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## **Mobile Phone Data for Enhanced Tourism Statistics in Italy: Insights from Vodafone-Istat Project Foundation**

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### *Abstract*

Turning to alternative data sources to produce official statistics has become an increasingly focal theme. This work provides an overview of the activities and findings from the concluding phase of the Project Foundation (PJ), a collaborative initiative between Vodafone (MNO) and Istat, still on going, to share this national experience from a thematic point of view. Following a preliminary phase, called Sprint, conducted in Sept-Nov 2020, and aimed at a first exploration of the potential of mobile data in provide estimations/trends on arrivals and nights spent in Italy (domestic tourism and inbound tourism), the PF is exploring some aspects in depth, first of all: the convergence improvement of the conceptual definitions and classifications. The work reports the methodological challenges faced during the first phase of the project, the modifications made, the improvements achieved through the Project Foundation and what it does not work so far. The analysis, focused on 2 Italian Regions and for 16 months, compares Vodafone estimations and Istat official data deriving from the survey “Occupancy in collective accommodation establishments”, and suggests cautious optimism in utilizing mobile data for official tourism statistics and highlights the potential use of MNO data for trend estimations. However, challenges remain, necessitating further refinement and cautious consideration of potential use at national level.