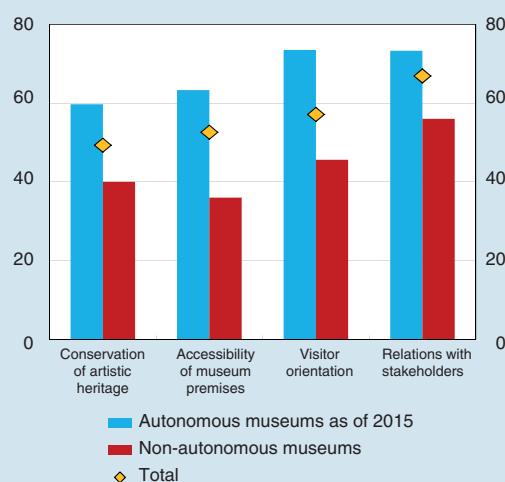


The conservation of and the accessibility to artistic heritage provides a service for the common good, improving social and human capital. The presence and exploitation of this heritage may also render a country more attractive to tourists, with positive repercussions on the local economy. The organizational structure and performance of museums are essential in carrying out these processes. In this regard, some recent studies have found that greater autonomy (accounting, organizational and operational) generally corresponds to better results, regardless of whether the museum is publicly- or privately-owned; this has been the case for Italian museums.¹

Some two thirds of Italian museums are public property; those belonging to the State, despite representing less than 10 per cent of the total, attract more than 40 per cent of visitors. Half of the latter are concentrated in 32 sites that since 2014 have been affected by sweeping reforms, through which wider margins of autonomy were recognized. Within this context, museum directors (selected by means of an international recruitment process) were given greater responsibilities: they are responsible for the museum's management, together with the board of directors.

A recent survey was carried out regarding the initiatives taken in the two years 2016-17 by 40 of the main state-owned museums and archaeological sites:² 20 were granted autonomy in 2015, another 10 in 2016, while 10 were not affected by the reform. To develop a performance indicator, the study used initiatives that address four areas of museum services: the conservation of artistic heritage, the accessibility of the museum's premises, visitor orientation, and relations with stakeholders.

Performance of state-owned museums in some areas of museum services (2016-17) (1)
(per cent)



Source: L. Leva, V. Menicucci, G. Roma and D. Ruggeri, op. cit.
(1) The performance indicator is calculated as the share of new initiatives taken during the reference period out of all the possible initiatives in each area of museum services. For autonomous museums as of 2015, only the first 20 museums and archaeological sites affected by the reform were considered; for non-autonomous museums, 10 museums not affected by the reform were considered (control group).

¹ E. Beretta, G. Firpo, A. Migliardi and D. Scalise, 'La valorizzazione del patrimonio artistico e culturale in Italia: confronti internazionali, divari territoriali, problemi e prospettive', Banca d'Italia, Quaderni di Economia e Finanza (Occasional Papers), forthcoming; E. Bertacchini, C. Dalle Nogare and R. Scuderi, 'Ownership, organization, structure and performance in public service provision: the case of museums', *Journal of Cultural Economics*, 42, 4, 2018, 619-643.

² L. Leva, V. Menicucci, G. Roma and D. Ruggeri, 'Innovazioni nella governance dei musei statali e gestione del patrimonio culturale: alcune evidenze da un'indagine della Banca d'Italia', Banca d'Italia, Quaderni di Economia e Finanza (Occasional Papers), forthcoming.

In the reference period, the services offered by autonomous museums expanded more markedly in all the areas considered (see the figure). In particular, the differences between museums that first became autonomous and museums not affected by this reform were statistically significant in the area of accessibility, which broadly refers to the ability to make use of a museum's premises, and in the area of visitor orientation. With regard to accessibility, nearly all the museums offered extended opening hours, but autonomous museums adopted more initiatives geared at adjusting their hours of operation and the number of days they are open and at offering online ticket purchase. In order to increase the usability of museums and the interest of visitors, autonomous museums have taken more steps to expand their artwork and to rotate the art collections on exhibit, improve the information available during the visit (e.g. didactic panels, audio-visual media, guided tours) and enlarge the number of ancillary services (e.g. bookstores and dining services).