

## SUMMARY OF THE CAPIRe CONFERENCE on

September 30<sup>th</sup> 2010

Milano, Italy

On September 30<sup>th</sup>, Progetto CAPIRe organized in Milan a Conference on *Program Evaluation, Legislatures and Public Debate. the US Experience and its implications for Italian Regions* ("Valutazione delle politiche, processo legislativo e dibattito pubblico. Riflessioni sull'esperienza americana e le possibili applicazioni alle regioni italiane"). The Conference was open to elected officials, administrators, academics and practitioners. The participants were about 120. The purpose of the Conference was to provide a better understanding of policy analysis and program evaluation, by looking in-depth to the US experience with legislative oversight.

### Why Progetto CAPIRe

In 2002 the Legislative Assemblies of four Italian Regions' together with ASVAPP, a non profit research organization, started Progetto CAPIRe (Controllo delle Assemblee sulle Politiche e gli Interventi Regionali – Legislative Oversight On Regional Policies).<sup>1</sup> The goals were to strengthen the role of policy evaluation in the legislative process and to improve accountability of the Executive branch of the Regional governments toward the Legislatures. Recognizing its importance, the National Conference of Regional Legislatures began funding the project in 2006.

Another stimulus for the project came from the constitutional reform of 2001, which strengthened the power of the Executive branch of the Regional governments at the expense of the Legislative branch. In this transformed scenario, the Regional Legislatures began to perceive the need to develop a strong *Legislative Oversight* function. The mission of CAPIRe is to support the Italian Regional Legislatures to develop rules, methods and evaluation expertise to enable them to conduct effective legislative oversight.

### The debate at the Conference

The speakers of the Conference were:

- **Davide Boni**, President of the Legislative Assembly of Lombardia and Chair of the National Conference of Regional Legislatures;
- **Alberto Martini**, Director of Progetto CAPIRe and Professor of Statistics and Program Evaluation at University of Piedmont;
- **Doug Besharov**, Professor of Policy Analysis at University of Maryland;
- **Elio Borgonovi**, Professor of Economics and Public Management at Bocconi University (Milano);
- **Giancarlo Vecchi**, Professor of Policy Analysis at the Polytechnic of Milano;
- **Filippo Penati**, Vice President of Legislative Assembly of Lombardia;
- **Onofrio Introna**, President of Legislative Assembly of Puglia and "Legislative Oversight and Program Evaluation" teamwork coordinator for the National Conference of Regional Legislatures.

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<sup>1</sup> Emilia-Romagna, Lombardia, Piemonte and Toscana

The following representatives of regional parliaments took part in the ensuing debate: **Orfeo Goracci**, Vice President of Legislative Assembly of Umbria; **Monica Donini**, Former President of Legislative Assembly of Emilia-Romagna and Chairperson of Health and Human Services Policy Committee; **Roberto Placido**, Vice President of the Legislative Assembly of Piemonte; **Marco Lombardi**, Chair of the Finance Committee of the Legislative Assembly of Emilia-Romagna.

**President Boni** opened the Conference with a short introduction detailing: (1) the mission of Progetto CAPIRe; (2) how the Parliament of Lombardia is improving its oversight capacity; (3) the aims of the Conference.

**Professor Martini** spoke about the U.S. experience of legislative program evaluation. He cited some congressional support agencies such as GAO (Government Accountability Office) of the CRS (Congressional Research Service) and some performance evaluation offices that operate within State Legislatures.

The lecture by **Professor Besharov** examined challenges and opportunities of modern policy analysis in the context of education policy. Starting from a definition of policy analysis as *"a systematic application of multiple research and analytic methods to understand a problem and then determine which of various alternative policies or programs might best achieve a specified goal"*, he made several examples to illustrate which questions a policy analyst must face and what kind of evidence must produce to inform policy decisions.

**Professor Borgonovi**, **professor Vecchi** and **Vice President Penati** discussed Besharov's presentation from different standpoints. Prof. Borgonovi, an expert of management systems in public administration, underlined the role of policy analysis in the organizational learning process. Prof. Vecchi, a political scientist, argued that results of policy analysis can't take the place of political criteria in the decision process, but policy analysis can facilitate the negotiation process between different interests. Vice President Penati remarked the need of an evidence based policy movement in Italy and the importance of credible and non-partisan research and policy institutes.

**President Introna** concluded the Conference stressing three key-points: (1) the importance of creating, in regional assemblies, "legislative oversight committees", equally divided between the majority and minority parties, to guarantee a credible and non partisan use of policy analysis and program evaluation; (2) the strong need of recruiting and training high-qualified policy analysts within regional legislatures; (3) the hope that Italian public administrations use policy analysis and program evaluation also to improve democratic accountability and citizen participation in decision-making.