

***Investigation about reporting
at the Regional Councils in Italy
and education of new reporter
(work in progress)***



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- IPRS meeting -

Budapest, 3rd October 2010



The “origins” of this investigation

- The investigation is also a result of a sensitivity of the “Giuseppe Aliprandi” Italian Academy, in order to better know the ways utilized by Regional Councils to publish their reports
- Regional Councils in Italy (in number of 20) were invited to answer some questions so that we can compare different ways to proceed and also common rules in the reporting field

Italians Regions



Questions

- The 6 main basic points asked:
- 1) If reporting is carried out by an internal staff or outside companies (or by a synergy between them)
- 2) the number of people involved in reporting
- 3) if also summary reports are drawn up
- 4) the number of parliamentary sessions (in a month and in the last legislature)
- 5) the way for transcription used (shorthand, stenotype, speech recognition, typing)
- 6) professional examination in order to verify abilities of candidates for recruitment

Up-to-dated results...

- 11 Regional Councils answered the questions, that is about half the total
- From this investigation, a first datum appears about the Reporting Service: in some cases, it is an independent service, in other cases it is a part of a bigger Service, like the Assembly Service or General Secretariat

Internal/External staff

I want to underline the experience of Calabria's Regional Council and my Administration which recently held a selection for reporters and assistants for transcription, thanks to public examinations

In the first examination at the Sicily's Assembly, a shorthand passage was proposed: total duration 5 minutes (like the duration of the speech to be typed for the reports), provided for a 90-word speed in the last minute. 46 candidates passed the test to a new examination: 300 characters per minute (total duration test, 5 minutes)

However, in many Regional Councils (also Calabria and Tuscany, Molise, Liguria, Basilicata, Aosta Valley, Lombardy as well) outside companies cooperate with the internal staff for reporting. Generally, companies carry out the transcription of files, the internal staff review the work of companies and publish the official reports

Among the up-to-date results, in three Councils (Piemonte, Trentino Alto Adige and my Regional Assembly) only internal staff provide the entire process of reporting, from transcription to the end. Also in another Region (Emilia Romagna), reporting is guaranteed by the internal staff, but now the Administration is preparing a contract in order to outsource the activity of transcription, by granting to have a strong synergy between internal and external staff in the future

This is the perspective in my opinion: transcription carried out by external companies, revision by internal services (with lower costs for Administration, being services "on demand")

The number of employees

- 10 officials in Calabria, 4 in Basilicata (besides, for external company, 4 employees of it alternate themselves for transcriptions)
- 7 officials in Aosta Valley: 3 secretaries and 4 assistants
- 4 officials in Lombardy and 4 assistants. Also 4 units are employed in Molise's Council (1 internal unit, 3 of the external staff). 4 officials are employed in Tuscany's Council too.
- 2 employees (for checking) in Liguria and an external staff for reporting the speech
- 13 officials in Piemonte: one of these provides all administrative tasks (suppliers, service stenotype machines and so on)
- 3 officials are involved in Trentino Alto Adige: (only 1-2 sessions per month, but for the whole day) and reports are drawn up in 2 languages (Italian and German) for historical reasons (in this Region there is also a minority of people speaking German)
- In my Administration, 6 shorthanders and 10 assistants are involved for 5 hours of speech: shorthanders alternate themselves every 30 minutes and assistants every 5 minutes. Shorthanders and assistants are also involved in other services when the Assembly does not work. A stenographer provides summary reports for Finance Commission, also other legislative Commissions may require full reports for their works.

Summary and full reports

- Until March 2004, the Regional Council of Basilicata also drew up the summary, performed by internal staff, trained by reporters of the Italian Senate. As above mentioned, summary reports are furthermore drawn up in my Administration, and in the Council of Calabria: here, in fact, the Sector is divided into two services, for summary and full reports
- In other Councils, only full reports are drawn up (in Lombardy, besides, the summary is not to be provided by the internal regulation any more)

Times for printing

- In Sicily, it is possible to publish a temporary report a few hours after the end of parliamentary works. That is the same model used in the two Parliamentary Chambers in Italy. Generally, the final reports are ready after two weeks. Before this document is issued, deputies can correct the text, just the form, not the content
- Usually a week in Calabria (for the temporary report), but a summary is published on the web during the legislative works. In Molise the company must deliver the temporary text before the next meeting, 7 days are available for councillors to make formal corrections
- In Liguria's Council the temporary report is published within 2 days, the final one after a week.
- A temporary report is also published on the web in Basilicata, in progress with the activity: the revised report is ready after a few days, but the final document must be approved by the Council at the next meeting
- In Lombardy, the company must deliver the transcription within 2 days after the event happens
- An average period of 15 days in Trentino; 36 days in Aosta Valley; this result feels the effect of the times of delivery for the transcription by the outside company (on average 8 days) and furthermore 10 days for councillors who can review the text for formal corrections. Also in Piemonte, generally, the final report is ready within a month
- Regulations of Emilia Romagna Council grant the councillors a week in order to make their corrections regarding the "pure form" of the text. After this period, the transcription is considered "final".

The “amount” of reporting

- Homogeneous data not always being available, a generic number of sessions would have been not relevant for investigating. On the other hand, we have appreciated in a 5 year legislature a considerable quantity of hours of speech, as shown below:
- Calabria's Council: 110 meetings in the passed legislature, at least one meeting per month and legislative Committees 7 times per month. Medium duration of each 2 hours and half, a lot of meetings during the financial session, generally never less than 10 hours per event
- In Basilicata, normally 2 meetings in a month, in a legislature they count between 150 and 200 sessions, for a total duration of about 1000 hours. Total duration is the same in Molise's Council
- In Piemonte, in this legislature (three-year period, 2006-2008), a total of 345 meetings and 900 hours of activity, with an average of about 3 hours per event
- In Aosta Valley, an average of less than 4 hours for each meeting
- The Lombardy's Council: during the period 2005-2008, 113 sessions, total duration 564 hours, so an average of 5 hours for each meeting
- 71 meetings for the Trentino's Council, total duration 426 hours, so an average of 6 hours for each meeting
- 208 meetings in Tuscany, in the last legislature, total duration 879 hours, an average of 4 hours
- 300 meetings in Liguria, an average of 3 hours for each session
- Sicily's Assembly: till today, more than 190 meetings, total duration more than 500 hours, an average of 2 hours and half
- In Emilia Romagna, in this legislature, an average of 4 meetings per month, with an estimated total duration of 600 hours

Techniques for reporting

- Typing is largely used for transcription: this is the way used in Calabria, Aosta Valley, Trentino, Emilia Romagna, Molise, Basilicata and fundamentally also in Sicily's Assembly, since assistants usually type the previously shorthanded text, also by listening to the audio-record. Two years ago, my Administration decided to start the testing of speech-recognition: this test only concerned the first passage, that is the transcription carried out by the assistants (second passage: stenographers check the text)
- Speech recognition is used by the company involved in reporting for Lombardy's Council and also in Liguria. In Piemonte, two years ago, speech recognition was acquired such as an alternative way for the text transcription, but it was really used only by a few colleagues in the peak-work: generally they use stenotype machines
- Stenotype machines were also used in the past in Basilicata and nowadays this technique is used in Tuscany (by an external company)

Recruitment

- Obviously, where the transcription service is outsourced, Administrations do not proceed to new procedures for recruitment of new reporters/stenographers
- Selections were held in Calabria and in my Administrations as above indicated
- A specific recruitment happened also in Piemonte; the last selection was held in 2000: a shorthand passage (by stenotype)
- In Basilicata, in 1985, a vocational training course took place for stenotype reporters, implemented during 9 months (8 hours a day)
- In Trentino selections consist in technical tests in order to verify a good knowledge of the office automation softwares, Outlook, the use of Internet... In other words, no specific recruitment to test the speed writing
- In Aosta Valley, Liguria and Molise no specific profile or recruitment is involved in reporting
- Also in Emilia Romagna, there is not a specific recruitment, but the Administration expressly agrees on a training course in the sector (as a stage for employees who want to report the meetings)
- In Tuscany, the Reports Service has developed a “manual for corrections”, by inserting the main “rules” for interpreting the speech, in order to manage the diamesic variation “spoken/written”, spelling, syntax, and citation of foreign words

Training in speech-capturing

- An educational project was held in Sicily (2006), by a partnership of public and private bodies, for “multimedia reporter”, financed by the European Social Fund. This project consisted of 620 hours in total, classes held for 495 hours and 13 modules, among which Fundamentals of shorthand writing, speech recognition, speed writing (70/80 wpm for shorthand and 100 wpm and over for speech recognition), introducing to the profession, parliamentary and regional law, reporting, IT, English as a foreign language, Professional Orientation
- Mean age of candidates: 25 years old. 18% of them with a University Degree, 37% University students and 85% who had never studied shorthand or respeaking
- Italian Senate also organized, in 2003, a training for parliamentary stenotypists
- In my opinion, also Universities should provide specific degrees in reporting

Intersteno for training

- Intersteno founded the Education Committee, with the goal to collect educational specialists from every country in order to do the best “to get standardization and normalization of international steno education (...) also to improve spreading of advanced ideas and methods on education” (*Chairman’s welcome speech, Mr. Tang Keliang*)
- In my opinion, Education Committee, as soon as it defines an educational platform for “reporters”, could entrust every country to perform it, so that we can have common educational rules in our field, without neglecting the specific features of the parliamentary reporting, a field in which IPRS must bring about a fundamental synergy with the Committee
- I want to point out that Intersteno should become the world leader in the training of professional reporters



THANKS!