

# Legal research quality assessment: A survey on legal monographs in Italy

## Non-Bibliometric Analysis of book evaluation

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# The role of legal scholarship

Essential role of legal literature in the global context

- Link to legal practice
- Influence and connection with other disciplines
- Methodological diversity and interdisciplinary nature
- Impact and implications on society, for the development of new policies and legislation.

# Typologies of legal scholarship

- Journal article
- **Monograph**
- Contribution in edited volumes
- Contribution in conference proceedings
- Case note
- Commentaries
- Contribution on encyclopedias
- Critical edition
- Review

# The project

**Funded** by ANVUR - Agenzia per la Valutazione del Sistema Universitario e della Ricerca

**Research question:** Opportunity to identify specific indicators to support the evaluation of the quality of legal monographs (*informed peer review*)

## Research methodology:

- **National survey**, via a questionnaire for legal scholars (4.700) + focus groups on specific topics.
- International Survey via LERU (quite difficult to reach the League)
- Comparative analysis (France, England, The Netherlands).

# The national survey

4.645: Invitation sent

4.501: Invitation arrived

1.241: Answers received (26% of the target population)

## Three sections:

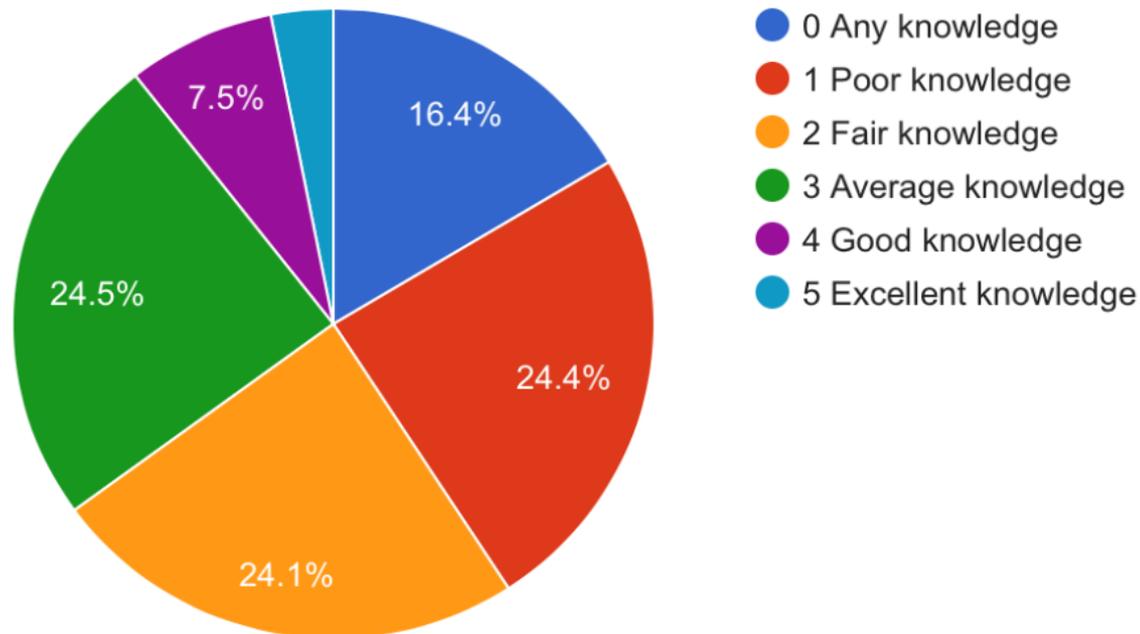
1. Experience and knowledge of respondents
2. Indicators of the assessment of legal monographs
  - Definition of legal monographs
  - **Quality and impact indicators for legal monographs**
  - Focus of specific aspects of indicators (ranking of publishers and series, usefulness of citation databases...
3. General information on respondents

*Free comments space available*

# Distribution according to areas of law

Areas of law	MIUR staff	Invited	Respondents	Response rate (%)
IUS01 - Private Law	688	677	143	21,12
IUS02 - Comparative Private Law	162	161	43	26,71
IUS03 – Agri-food Law	41	40	12	30,00
IUS04 - Business law	408	390	113	28,97
IUS05 - Economics Law	66	65	22	33,85
IUS06 - Navigation and Air Law	47	45	9	20,00
IUS07 - Labour Law	295	294	77	26,19
IUS08 - Constitutional Law	234	230	73	31,74
IUS09 - Public Law	285	277	39	14,08
IUS10 - Administrative law	422	410	90	21,95
IUS11 - Ecclesiastical and Canon Law	111	109	33	30,28
IUS12 - Tax Law	186	184	40	21,74
IUS13 - International Law	265	260	72	27,69
IUS14 - European Union Law	106	103	33	32,04
IUS15 – Civil Procedural Law	199	196	45	22,96
IUS16 – Criminal Procedure	185	181	35	19,34
IUS17 - Criminal Law	274	273	66	24,18
IUS18 - Roman and Ancient law	235	235	75	31,91
IUS19 - History of Medieval and Modern Law	159	157	58	36,94
IUS20 - Philosophy of Law	229	227	97	42,73
IUS21 - Comparative Public Law	132	131	41	31,30

# Familiarity with bibliometrics



# The 3 quality dimensions envisaged

Three different **dimensions of quality**:

1. the quality *tout court*
2. the impact and dissemination within the scientific community of a monograph ('impact on scientific community');
3. the societal impact of a monograph.

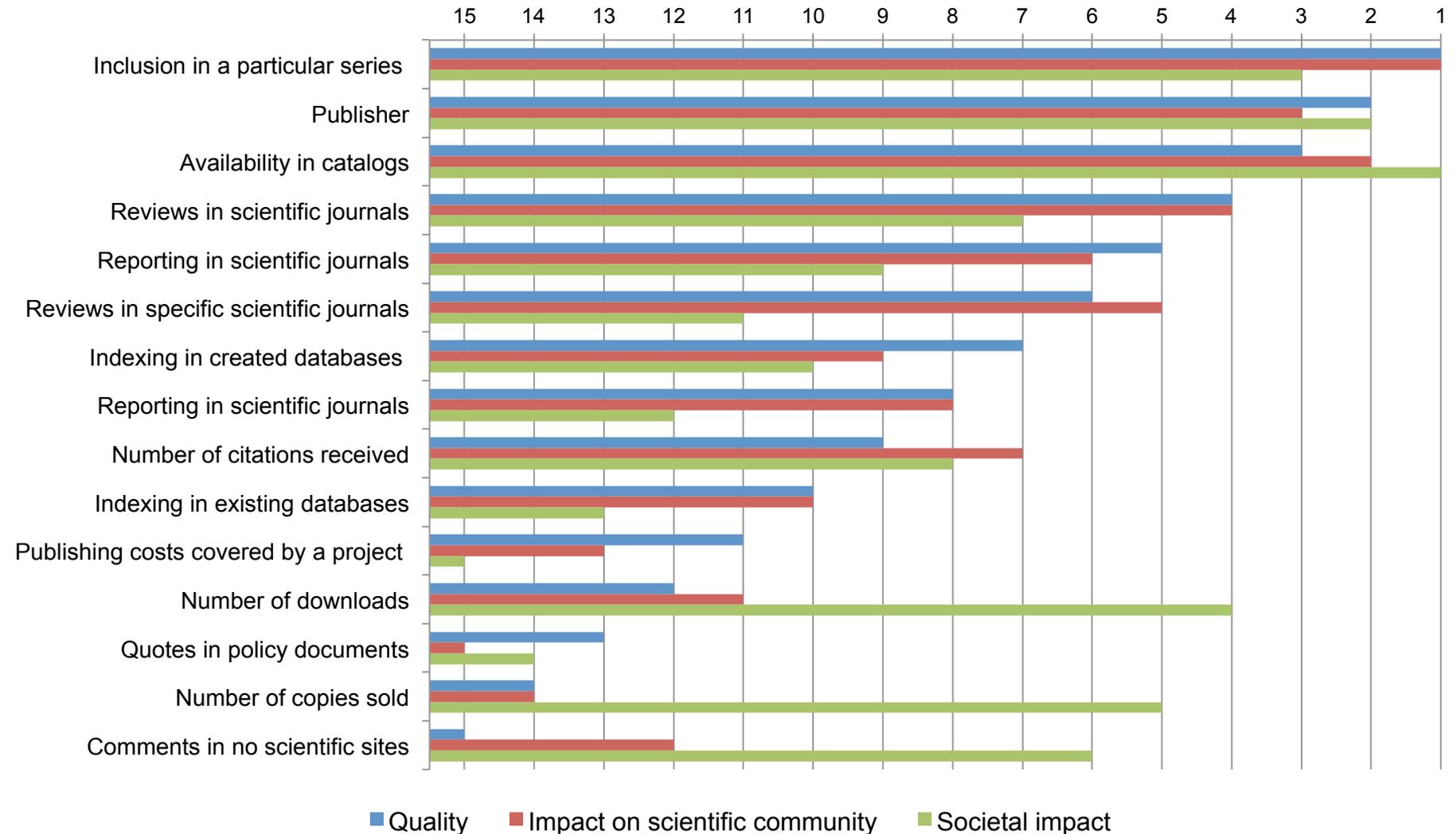
# Indicators for assessing the quality of legal monographs

- Publisher
- Inclusion in a particular series with special characteristics (review process...)
- Availability in the catalogs of national and international libraries
- Indexing in existing citation databases (Web of Science, Scopus, SSRN ...)
- Indexing in citation databases specifically created for the legal domain
- Number of citations received
- Reviews in scientific journals
- Reviews in specific scientific journals (only highly ranked journals)
- Reporting in scientific journals
- Reporting in specific scientific journals (only highly ranked journals)
- Comments and citations in no scientific sites (e.g. Newspapers)
- Number of copies sold
- Number of downloads in case of monograph available online
- Publishing cost covered by a research project financed on the basis of an evaluation process
- Quotes in policy documents

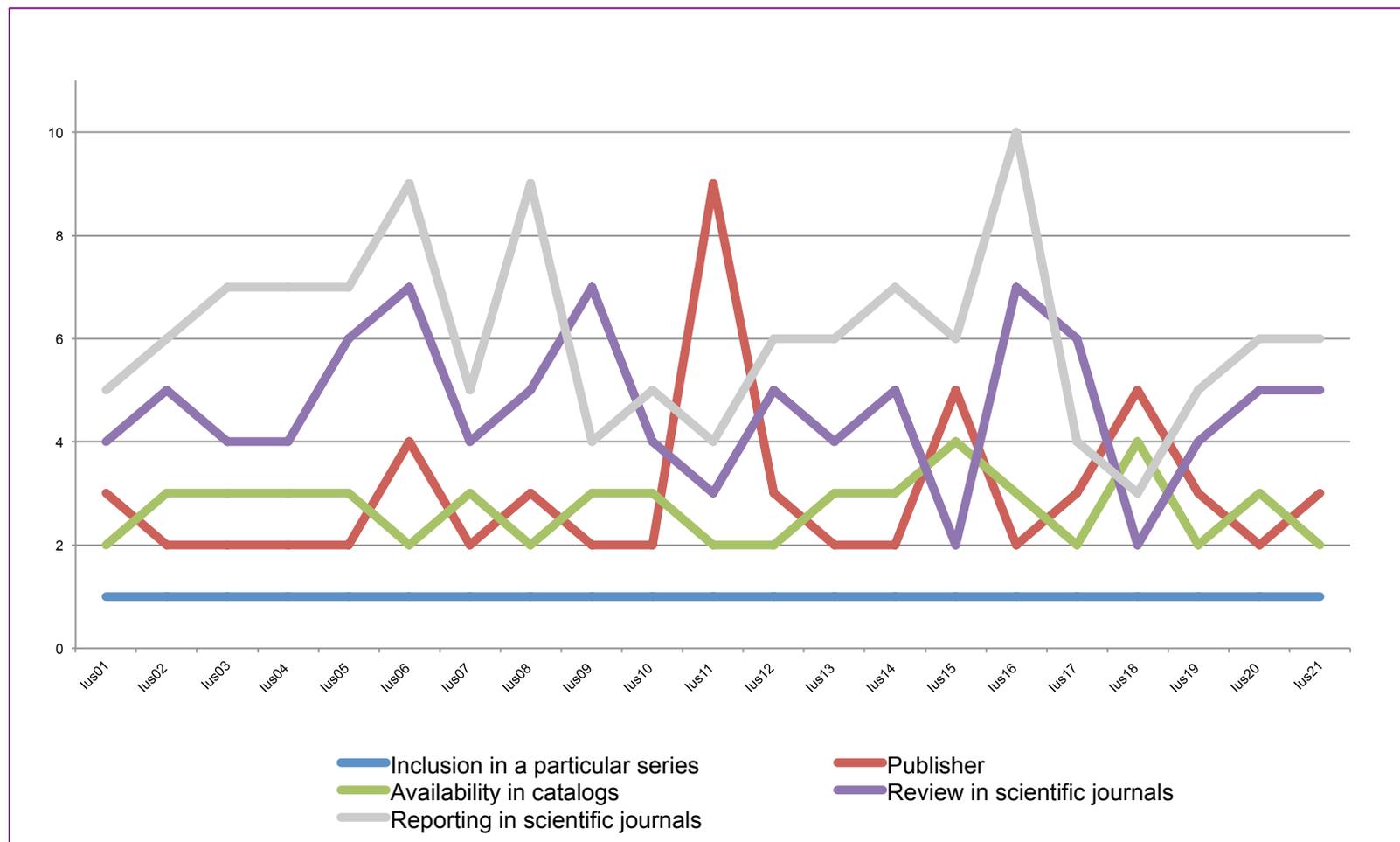
# The first five positions of indicators

	Quality	Impact on scientific community	Societal impact
◦1	Inclusion in a particular series with special characteristics (review process...)	Inclusion in a particular series with special characteristics (review process...)	Availability in the catalogs of national and international libraries (except for the legal deposit)
◦2	Publisher	Availability in the catalogs of national and international libraries (except for the legal deposit)	Publisher
◦3	Availability in the catalogs of national and international libraries (except for the legal deposit)	Publisher	Inclusion in a particular series with special characteristics (review process...) ...
◦4	Reviews in scientific journals	Reviews in scientific journals	Download numbers in the case of monograph available online
◦5	Reporting in scientific journals	Comments and citations in no scientific sites	Number of copies sold

# Ranking of indicators for the three dimensions

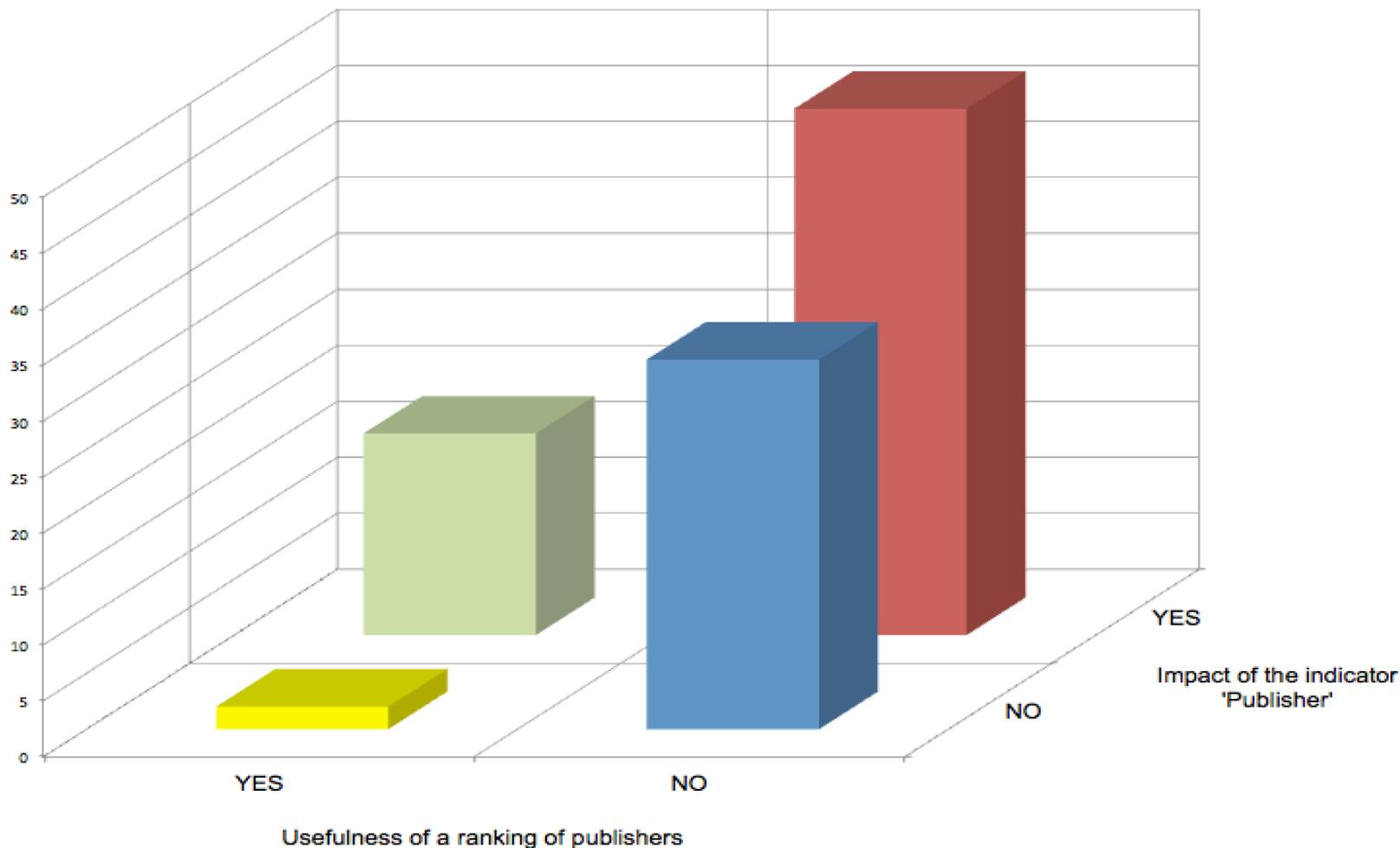


# Position of top five indicators of quality according to each areas of law



# Ranking of publisher

Comparison between the answers to questions about the usefulness of a ranking of publishers and answers on the impact of the indicator 'Publisher' with reference to quality



## Food for thought

- Monographs as the principal 'coin of the realm'
- Peer review (non-blind) as the standard for assessing the quality of legal monograph
- Implicit recognition of publisher relevance but no consensus to the formalization of ranking of publishers
- Internationalization: which value?
- Societal impact: hard to measure
- Lack of qualification of reviewers

... see more in G. Peruginelli, *Research Quality Evaluation: The Case of Legal Studies*, in A. Bonaccorsi (ed.), *The Evaluation of Research in Social Sciences and Humanities. Lessons from the Italian Experience*, Springer, 2018

# Key elements to have in mind and to take action

- Quality indicators should not be imposed upon legal scholars in a top down way
- Need for transparency and accountability of legal evaluation process
- Desirable harmonisation of legal research assessment exercises at European level
- Leading role of legal scholars in order to avoid negative effects (restrictions on academic freedom, approval ...).

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