

Reset, n. 101 May-June 2007

The first time in Italy

Mauro Buonocore

A few months after Regione Lazio realized the informed poll in cooperation with Reset and Ispo, the regional government has passed the first measures that largely include the suggestions that emerged from those consultations. It was on December 3rd 2006 when informed polls, the Italian application of Deliberative Polls, made their first appearance in our country.

The initiative revealed to be successful as underlined, in particular, by the great appreciation shown by the participants and their desire to take part to similar events in the future. In Italy the informed polls have proved to be an efficient instrument to improve the quality of public opinion and the citizens' knowledge about issues of public interest, as they had already demonstrated in several other foreign applications. They reveal their usefulness not only for those who have to form an idea, but also for those who must translate politics into the practice of government concrete actions.

The focus was on Lazio health care system. The Region had just announced it had inherited a debt of more than 10 millions euro in the health care budgets from the previous administration of center-right; a reorganization was necessary, and they needed to find a way to optimize the structures' efficiency and reduce the costs.

At the end of the informed poll, more than 70% of the sample was for a reorganization of the hospital network, a reorganization that would provide the reduction of the beds for hospitalization, (in Lazio the beds number was much higher than the national average), they were for the realization of structures such as outpatients clinics distributed on the territory. And it is toward that direction that the Region's reform is moving.

The regional council treasurer who was one of the chief protagonists of last December informed poll, Luigi Nieri declares that: «The plan to pay off the health care debt provides a reduction of about 1700 beds but, at the same time, it outlines a reorganization of the hospital network on the territory on the basis of the citizens' real needs; moreover a few days ago some resolutions were passed and they provide the reconversion of traditional beds into structures that are more adequate to the needs of local communities.»

At its beginning in Italy, the informed poll sets itself up as an instrument that is useful and efficient for government practice. «It was an exciting experience that has shown how great is the people's desire to participate and to express their opinion – Neri concluded –. It's exactly what we want: encouraging direct participation to democratic life and promoting new transparency practices. An efficient way to prevent attempts of dishonesty and corruption.»