24 percent of the programmatic proposals), "Infrastructure and telecommunications" (22 percent), "Greater security" (20 percent), "Reorganisation and digitisation of the public administration" (20 percent), "Lower taxes" (18 percent) and "Schools and universities; research and culture" (16 percent). Lower levels of activity are associated with the aim of improving the position of "The South" (with each objective counting for between 0 and 6 percent of the total number of initiatives of a programmatic nature).

**Table 4: Distribution of government bills of a programmatic kind, by type of bill and programmatic objective (excluding ratifications)**

<i>Objective</i>	<i>Ordinary bills</i>	<i>Decree laws</i>	<i>Proposed laws of delegation</i>	<i>Bills including proposals for delegation</i>	<i>Total</i>	<i>As % of total bills*</i>	<i>As % of programmatic bills</i>
Company taxation	1	6	0	0	7	4.9	14
Infrastructure	1	9	0	1	11	7.7	22
Employment	2	4	0	0	6	4.2	12
Liberalisation	0	4	0	0	4	2.8	8
Support for exports	2	4	0	0	6	4.2	12
Reorganisation public administration	2	5	2	1	10	7.0	20
Lower taxes	2	7	0	0	9	6.3	18
Homes for all	2	5	0	0	7	4.9	14
Better social services	2	2	0	0	4	2.8	8
Giving hope for the future to the young	0	1	0	0	1	0.7	2
Improved security	3	5	1	1	10	7.0	20
Better justice system	4	5	1	2	12	8.5	24
Health	1	1	0	1	3	2.1	6
Schools, universities, research	4	4	0	0	8	5.6	16
Environment	2	0	0	1	3	2.1	6
The South: Infrastructural planning	0	3	0	0	3	2.1	6
The South: Framework legislation	-	-	-	-	-	0.0	0
The South: Industrial development	-	-	-	-	-	0.0	0
The South: Compensatory taxation	1	1	0	0	2	1.4	4
The South: Fighting crime	-	-	-	-	-	0.0	0
Federalism: local authorities	0	1	1	0	2	1.4	4
Federalism: Local finance	0	3	1	0	4	2.8	8
Public finance	1	1	0	0	2	1.4	4

Source: CIRCaP database on Italian government's legislative activity

Table 5 completes our analysis of the relationship between the Government's programme and its legislative activity by showing how many of the specific "actions" set out in the document have been the object of legislative measures on the part of the executive. For each programmatic aim, the table shows the overall number of actions envisaged, and the number (and the percentage) of actions with which it is possible to associate at least one government initiative, or rather, at least one article (or section) of a bill passed by the Cabinet (excluding ratifications).

As above, what we have is an indicator of the way in which the work of the Government has been distributed between the various sections of the programme, not a measure of the degree to which its objectives have actually been achieved. The distribution of government initiatives gives us only an idea of how the executive's agenda has been taking shape in the two and half years of the legislature. It cannot tell us anything about the "quality" or effectiveness of the initiatives (nor, consequently, the extent to which these initiatives have achieved the results anticipated in the programme's statement of objectives).

**Table 5: Programmatic actions concerning which the Government has taken at least one legislative initiative (excluding ratifications)**

<i>Aim</i>	<i>Specific actions envisaged (N)</i>	<i>Actions made the object of an initiative (N)</i>	<i>% of actions made the object of an initiative</i>
Rikindling growth	31	15	48.39
Supporting the family	34	7	20.59
Security and justice	26	17	65.38
Public services	20	6	30.00
The South	9	2	22.22
Federalism	4	3	75.00
Public finance	1	1	100.00
Total	126	51	40.48

Source: CIRCaP database on Italian government's legislative activity

The programmatic document which the centre-right coalition presented at the general election of 2008 listed a total of 126 specific actions (distributed across the seven various aims) to be undertaken in five years of office. Of these, 51 (equal to 40.48 percent) have been the object of government legislative initiatives in the two and half years of the legislature. More interesting than the overall proportion of actions having been the object of initiatives (which, as noted, says nothing about the initiatives' effectiveness

or the actual achievement of the objectives) is the way in which the actions making up this proportion are distributed across the various aims. Exploring this issue reveals a picture similar to the one outlined before. Some aims, especially “Greater security; a better system of justice”; “Rikindling economic growth”, and the aim of achieving “Federalism” – have been the object of a significantly higher number of government initiatives than others.<sup>5</sup> Once again, the proportion of actions associated with the aim of improving the position of “The South” that have been the object of initiatives is particularly small. Thus, the percentage of actions envisaged by this aim to have been the object of government initiatives amounts to no more than 22. The aim of “Supporting the Family” has a similar percentage, at around 21.

### The rate of success in Parliament of government initiatives

As a final indicator of government performance, we will analyse the rate of success of the executive’s initiatives in Parliament. Table 6 shows the rate of success of government initiatives in Parliament by initiative type. Overall, 73 percent of the bills presented by the Cabinet have been definitively passed by Parliament in the short time the current legislature has been in existence. This percentage too is one in decline, albeit slightly, when compared with the corresponding percentage for the first two years of government (when the rate of transformation of government proposals into law amounted to 76 percent). Just two and a half years from the start of the legislature, it nevertheless remains high (the corresponding percentage at the end of the two years of the second Prodi government being a little above 44).

**Table 6: Government bills: success rate, average number of readings, and average time required for their approval**

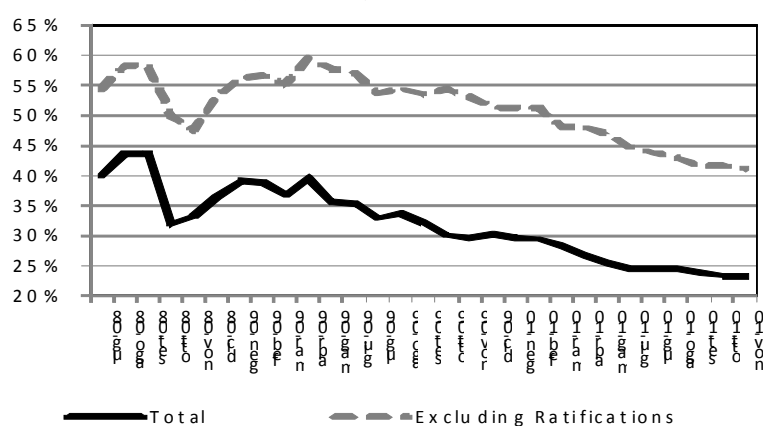
Type of bill	No. Approved	Bills approved as % of bills of the same type	Average no. Of readings	Average time required for approval (in days)
Bills	34	45.3	2.3	162.6
<i>Ordinary bills</i>	24	45.3	2.2	123,1
<i>Proposed laws of delegation</i>	5	35.7	2.6	317,2
<i>Bills including proposals for delegation</i>	5	62.5	2.6	297,4
Treaty ratifications	75	79.8	2.0	103
Decree laws	63	94.0	2.2	54
Total	172	72.9	2.2	99.8

Source: CIRCaP database on Italian government’s legislative activity

It is therefore apparent that the high success rate has been supported by the strategy of the Government which, we have seen, has often chosen to engage with Parliament through urgent decree-making: through instruments which, by their nature – as we can see from the figures for the average duration of the proceedings required to approve government measures (the last column of Table 6) – take about a third of the time that ordinary measures require on average to achieve parliamentary approval and finally to pass out of the assemblies of Chamber and Senate.<sup>6</sup>

If, then, the work of government really has encountered growing difficulties in the course of the legislature, these do not seem to have derived, in the first place, from the capacity of the executive to engage with Parliament. If anything, the greatest problems seem to have arisen before government proposals have been presented to Parliament and to reside in the growing difficulties shown by the executive in pursuing an agenda of significant decisions – thanks to its internal divisions according to some; thanks to the unfavourable international economic situation, according to others. The progressive decline in the rate of programmatic activity on which we focused above gives empirical support to this interpretation. And moreover, it cannot but correspond to a “deterioration” in the Government’s legislative output, which nevertheless, we have said, remains significant in quantitative terms. Thus, in Figure 5 we can see that, excluding ratifications, as a percentage of government measures approved definitively by Parliament, the proportion of laws of a programmatic nature goes from between 60 and slightly less than 55 percent (almost always registered until the end of 2009) to less than 50 percent from the beginning of 2010, and little more than 41 percent at the end of November 2010.<sup>7</sup>

**Figure 5: Programmatic measures as a percentage of all Government bills approved by Parliament**



Source: CIRCaP database on Italian government’s legislative activity

## Conclusion

Through this brief analysis we have once again considered the legislative performance of the fourth Berlusconi government. We have done so at a significant moment in the life of the legislature, that is, in the middle of a crisis in the governing majority. Beginning in the spring of 2010, this has seen a part of the majority itself defect from the coalition, while the executive itself has had to face crucial and dramatic confirmatory confidence votes held in Parliament's two branches.

In a certain sense, we have said, our analysis constitutes a final balance sheet of the legislative activity of an entire phase of government – one which came to an end after two and half years of the legislature – in anticipation of the start of a new phase, the nature of which will become clear in the months ahead. Above all, however, the analysis has provided empirical evidence that the recent period, one coinciding precisely with the emergence and development of conflicts within the governing majority, has marked a change for the worse in the decision-making capacity of the executive. All our indicators of the government's legislative performance show significant and concomitant declines from the start of 2010 onwards. In particular, we have seen that the proportion of initiatives of a programmatic nature goes down by ten percentage points between the beginning of April and the end of November 2010. So while, overall, the success rate of government bills has remained rather high (especially when compared with the corresponding rates for the most recent preceding governments such as Prodi's second administration), the "significant" measures (concerned with achievement of the objectives of the programme for government) approved definitively by Parliament have been progressively declining.

Some will say that the Government's growing difficulties are nothing other than the effects of the crisis within the majority that is supporting it; others, that the growing inefficacy of government activity has been the cause of the coalition's progressive break-up. It is not for us to favour one or the other of these interpretations. Certainly, we think that our data invite reflection on the impact the events of recent months have had on the strength and overall productivity of the government, and – if looked at with the coming months in mind – on the problems of governability which the current phase seems to portend for the immediate future.<sup>8</sup>

*Translated by James L. Newell*

## Notes

<sup>1</sup> To use a recent benchmark: the rate of recourse to urgent decree-making on the part of the second Prodi government, excluding ratifications, amounted to 29

percent, as against 47 percent, as we have mentioned, for the fourth Berlusconi government.

<sup>2</sup> See the appendix to this report for details concerning the structure and organisation of the programme for government.

<sup>3</sup> Rates have been remarkably high, relatively, in relation to decree laws, which have been subject to confidence votes in over 48 percent of the cases when linked to the programme for government (and in 7.9 percent of the cases when not so linked).

<sup>4</sup> This is something that would also be anticipated by an “accommodating” perspective on management of the Government’s agenda. This would consider it much more likely that the executive would concentrate on the measures on which the greater and more extensive compromises have been reached among the coalition parties, in the initial governing phase, immediately following an election victory. Alternatively, deceleration might be the result of the emergence, during the course of the legislature, of new situations and requirements (such as those deriving from the economic crisis) which naturally bring alterations in the priorities of the Government as compared to what was foreseen and established during the election campaign.

<sup>5</sup> The percentage relating to the aim of improving the “Public Finances” is also especially high, though as compared to the others, the figure is not very suggestive since the aim itself envisages only one programmatic action.

<sup>6</sup> The rate of success of government bills is in reality slightly lower (at a little over 68 percent), if bills ratifying treaties are excluded. In this case, the reduction in the rate of approval of government bills since the period covering the first two years of the legislature (when it was 75.2 percent) is sharper.

<sup>7</sup> The black line in Figure 5 refers to all government-initiated laws and thus includes ratifications. The figures are, obviously, significantly lower, but show a trend similar to the one just discussed.

<sup>8</sup> And perhaps especially after the latest votes of confidence, which have confirmed the support of Parliament for the government in office but which, in the case of the Chamber of Deputies, have seen the size of the Government’s majority reduced to just three or four.

## References

- CIRCaP, (2010), “V Report on the Government in Italy 2010”, available online at [www.gips.unisi.it/circap/publications/government-report](http://www.gips.unisi.it/circap/publications/government-report) (accessed 15 December 2010)
- Della Sala, V. and Kreppel, M. (1998), “Dancing without a Lead: legislative decrees in Italy”, in J. Carey and M. Shugart (eds.), *Executive decree authority*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, pp. 175-96.
- Giuliani, M. and Zucchini, F. (eds.) (2008), *Law-Making in Italy in the Age of Alternation*, special issue of *South European Society and Politics*, 13 (1).

*Appendix*  
*The structure of the programme for government:*  
*Aims, objectives and number of related actions*

Missions	Objectives	Number of actions envisaged
«Rikindling growth»	New tax regime for enterprises	8
	<i>Infrastructure, sources of energy</i>	10
	<i>Employment</i>	5
	<i>Liberalisation</i>	3
	<i>Support for exports</i>	4
	<i>Riorganisation public administration</i>	2
	<i>Total</i>	31
«Supporting the family»	<i>Lower taxes</i>	7
	<i>Homes for all</i>	7
	<i>Better social services</i>	14
	<i>The future of young people</i>	6
	<i>Total</i>	34
«Security and justice»	<i>Improved security</i>	12
	<i>Better system of justice</i>	14
	<i>Total</i>	26
«Public services»	<i>Health</i>	5
	<i>Schools and universities; research and culture</i>	10
	<i>Environment</i>	5
	<i>Total</i>	20
«The South»	Infrastructural planning	2
	Framework legislation	1
	Industrial development	2
	Compensatory taxation	2
	Fighting crime	2
	<i>Total</i>	9
«Federalism»	Local authorities	2
	Local finance	2
	<i>Total</i>	4
«Public finance»	<i>Agreement between state and regions: solidary fiscal federalism</i>	1
<b>Total</b>		<b>126</b>

Source: CIRCaP (2010)