



CS1. Studies on national media research capability as a contextual domain of the sources of ROs

The aim of the **first case study** is to describe and analyse the **countries' monitoring capability**: the ability and possibilities of various agents to observe the developments of the media and the changes in society emanating from the media transformations, as well as related risks and opportunities for deliberative communication, and applying the obtained knowledge in making media political decisions.

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ITALY

Risks and Opportunities Related to Media and Journalism Studies (2000–2020). Case Study on the National Research and Monitoring Capabilities

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Executive Summary

In this report we assess the state of the matter of the governance and the role of media in the case of Italian democracy based on deliberative communication. We explain how legal and ethical regulation, journalistic production, media usage patterns and media literacy influence and determine the development of democracy. Finally, employing the field theory of Bourdieu, we describe the Italian media ecosystem in terms of risks and opportunities for deliberative communication, and, more broadly, deliberative democracy.

1. Introduction

In this report Italian team analyzes the risks and opportunities regarding governance and media landscape in Italy¹⁷⁴ based on deliberative communication. To introduce this report, we present: firstly, the main traditions and trends in the last twenty years (2000-2020) and the present-day situation of the Italian media research and monitoring system; secondly, the structural peculiarities that may be important for this report and that determine the risks and opportunities related to deliberative communication (and its four domains); thirdly, the institutions, bodies and actors of media, communication, journalism research, education institutions, transnational organizations that monitor media systems globally, large comparative research projects that collect data periodically and produce comparative analysis over certain periods, units in the media industry structures or linked to media, scholars and research groups in universities, independent organizations or professional associations, and organizations that may be regarded as a branch of Government or public body; fourthly, the funding system of media research and monitoring (public, private, project-based, etc.); and, fifthly, the national research database and most important journals in the area of communication and journalism.

1.1. Main traditions and trends in the 21st century and current situation of the media research and monitoring system in Italy

In the Italian social sciences, public opinion and research community debates, the legal/normative discourse is notoriously dominant in terms of risks and opportunities for deliberative communication (see for example Splendore 2017b concerning the regulations of journalistic activity or Padovani *et al.* 2021). This means that even in the media and journalism — as

¹⁷⁴ Italy is a country with a population of 59,066,225 (2021) that maintains a negative growth of -0.6. The index of Individuals using the Internet (% of Italians that have used the Internet in the last 3 months) is 70, according to the International Telecommunication Union (ITU, 2020) and Telecom Italia (Ministry of Economic Development-Communication).

a profession, when different actors (practitioners, stakeholders, or users of media content) want to improve the quality or effectiveness of their work, they must necessarily succeed in introducing or changing legal regulations. This situation explains why one of the characteristics of the field we are analyzing here is precisely the little recognition that many actors (excluding government bodies) have. This also means that, within the Italian context, the legal domain takes on even greater importance.

The Italian media environment has traditionally been characterised by a particularly strong television sector (although it is declining slightly) and a weak and declining newspaper sector, according to The Reuters Institute for the Study of Journalism in its Digital News Report 2022. In the first decade of the new millennium, the case of the transition from analog television to digital television was paradigmatic of the importance of the regulatory body as well as the irrelevant attention that academic studies receive.

Despite the copious scientific production on the subject (Balbi & Prario, 2009; Prario, 2007; D'Arma 2009) the discourse was almost exclusively legal (and political), with monitoring and document production of *Autorità per le Garanzie nelle Comunicazioni* (AGCOM)¹⁷⁵ as the most relevant body/authority to preside over the switch-over. Many scholars repeatedly recommended legislative reform to strengthen the independence of AGCOM, especially the exclusion of the Government from appointing any board members (Mazzoleni *et al.* 2021). We will return to this case in the following paragraph in relation to the question of pluralism.

More recently, a different case took place, related to public access to data and the introduction of a *Freedom of Information Act* (FOIA)¹⁷⁶ (May 2016), granting everyone the right to access documents held by public bodies. If in the case of the switch to digital terrestrial the game was almost entirely political and played through AGCOM, the question linked to open data appeared instead quite different. This theme is related to the field that we are analyzing here on at least three levels (see Porlezza & Splendore, 2021):

- 1) It has precisely to do with public access to data of public interest, generated by the public administration (those data may also include data related to the functioning of the media). Their “publicity” is necessary to increase citizens' knowledge on several levels and to allow them a more accurate “deliberative communication”.
- 2) The open data debate involved data-journalists as the main stakeholder, who need reliable data flows to produce adequate information.
- 3) This debate concerns the transformations of media and technology on which the growth of data journalism strictly depends.

The work of journalists and various associations and pressure groups was able to pass a FOIA. The approval of a FOIA may only apparently seem less important than the digital transition. Beyond the scope of the two changes, what appears evident in the difference between the two situations is that in the second case the change in the ecology of the media has led to greater focus in the introduction of the law. The transition from digital television certainly took place in a different political climate in which one of the main political exponents, Silvio Berlusconi, was also the owner of national television stations, but the open data and FOIA case demonstrates how the public debate (which in this case resulted also in being deliberative) sees the active participation of actors who are not strictly political. As Gianpietro Mazzoleni affirms, “Silvio Berlusconi became an influential and controversial political figure thanks to his television networks”¹⁷⁷.

¹⁷⁵ Website of AGCOM: <https://www.agcom.it/>

¹⁷⁶ Website of FOIA: <https://www.foia.gov/>

¹⁷⁷ Jeanpietro Mazzoleni is a professor at the University of Milan. This comment came from an interview conducted by Sergio Splendore (June, 2022).

The other important element is then the fact that, as mentioned above, this urgency for change is still a product of media transformation. Although such significant results cannot be imagined, something similar is also happening for whistleblowing platforms (Porlezza & Di Salvo, 2020).

1.2. Structural peculiarities of this report

An approach based on risks and opportunities linked to the transformation of the media ecology is rather entrenched in both journalism studies and political communication. Umberto Eco (Eco & Lumley, 1994) used to talk about apocalyptic and integrated to define and to split techno-enthusiasts from techno-skeptics. The Italian communication field is not an exception, more than 200 academic articles/books [Appendix] published in the last twenty years; current national legislation (1948 Constitution, 1930 Criminal Code, Legislative Decree No. 97 of 2016 on the prevention of corruption, among others); regulations on information and communication (2019 Regulation containing provisions on respect for human dignity and the principle of non-discrimination and combating hate speech from *Autorità per le garanzie nelle comunicazioni*) include explicitly what we may define as a risks and opportunities (ROs) approach in the frame of deliberative communication in Italy.

We use the word 'field' on purpose (or deliberately) to employ for this paper a Bourdieusian approach (Bourdieu, 1999; Bourdieu, 1993). Field theory conceives society (or the social) as composed of different fields which are separate as well as related. Each field has its proposals, but also its own specific logics. Using the Bourdieusian approach here means conceiving as a social sub-field the ensemble of actors and their relations that attempt to define, describe, and analyze the Italian media ecology in terms of risks and opportunities for deliberative communication (and, more broadly, deliberative democracy).

What we dare to define as ROs sub-field, like many other sub-fields, is prevalently linked to the field of politics, society and economy, but for its features, many other fields are here interconnected and overlapping (academic and journalistic fields first). In this sub-field, the key points is exactly defining and measuring which risks and opportunities media ecology transformation may involve (and, therefore, influencing policymakers).

1.3. Main institutions/bodies and actors of media/communication/journalism research, monitoring and education

In Italy, this sub-field is inhabited by different actors, which compete or collaborate to define what the risks and opportunities are as far as deliberative communication is concerned. Following the Mediadelcom framework¹⁷⁸, we identify and use for our analysis, mainly, six different actors that inhabit the sub-field:

- 1) Transnational organizations that monitor democracy and media systems globally (e.g., Freedom of the Press, Reporters Sans Frontières, Eurobarometer, Reuters Institute Digital News Report, Open Society Institute, among others):
 - a. Human Freedom Index 2021¹⁷⁹: 8.49/10, ranking 26; Personal freedom: 9.12; Economic freedom: 7.61.
 - b. Freedom House 2022 score¹⁸⁰: Global Freedom: 90/100; Internet Freedom: 76/100; Political rights: 36/40; Civil liberties: 54/60. Status "Free".
 - c. Corruption Perceptions Index¹⁸¹: Level of public sector corruption: 56/100 (0 is highly corrupt) (A positive trend has been seen from 2012 when the score was 42); Rank in the world: 42/180.

¹⁷⁸ MediaDelCom Website: <https://www.mediadelcom.eu/outreach/departure-point-1/>

¹⁷⁹ Website of Cato Institute: <https://www.cato.org/human-freedom-index/2021>

¹⁸⁰ Website of Freedom House: <https://freedomhouse.org/countries/freedom-world/scores>

- d. Reporters Sans Frontières¹⁸²: score 68.16, ranking 58/180; Political indicator: score 65.89, ranking 57/180; Economic indicator: score 47.52, ranking 67/180; Legislative indicator: score 73.93, ranking 59/180; Social indicator: score 80.00, ranking 49/180; Security indicator: score 73.48, ranking 68/180.
- 2) Large comparative research projects that collect data periodically and produce comparative analysis over certain periods (e.g. Worlds of Journalism Study¹⁸³).
- 3) Units in the media industry structures or linked to media industries (like *audiweb*, *auditel*, but also *Nielsen*).
- 4) Scholars and research groups in different universities (a.g., *Dipartimento di Scienze sociali e politiche* at the University of Milan).
- 5) Independent organizations or professional associations (a.g., *Carta di Roma*, *Ordine dei Giornalisti*, *Rai Code of Ethics*, *l'Osservatorio sul giornalismo* - 2014, etc.).
- 6) Organizations that may be regarded as a branch of Government or public body (e.g., the Italian Communications Regulatory Authority - *Autorità per le Garanzie nelle Comunicazioni*, AGCOM).

All the six actors outlined above are very well institutionalized in terms of being equipped and structured to precisely monitor ROs (especially regulatory offices – including a branch of Government, legislation, universities, media practitioners' professional associations). When we use the term institutionalization, we mean that these actors are equipped to regularly produce and/or analyze documents or data related to deliberative communication and the risks and opportunities linked with this (e.g. reports based on data they have collected, raw data, policy proposals). Other actors may take part occasionally in the field, even politicians or pundits, but they are not structurally designed to monitor ROs.

1.4. Funding system of media research

Although there are different actors in charge of investigating this sub-field related to deliberative communication - as we saw in the preceding paragraphs - the Italian government is the main institution in charge of financing research into the media and, moreover, the media themselves - especially the public ones. Specifically, the Italian Ministry for Education, University and Research (MIUR)¹⁸⁴ is the key Research and Technological Development (RTD) policy actor and funding agency in Italy at state level. This institution oversees the National Research Programme entitled *Piano Nazionale della Ricerca* (PNR)¹⁸⁵.

To adapt the Italian research context to the European standard, MIUR adopted in March of 2013 a strategic document called "Horizon 2020 Italy", a proof of the effort being made in Italy at the institutional level, promoting initiatives such as the funds for the diffusion of scientific culture (PUS) and enforcement of EU and international rules on university education and research. A final point highlighted by organizations focused on international research such as Flag-Era¹⁸⁶.

¹⁸¹ Website of Transparency International. The global coalition against corruption: <https://www.transparency.org/>

¹⁸² Website of Reporters without Borders: <https://rsf.org/en/country/italy>

¹⁸³ Website of Worlds of Journalism Study: <https://worldsofjournalism.org/>

¹⁸⁴ Website of MIUR: <https://www.mur.gov.it/it>

¹⁸⁵ The National Research Program (PNR), provided for by Legislative Decree 204/1998, is the document that guides research policies in Italy, with the administrations of the State contributing to its implementation (or compilation???) with the coordination of the Ministry of the University and of Research.

¹⁸⁶ FLAG-ERA gathers most regional and national funding organisations (NRFOS) in Europe with the goal of supporting the Future and Emerging Technologies (FET): <https://www.flagera.eu/about/>

Regarding media funding, new measures have changed the dynamics of the segments of the *Sistema Integrato delle Comunicazioni* (SIC)¹⁸⁷. The competencies of the authority in relation to the Integrated Communications System (SIC) are dictated by Legislative Decree 31 July 2005, no. 177, called the “Consolidated text of audiovisual and radio media services” (Tusmar)¹⁸⁸. According to the “Media Influence matrix: Italy. Funding journalism” (Center for Media, Data and Society, 2020), one of them is related to the system of state financial contributions for local broadcasters, which was reformed by the Stability Law (Law no. 208 of 2015) and subsequently by Law no. 198 of 2016. The latter introduced the so-called Unique Fund for pluralism and innovation in information.

This report also highlights that, firstly, advertising remains the main source of financing for almost all operators in the Italian media market, increasing by €1,415 millions between 2015 and 2019. However, the share of advertising sales in the total media market has decreased, except for the online segment. And, secondly, the role of philanthropic funding in the Italian media is marginal (Media Impact Funders, MIF)¹⁸⁹.

1.5. National research database and most important journals

Research in Italy is encouraged through the *Istituto Nazionale di Statistica* (ISTAT)¹⁹⁰ and the National Research Program (PNR), provided for by Legislative Decree 204/1998. The PNR guides research policies in Italy, with the administrations of the State contributing to its implementation with the coordination of the Ministry of the University and of Research (*Ministero dell'Università e della Ricerca*)¹⁹¹. On 15 December 2020, the National Research Program 2021-2027¹⁹² was approved at CIPE, as a result of a broad and in-depth discussion initiated by the Ministry of University and Research with the scientific community, with the administrations of the State and regional entities, and extended, through a public consultation, to public and private stakeholders and civil society.

Under Italian law 150/2000, the *Consiglio Nazionale delle Ricerche* (CNR)¹⁹³ was established with the aim of enhancing information provided by scientific departments, research institutes and offices by issuing press releases and notes and handling the overall media communication. The office of CNR publishes the web magazine *Almanacco della Scienza* and makes available a daily press review operated in collaboration with a specialized service, monitoring thousands of newspapers, magazines, journals, as well as television and radio programs; a collection of the most relevant press platforms is also provided by email.

However, the most important organization that may be regarded as a branch of Government or public body is the Italian Communications Regulatory Authority (*Autorità per le Garanzie nelle Comunicazioni*, AGCOM). AGCOM's core competencies include, firstly, the promotion of research and study in the field of technological innovation, developing the communication sector and the multimedia service, as well as the advancement of the superior institutions of the postal and telecommunications services; and, secondly, verification of the financial statements and data

¹⁸⁷ Integrated Communications System: <https://www.agcom.it/sistema-integrato-delle-comunicazioni-sic>

¹⁸⁸ The last results can be consulting in the “*Resultati del processo di valutazione (2019)*”: <https://www.bit.ly/3zIYF8n>

¹⁸⁹ Web page of Media Impact Funders: <https://mediainpactfunders.org/>

¹⁹⁰ Web page of National Institute of Statistics (ISTAT): <https://www.istat.it/en/>

¹⁹¹ Web page of *Ministero dell'Università e della Ricerca*: <https://www.mur.gov.it/it/aree-tematiche/ricerca/programmazione/programma-nazionale-la-ricerca>

¹⁹² PNR (2021-2027). *Programma nazionale per la ricerca*: <https://www.mur.gov.it/sites/default/files/2021-01/Pnr2021-27.pdf>

¹⁹³ Web page of National Research Council (CNR): <https://www.cnr.it/en>

relating to the activities and ownership of the authorized subjects or concessionaires of the radio and television service, according to the procedures established by regulation (AGCOM)¹⁹⁴.

In addition to the public institutions of the state there are other bodies such as associations, organizations, professional institutions related to this area which we will systematize later in this report (eg. *Federazione Nazionale della Stampa Italiana* (Fnsi), *Consiglio Nazionale Ordine dei giornalisti*, USPI – *Unione Stampa Periodica Italiana*, *Centro di Studi ed Iniziative Culturali* (<http://www.piolatorre.it/>), among others.

Universities and scientific publishers in the field of communication also play a fundamental role in the dissemination of research in Italy (as we will show later in this report from our results). In Italy there are several journals focus on communication and its related fields, but only seven are indexed in *Scopus*.

2. Publications, data sources and main monitoring actors of legal and ethical regulation domain

Isabella Splendore, General Counsel of Federazione Italiana Editori Giornali (FIEG), highlights that “we have seen some changes in the field of information which pose major challenges from a legal and ethical perspective”¹⁹⁵. This is the main reason why the domain of legal and ethical regulation is well researched in general terms – along with the domain of journalism and media usage patterns - as we will see later; even more with respect to freedom of expression (defamation, privacy, disinformation and copyright, among others) and information (access to documents, the protection of journalistic sources, whistleblowing, trade secrets and transparency in media ownership, among others).

2.1. Freedom of expression

The right to and protection of freedom of expression is presented in the main legal documents that legislate the Republic of Italy, such as *Costituzione della Repubblica Italiana*, art. 21 of 1948 (Italian Constitution), *Codice Penale Italiana*, art. 595 de 1930 (Criminal Code) and legislative decrees (as No. 97 of 2016) and other laws (as Law No. 112 of 2004). The freedom of expression of media professionals, and of all professionals, is one of the rights that Italian law most vigorously protects. However, *Freedom of the Press* and *Reporters Sans Frontières* have ranked Italy as a country where the level of freedom of the press is lower than its neighbouring countries and Western democracies in general. Due to these inconsistencies, the main variables that define freedom of the press, in addition to being legislated directly and precisely, are studied recurrently in the Italian academy.

Regarding freedom of expression, the variables most studied and analyzed are defamation, hate speech, disinformation, protection of personal data and protection, exceptions and copyright especially in relation to defamation, because - according to the *Costituzione della Repubblica Italiana* (1948) - everyone has the right to express their thoughts freely in speech, writing and any other media, and the law recognizes honour and reputation.

Furthermore, the press may not be subject to authorisation or censorship. If there exists a “positive part” of the right to report the news, there is, also, a “negative”, interspersed with the defence that the law recognises honour (understood as including reputation). It is, therefore, in the “balancing of opposing interests” that the solution to the limits of the reciprocal expansion (Pacileo, 2013). In case of not complying with the legislation, if the offence is committed through

¹⁹⁴ Web page of AGCOM: <https://www.agcom.it/>

¹⁹⁵ Interview made by Sergio Splendore (June, 2022).

the press or any other means of publicity, or in a public document, the penalty shall be imprisonment for a term of between six months and three years or a fine of not less than five hundred and sixteen euros (*Codice Penale italiano*, 1930).

The defamation law continues its discussion in the Constitutional Court and Italian Parliament (Article 19)¹⁹⁶. In the journalistic and Italian media context this phenomenon is relevant because, according to the ISTAT, in 2017 alone, a total of 9,479 proceedings for defamation were initiated against journalists, of which 60% were dismissed after preliminary investigation and 6.6% went to trial. A reality shown by Pacileo (2013) in his research based on the condemnation of the editor of the *Libero* newspaper. Both Pacileo (2013) and Cultrera (2006) advocate for the decriminalization of defamation by the press to offer greater weight to the civil responsibility of each citizen.

Defamation began to be part of the interest of researchers from the first decade of the 2000s due to the popularization of digital platforms that gave citizens a greater voice and visibility. The clearest example is social media such as *Facebook* and *Twitter*.

There are other documents that act as regulations in the media and journalistic field regarding freedom of expression. Firstly, Resolution No. 157 of May 15, 2019 of the Council of the communication regulates the contents provisions out of respect for human dignity and the principle of non-discrimination and combating hate speech:

Audiovisual and radio media service providers, in compliance with the principles of Article 3, and taking into account the provisions of the current Consolidated Law on the Duties of Journalists of the duties of journalists in force, observe a series of cautions and guidelines, paying particular attention to the identification of the specific context of reference with respect to possible stereotyped representations and generalisations which, through the use of hate speech, could generate prejudice against people who are associated with a certain category or group of people associated with a certain category or group subject to discrimination, thus offending human dignity and harming the rights of the individual (Art. 4).

RAI, in its role as manager of the public radio, television and multimedia service and multimedia, also in execution of the service contract, promotes the diffusion of contents that enhance the principles of respect for non-discrimination, social principles of respect for human dignity, inclusion and social cohesion, as well as combating incitement to violence and hatred (Art. 5).

Secondly, article 13 on the Law of the Press no. 47/1948: “(1) Personal freedom shall be inviolable. (2) No one shall be detained, inspected, or searched nor otherwise restricted in one’s personal liberty save by order of the judiciary for which the reason must be stated, and then only in such cases and in the manner as the law provides for”.

Reports such as, firstly, “*News vs. Fake-news nell Sistema dell’informazione*”¹⁹⁷ that through the direct observation of data, studies the scenarios that characterize the Italian system, focuses its study both on the profile of the production and dissemination of information, and on the peculiarities and methods of dissemination of disinformation. This report shows that our national information system is seeing an increase in the volume of fake content.

And, secondly, “*Le strategie di disinformazione online e la filiera dei contenuti fake*”, a technical report that focuses its analysis on the distortions of online information as a phenomenon, in terms of characteristics, subjects involved, underlying motivations, communication techniques

¹⁹⁶ Website of Article 19: <https://www.bit.ly/3U6RbnQ>

¹⁹⁷ Interim Report Indagine Conoscitiva del. 309/16/cons (Autorità per le garanzie nelle comunicazioni): <https://www.agcom.it/documents/10179/3744102/Allegato+22-11-2018/3aff8790-8039-4456-8f9a-dae2497289a4>

used to compose fake content, tools and technologies used. Specifically, the latter determines that the textual analysis of the fake content produced by disinformation sites in 2018 leads to the identification of 9 main topics: politics, rights, economy, health and environment, family and faith, news, foreign affairs, science and immigration. Both reports have been published by the *Autorità per le garanzie delle comunicazioni*.

In the same vein, and within the academy, Bentivegna & Rega (2020), Nicolosi (2019), Magnani (2019) and Scamuzzi, Belluati, Caielli, Cepernich, Patti, Stecca & Tipaldo (2021) focus their analysis on the phenomena of hate speech. Specifically, in the discussion around the relationship between hate speech, fake news, users and media, and the regulatory actions in this regard. According to Scamuzzi et al. (2021), “hate speech and fake news are two different phenomena, but unfortunately often very connected, and as international as the network that made them possible, now widely perceived as worrying” (p. 50). In Italy, specifically, Federico Anghelè, Italian office Director & Head of policy at The Good Lobby and University of Bologna, highlights “the risk of the permanent political campaign model. It shows how the political forces use hate speech and violent language to discredit the opponent on the one hand and on the other to accredit themselves from a political point of view. From the point of view of regulation there is still a lot to do and that is the problem”¹⁹⁸.

When we talk about disinformation we refer to anyone who publishes or disseminates false, exaggerated, or tendentious news that may disturb public order. According to the *Codice penale italiano* (1930), it shall be punished, unless the act constitutes a more serious offence, with imprisonment of up to three months or a fine of up to €309. The disinformation, in addition to addressing its regulation in the laws mentioned above, is being extensively studied by Bracciale & Grisolia (2020), Cappello & Rizzuto (2020), Lovari, Martino & Reighetti (2021), Scamuzzi et al. (2021), Pierri (2020), De Grazia (2013), Patterson, Smith, Fullerton, & Tuñón Navarro (2017).

Defamation, mostly investigated by university researchers in Italy, has been also analysed by magistrates (Pacileo, 2013), lawyers (Cultrera, 2006; Verri & Cardone, 2013) and journalists (Picca, 2005) due to its highly detrimental connotations for the development of a deliberative democracy.

Publications made by the *Ordine dei Giornalisti*, such as “*Testo unico dei doveri del giornalista*”¹⁹⁹ (Journalist's Text of Duties) (in force from from 1 January 2021), a set of deontological rules relating to the processing of personal data in the exercise of journalistic activity. This text focuses, firstly, on the protection of personal data and the dissemination of the data: “The processing of data by journalists is essentially free. Journalists may also process (and publish) sensitive and judicial data without having to obtain the consent of the data subject, provided that two requirements are met: the data have been collected (1) lawfully and (2) correctly (principle of lawfulness)”; and, secondly, on the protection of journalistic sources through the duty of the journalist and editor to respect professional confidentiality as to the source of news: “The dissemination of the data takes place within the limits of the essential nature (principle of essentiality) of the information concerning facts of public interest”²⁰⁰.

But, according the *Ordine dei Giornalisti*, “Journalists and editors are obliged to respect professional secrecy about the source of news, when required by the fiduciary nature of the news, and to promote a spirit of collaboration between colleagues, cooperation between journalists and editors, and trust between the press and readers” (Art. 1 of the Journalist's Text of Duties). An area also addressed from the academy by Porlezza & Di Salvo (2020).

¹⁹⁸ Interview made by Martín Oller Alonso (August, 2022).

¹⁹⁹ Ordine Dei Giornalisti. Consiglio Nazionale: <https://www.odg.it/testo-unico-dei-doveri-del-giornalista/24288>

²⁰⁰ From ODG webpage: <https://www.odg.it/testo-unico-dei-doveri-del-giornalista/24288>

The current legislation, and the one that is Under debate prior to approval, the reports published by professional associations and institutions related to journalism and the media, and academic scientific studies all confirm that freedom of expression has been evaluated from the point view of disinformation, hate speech and defamation.

Legislative interventions in this direction, Article 15 of the 2019 EU Directive on Copyright in the Digital Single Market: Article 15 DSM Directive presents numerous critical issues, which make the prospects of effectiveness in the medium and long term uncertain.

The introduction of a new exclusive right represents a protectionist squeeze in favor of publisher-investors rather than a step towards sustainable regulation in step with the times. Although the obligation to redistribute the proceeds generated by the exploitation of related laws in favor of individual authors remains a fundamental and long-awaited intervention in the contractual framework of copyright, Article 15 DSM Directive risks failing in the attempt to find the right balance between fundamental rights and freedoms of those who invest in the production and dissemination of journalistic content and of the users for whom it is intended.

The arduous task to which the Italian legislator is called today is to remedy the weaknesses and flaws of the community law, in favor of a regulatory approach capable of responding to the challenges of the times, sensitive to all the interests at stake and well calibrated - a task difficult, but not impossible.

2.2. Freedom of information

The right to and protection of information - as the right of expression - is presented in the *Costituzione della Repubblica Italiana* and the *Codice Penale Italiana*. The FOIA (Freedom of Information Act) legislation, introduced by Legislative Decree No. 97 of 2016, is an integral part of the public administration reform process, defined by Law No. 124 of 7 August 2015.

When right of information refers to the access to information/documents, there are several problems in obtaining data: (1) Data exist but are not available in open and digital format; (2) Data exist, are in table format, are accessible and open, but have unprocessable extensions (pdf, scanned images, closed format); and (3) Data exist, can be accessed, but are not provided in a tabular and structured format (Splendore 2016a; Porlezza & Splendore 2019).

Talking about trade secrets, the *Codice penale italiano* (*Codice Rocco*, 1988) states that “if the news is indispensable for the purposes of proving the offence for which proceedings are being brought and its truthfulness can only be established by identifying the source of the news, the court orders the journalist to indicate the source of his information” (Art. 200).

The Italian law establishes, by general rules, that the means of financing the periodical press shall be disclosed (*Costituzione della Repubblica Italiana*, art. 21). A rule related directly with the media ownership and transparency (an area studied in considerable depth by scholars like Mazzoleni, 2006; Cornia, 2016; Mancini, Mazzoni, Barbieri, Damiani & Gerli, 2021; Molé, 2013; Craufurd Smith, Klimkievicz & Ostling, 2021). In this sense, the Italian law offers greater prominence of audiovisual media services of general and public interest:

- Law No 112 of 2004 (the so-called Gasparri Law) redefined the tasks of public service broadcasting and of the concessionaire, defining when and how to start the privatisation process of RAI, modifying the duration of the concession and the composition and appointment procedures of RAI's bodies. These rules were then incorporated in the Testo Unico della Radiotelevisione.
- The tasks of the public broadcasting service and the public service tasks in the regional and provincial spheres are defined. The public broadcasting service must be guaranteed.
- Full coverage of the national territory.

- An adequate number of hours of television and radio broadcasting devoted to education, information, training, cultural promotion and the implementation of distance-learning activities.
- Access to programming in favour of political parties and groups, associations of local authorities, national trade unions, religious denominations, ethnic and linguistic groups, and other groups of major social interest who request it, and the free transmission of socially-useful messages.
- The establishment of a company for the production, distribution and broadcasting of radio and television programmes abroad, aimed at increasing knowledge and enhancement of the Italian language, culture and enterprise.
- The broadcasting of radio and television programmes in German, Ladin, French and Slovene for the border regions and the enhancement and strengthening of decentralised production centres for the promotion of local cultures and language tools.
- The broadcasting, at appropriate times, of content specifically intended for minors.
- The preservation of historical radio and television archives.
- The allocation of at least 15% of total annual revenues to the production of European productions.
- The protection of people with sensory disabilities.
- The law n. 112/2004, so-called Gasparri, decrees the resurgence of representatives of political parties to the Board of Directors of Italian public service corporation, the RAI. This change to the previous 1993 law, along with the governance pattern of the corporation stated by the law, limit its industrial nature and reduce pluralism in the Italian duopolistic market of broadcasting. The law represents a meeting of interests between the Government, owner of the private side of the TV duopoly, and the system of political parties, as represented in Parliament, in control of the RAI in sight of its privatisation, also provided for by the law (in Spada 2005).

Within the academic spectrum, the legal environment and implementation of the laws concerning freedom of expression and information have been analysed based on a theoretical and normative perspective and other instruments of media accountability. From a critical point of view in this regard, Splendore (2017) highlights that there is an excessive number of regulations that Italian journalism has adopted without effective sanctions; a dynamic fuelled by a widespread clientelism, a partisan news media, an alternative definition of public interest, and weak professionalism (Patterson et al. 2017). A highly regulated system (Padovani et al. 2021) that in the last two years has focused on aspects of misinformation between citizens and the government due to COVID-19 (Lovari, 2020) and migrants and media newsmaking practices (Gemi et al. 2013; Arcila et al. 2021).

2.3. Accountability system

The list of what can be considered instruments in dealing with media accountability in Italy is long, detailed and puzzling. According to Puppis (2007) with regard to definitions of media regulation, Italy is an assortment of a state-regulated domain, some self-regulation and a consistent mixture of the two (where public and private sectors jointly operate). The variables referring to legal and ethical regulation have been studied systematically in the academy (Razzante, 2005; Roidri, 2001).

In terms of influence on Italian journalists' practices and behavior, state law is unequivocally the most significant (Fengler, Eberwein, Mazzoleni, Porlezza & Russ-Mohl, 2014), although ethics and media responsibility studies have a long tradition in Italian academia and among journalists and journalists' associations (Razzante, 2005; Ordine dei Giornalisti; Roidi, 2001; Splendore, 2017; D'Arma, 2009; Gemi et al. 2013; Padovani et al. 2021; Lovari, 2020; Patterson et al. 2017). This is an area of great interest to researchers because the difficulties that Italian journalism

faces to be accountable depend on the excessive number of regulations that Italian journalism has adopted without effective sanctions. The result is that in Italy even the simplest disagreements, that could be solved by a system of self-regulation, tend to be regulated by law (see Splendore 2017).

This has been so because the discourse around the press council and the code of ethics is extremely complex. The Italian equivalent to a press council is the *Ordine dei Giornalisti (OdG)*, which the Association of Journalists established by law, and to which all journalists must belong to see their qualifications recognized. The OdG can be regarded as a press council, at least in the sense of it being an institution established in defence of press freedom, which is guaranteed by the Constitutional Law, and which should monitor the accordance of the content provided by media associates. When media practitioners become members of the OdG, they must, now being professional journalists, sign the OdG's code of ethics. The OdG has the legal capacity to ensure the code is abided by.

The journalistic code of ethics is thoroughly articulated (and generally based on co-regulation) (Splendore, 2017). Sergio Splendore (2016 b, p.2-5) has also studied the role of ombudspersons as part of communication processes and journalism. According to this author, the introduction of newspaper ombudsmen has hardly been on the agenda of the domestic media players. Historically, Italian journalism has experienced only two ombudsmen initiatives and neither that of *Il Messaggero*, one of the most important dailies in the Italian central region, nor of *La Repubblica*, one of the most influential national newspapers, lasted. The basic problem facing ombudsmen is that they are perceived as an “odd institution” in the Italian political and cultural context.

The Register of Communication Operators (ROC)²⁰¹ is the instrument to which the institutive law of the Authority entrusts guarantee functions, in terms of transparency and publicity of the ownership structures of communications operators. Keeping the ROC constitutes an essential requirement for the purpose of exercising a variety of institutional tasks such as, among other things, the protection of information pluralism, the verification of compliance with the limits set for shareholdings in foreign companies and activities relating to anti-concentration discipline. Last year (2020), according to “*Relazione Annuale 2021. Sull'Attività svolta e sui programmi di lavoro*” published by AGCOM, the judicial litigation has considered areas of intervention of the Authority, as well as the discipline of the proceedings.

Here are the two of most relevant decisions: (a) Electronic communications, with reference to the obligations regarding universal service, the Council of State, with the sentence of 6 April 2021, n. 2790; (b) Audiovisual media services, regarding advertising crowding and the notion of cross-media group, the ordinance of March 25, 2021, n. 2504, with which the Council of State made a preliminary reference to the Court of Justice of the European Union²⁰².

It is important to highlight that AGCOM represents in Italy a complex body, in terms of objectives assigned by law, assigned skills, functions performed, relationships with stakeholders and institutional networks to which it belongs at national and international level. In the last year, however, the administration has had to deal, on the one hand, with the health emergency and the related repercussions both on the markets and on its own organization, on the other hand, with the attribution of new skills and the beginning of a new cycle, as always happens at the start of a new Consiliatura (p. 179).

²⁰¹ Web page of Ministero dello sviluppo economico:

<https://www.mise.gov.it/index.php/it/comunicazioni/servizi-alle-imprese/registro-operatori-di-comunicazione-roc>

²⁰² In the matter of level playing field, the Lazio Regional Administrative Court, with the sentence of 2 December 2020, n. 12915, annulled the order-injunction (resolution no. 152/13 / CONS) with which the Authority sanctioned a national broadcaster for violation of the electoral level playing field (political elections 2013).

3. Publications, data sources and main monitoring actors of journalism domain

The domain of Journalism is the best researched in Italy, especially regarding: Market, production, public service media, working conditions, organization, professional culture and journalistic competencies.

3.1. Market conditions

In regard to market condition in Italy, one highlighted concern of academic researchers during the last fifteen years is ownership diversity. According to Cornia (2016), Mazzoleni (2006), Manchini et al. (2021) Dalpiaz and Ravasi (2010), in Italy this leads to a poorly-supervised media environment and therefore strongly influenced by both economic and political factors that are often strictly intertwined. Specifically, Cornia (2016) suggests that in Italy the digital transition has led to only moderate changes within the Italian media system and generated limited implications for pluralism of information because although the new media, compared to the traditional media, have lower technological barriers inhibiting entry, market and political factors still hinder the entrance of newcomers: it is only legacy outlets, which are in a position to invest in innovation, that are able to reach a large audience. Cornia (ibid, p. 4) also highlights that pluralism is not the automatic result of technological developments.

According to the Centers for Media, Data and Society (CMDS) (2020)²⁰³, the most important service operators in Italy are *Sky Italia* (Comcast Corporation), *RAI* (State-owned), *Mediaset* (Fininvest), *RCS* (Cairo Communications), *GEDI* (Exor), *Walt Disney* (Institutional investment companies), *Discovery Italia* (Discovery Group), *Gruppo 24 ORE* (Confindustria), *Caltagirone Editore* (Francesco Gaetano Caltagirone), *Viacom CBS Networks Italia* (Viacom CBS), *Società Editoriale Il Fatto* (No majority shareholder), *Ciaopeople Media Group* (Gianluca Cozzolino) and *Editoriale Nazionale* (Monrif) [more information in Index]. This distribution of operators shows that “the Italian media market is increasingly characterized by a strong cross-mediatlity” (p. 7).

Regional and local journalism was already the focus of study by journalists themselves at the beginning of the millennium (Schiavazzi & Tallia, 2003; Campanella, 2003; Capra, 2003), but it is in recent years that scholars have focused on the “new life” of local information (Marrazo, 2020; Splendore, 2020; Sorrentino & Mazzanti, 2020; Pogliano & Ponzo, 2019; Bifulco, Tirino & Castellano, 2020; Ferrandi, 2011). Local information is acquiring new life thanks to the new dynamics of the digital information ecosystem, rediscovering a role that is no longer in the background in the continuous flow of information of social networks (Marrazzo, 2020).

Other aspects that are also considered in studies related to the market are news media income and the labor market. It is relevant because, although television remains relatively stable in terms of popularity (dominated by the country’s two historical players, *RAI* and *Mediaset*), and online portals are steadily growing, the revenues in this segment are still only a fraction of the total media market. Moreover, online portals are increasingly dependent on intermediaries, the large technology companies. In 2018 alone, 41% of the advertising revenues generated by traditional online publishers was collected through programmatic advertising (CMDS, 2020). And online advertising revenues overtook television advertising revenues for the first time in 2019, and now represent almost half (49%) of overall advertising revenues in the Italian media sector (AGCOM, 2021)²⁰⁴.

In a fragmented profession like journalism, where the competition between the media is increasingly voracious (Rea, 2010; Splendore, 2016 b), the growth of commercial logic among

²⁰³ Website of CMDS: <https://www.ceu.edu/unit/cmds>

²⁰⁴ More information in the web page of AGCOM: <https://www.agcom.it/relazioni-annuali>

digital platforms and social media hurts journalists, users, and regular consumers (Mazzoleni & Sfardini, 2009; Curini, 2020; Dalpiaz & Ravasi, 2010; Porlezza & Splendore, 2016; Capra, 2003; Bifulco, Tirino & Castellano, 2020; Ferrandi, 2011; Schaiavazzi & Tallia, 2003). We can see in the “Digital News Report of 2022”, published by Reuters Institute, that “in 2022, for the first time, a digital-born outlet, *Fanpage*, obtained the widest online reach in our survey (21%), surpassing established broadcasters, the main Italian news agency (ANSA), and the most important newspapers.

Other digital-born outlets achieving good online results are *HuffPost* (9%), *Il Post.it* (7%), and *Open* (4%). Conversely, the offline news market is still dominated by the main Italian broadcasters (the public service broadcaster *RAI* and the commercial players *Mediaset*, *StyTg24*, and *TgLa7*), followed by established print outlets such as *La Repubblica* and *Il Corriere della Sera*” (p. 88).

In contrast, foreign interests, even though Italian news media ecology maintains a decent level of autonomy from journalistic foreign influence, are little explored at academic level. A situation that is surprising due to the “overturn” that has occurred in the media ecosystem, increasingly influenced by transnational digital platforms -as we show in the preceding paragraphs.

3.2. Public service media

One topic widely explored by numerous Italian scholars (Curini, 2020; Mazzoleni & Sfardini, 2009; D’Arma, 2009; Gardini, 2004, 2008; Avvisati, 2015; Giglioni, 2004; Vigevani, 2012; Cicheri, 2018; Brogi, 2005; Spada, 2005) and international comparative studies (e.g., *Worlds of Journalism Study*) is the public service media conditions from the autonomy and financing perspective. The autonomy of public media is seriously affected and threatened by competition and multiplication of platforms and media channels that follow commercial logic.

The competition exacerbated by the multiplication of information channels due to the advent of Web 2.0 and social media platforms has brought newspapers to slant the content of the news they produce. In the case of public media, the first decade of the 2000s is defined as a “performance measuring and assessing phase”, based on the digitalization processes and the new criteria for measuring and assessing achievement of the public sector organizations’ performance objectives (Ducci, Materassi & Solito, 2020, p. 1074). However, their main objective today is to control their regular audience. This process has also led *RAI*, the Italian Public Service Broadcaster, to adhere to commercial logic to survive (Mazzoleni & Sfardini 2009).

Moreover, during the first nine months of 2020 total revenues for the Italian media sector fell by €780m, with considerable decreases observed in both the newspaper (-15%) and broadcasting sectors (-8%), while online advertising grew (+7%) (*Osservatorio sulle comunicazioni*, AGCOM, 2021).

The fear for the loss of autonomy of public media has caused the increase of its study by the researchers in the Italian universities for the last twenty years. According to Ducci, Materassi & Solito (2020), in connected society some topics of reflection which to some extent have always accompanied the evolution of public communication in Italy – also in terms of its regulation – now become inevitable challenges and priorities²⁰⁵. For these reasons, these authors propose the following aspects in public communication review: (1) regulation, (2) competences, (3) training, (4) coordination, (5) listening, and (6) languages, (p. 1078-1079).

The relevance of the financing of public service media is shown in its level of legislation. The Gasparri law (Law No 112 of 2004) establishes the financing of the public broadcasting service,

²⁰⁵ On 9 January 2020, the Ministry of Public Administration - as part of the fourth Open Government Partnership action plan - purpose to reform of Law no. 150/2000 and draws up a national social media policy.

introducing an obligation for the concessionaire company to allocate the revenues deriving from the licence fee only to the costs incurred for the provision of the public service, providing, to this end, for the keeping of separate accounts, subject to the control of an independent auditor.

The relationship between the independence of the public media and the strength of Italian democracy has led many journalists (Somalvico, 2000; Spada, 2005), international institutions (European University Institute, 2005) and Italian researchers to study this issue for more than twenty years (Brogi, 2005; Richeri, 2018; Vigevani, 2012; Gigliani, 2004; Avvisati, 2015; Gardini, 2004, 2008; D'Arma, 2009; Mazzoleni & Sfardini, 2009; Curini, 2020).

3.3. Production conditions

The production conditions of the Italian media have been transformed due to the digitalization process. Studies in this regard began incipiently in the first decade of the 21st century (Prario, 2005; Cultrera, 2006; Campanella, 2003; Fortunati & Sarrica, 2010; Fortunati, O'Sullivan, Raycheva & Harro-Loit, 2010), gaining strength during the second decade (Cola & Prario, 2012; Portezza, Maier & RussMohl, 2012; Evens & Prario, 2012; De Grazia, 2013; Medina & Prario, 2013; Splendore, 2013, 2016c; Fortunati, Deuze & De Luca, 2014; Ramirez de la Piscina, Zaballondo, Aiestaran & Agirre, 2016; Cobianchi, Del Sal & Airoidi, 2016; Cobianchi, Del Sal & Splendore, 2014; Splendore, Caliandro & Airoidi, 2016; Porlezza & Splendore, 2016; Cornia, 2016; Mancini, 2013; Bentivegna & Marchetti, 2016), and consolidated in the last five years (Splendore, 2017, 2018; Iannelli & Splendore, 2017; Bentivegna & Rega, 2020; Nicolosi, 2019; Bracciale & Grisolia, 2020; Corchia & Bracciale, 2020; O'Sullivan, Fortunati, Taipale & Barnhurst, 2017; Nozal Cantarero, González-Neira & Valentini, 2020; Mattoni & Ceccobelli, 2018; Splendore & Rega, 2017; Splendore & Brambilla, 2021; Binotto, Nobile & Rega, 2020).

As we saw in the previous paragraph, the large number of studies carried out over the past twenty years allows us to appreciate that Italian journalism has generally been slow to adopt new technologies (Splendore, 2017) and that the Internet, and digital communications in general, have had a limited impact on the Italian market when compared with other European country markers (Richeri & Prario, 2016). However, since the outbreak of COVID-19 (2020), the entire media digitization process has accelerated.

Hence, this trend towards studies on the digitization of the media and all communication processes is not surprising. The Italian digital market reached 44.6 million users connected to the internet in December 2021, ranking the four global giants - *Google, Facebook, Amazon* and *Microsoft* - as platforms with the largest number of users; staying ahead of Italian media companies as *RCS Media Group, ItaliaOnline, Governo Italiano, Mediaset, GEDI editorial group* and *Mondadori* (AGCOM, 2021). In this regard, "one of the most important challenges of this current time is regarding the relationship between announcement data and the protection of editorial content. Specifically, "with reference to the relationship between press publishers and digital platforms, the so-called big four, and other service providers offering information to society" (Isabella Splendore, General Counsel of *Federazione Italiana Editori Giornali*, June 2022).

In addition to digitization, the production conditions have been determined, firstly, by the investigative resources. Beyond its traditional political parallelism (Hallin & Mancini, 2004), another reason why in Italy the economic and political factors that shape the media environment are often strictly intertwined is in regard to the fact that since Italian newsrooms in many cases lack the necessary resources to promote independent coverage, they tend to heavily rely on institutional sources (Tiffen et al. 2014; Splendore, 2020). Secondly, by the foreign offices/correspondents due to the change suffered in the last two decades. In the early 2000s the legacy media all had a correspondent in the major western cities. These correspondents enjoyed prestige and autonomy in their work. They had important language and cultural translation functions. However, due to the crisis in the Italian journalistic sector, the funding of these ex-

pensive foreign bureaus was cut (Splendore & Mazzoleni, 2008). Moreover, Italy has witnessed of increased competition from both foreign and domestic firms since the regulations were implemented (Richeri & Prario, 2016).

While the first topic – investigative resources – has been widely explored by numerous scholars (Gemi et al. 2013; Gerli, Mazzoni & Mincigrucci, 2018; Splendore, 2020) based on the constraints and limitations of investigative journalism due to the instrumentalization of the profession, foreign offices and correspondents have been little studied at academic level. In this regard, Sergio Splendore and Gianpietro Mazzoleni stand out. An example of the importance given to investigative journalism - and the resources necessary to carry it out - by the journalists' guild is that, even with the Covid-19 pandemic, the UGIS - Union of Italian Scientific Journalists - presented in December 2018 the “Piacenza Manifesto - Deontological Charter of Scientific Journalism”. The Piacenza Manifesto highlights:

- Science and technology in their dissemination require a dedicated professional update in the context of lifelong learning;
- Reference should be made to multiple and qualified scientific sources, including international ones, for precise evaluations in a critical view;
- The results of scientific research sometimes become an economic matter to be considered;
- The importance of ethical duty in verifying the correctness and truthfulness of the news, in compliance with current and subsequent privacy regulations;
- The importance of not creating unfounded expectations or unjustified alarms (especially when dealing with issues related to health) and indicating the necessary research and experimentation times before a discovery can be applied;
- The need to account for different positions;
- The importance of caution, prudence and balance: keywords in the management of scientific news;
- Support in the media for the role of the science journalist as a mediator trained in validating information.

3.4. Working conditions

The Worlds of Journalism Study (Hanitzsch et al. 2019) states that the perceived level of autonomy of Italian journalists is one of the lowest in the world. Specifically, in relation to choice of topics, journalists who do not hold positions of responsibility in the newsroom feel that they have less freedom in their choice of news. Those who work for private editors perceive more freedom in the choice of topics and frames, especially if these private media are online. Regarding the choice of frame, those who work for national newspapers feel less autonomous in the way they cover the news (Sorrentino & Splendore, 2022).

Also, WJS offers a detailed analysis of the profile of Italian journalists: most of the Italian journalists interviewed in WJS (2013-2016) held a full-time position (62.9%), whereas 4.8 percent of the respondents indicated that they had part-time employments, and 32.3 percent worked as freelance journalists. Italian journalists had on average 16.84 years of professional experience ($s=9.79$ and median=15); the sample also includes the 67.7 percent of journalists who worked on various topics. The selected sample is conformed by professional journalists included in the so-called “Ordine dei Giornalisti”. More than half of the Italian journalists (56.8%, $s=0.8$) worked for just one newsroom and 27.5 percent held other jobs outside the area of journalism (Splendore, 2016 c).

AGCOM has regularly pointed out the economic crisis that affects the Italian media system. This organization has repeatedly highlighted the lack of pluralism provide by the national media

system. Nevertheless, even if politically unnoticed, the most accurate and timely research came from media scholars. Specifically, Ceron et al. (2019) emphasize the importance of the autonomy of journalists in their professional careers. Even more so in an environment in which media polarization and political instrumentalization of journalists is a reality in Italy. Italian scholars, in their articles and books, generally maintain a traditional, normative point of view. It means that they consider journalism in based on its capability to set the actual conditions for deliberative communication.

The job satisfaction of Italian employees (journalists) depends directly on their working conditions. According to the main researchers in this area, although in Italy the *Ordine dei Giornalisti* is a professional association which journalists must join to be included by law and to legitimately practice the profession, only six out of ten of them work full-time in a fragmented profession with profound differences between various segments (Rea, 2010), and under the influence of left-leaning and right-leaning editors (Ceron, Splendore, Hanitzsch & Thurman, 2019).

All this occurs in a context of clear manifestation of the commercialization of journalism, arising from the extremely fierce competition rather than by the multiplication of information channels, the advent of Web 2.0 and social media platforms (Curini, 2020; Mazzoleni & Sfardini, 2009; Splendore & Curini, 2020; Mancini, 2013, 2020).

There are two aspects that the law considers to be fundamental in regard to the working conditions of journalists. The first is education and training (Splendore, Di Salvo, Eberwein, Groenhardt, Kus & Porlezza, 2016), which gives access to the journalistic profession (Art. 32 of Law No. 69/1963); the second, which has gained fervent interest in recent years, is threats/harassment/hate towards journalists (Garusi, Splendore & Oller, 2022), due to the number of incidents of intimidation against journalists recorded by the Ministry of the Interior's Observatory that has risen by 21 per cent. Almost one threat in two (47 percent) comes via the web and social networks (Federazione Nazionale Stampa Italiana, FNSI, 2021). Specialized journalists who work on specific issues, such as migration, are victims of hate speech (crime) on a recurring basis (according to results from PHARM²⁰⁶).

The organizational structure of media platforms directly affect their workforce (Comunello; 2015; Markova & McKay, 2013; Josephi & Oller Alonso, 2021), especially regarding women, who continue to hold lower positions on the hierarchical ladder (Azzalini, 2015; Comunello, 2015). The profile of the typical Italian journalist is almost in line with the "Italian white-collar" composition; journalists that also comprises a similar percentage of women (42.4%) to other professions - such as doctors or lawyers (Splendore, 2016 c).

3.4.1. Intra-organizational diversity

The rest of the professional variables that analyse journalistic skills have been less studied in Italy: firstly, professional values of Italian journalists, that in the changed context of the current media landscape are legitimised by a wide range of normative guidelines that were previously ignored (Örnebring, 2013; Splendore, 2017; Sorrentino & Splendore, 2022).

Secondly, knowledge and ability of journalists are tested based on the accredited training they must have before entering the profession (Örnebring & Mellado, 2018; Pogliano, 2019; Pogliano & Ponzio, 2019). Because of that, on an educational level, according to WJS (2013-2016), Italian journalists generally are well educated (72.9% of the sample have at least a college degree; 24.5% have a university degree). Just half of them (50.1%) hold a degree in journalism or communication. In this regard, since journalists covering immigration often lack the specific skills to put the events they report on into a broader context, even greater power to define the situation is given to actors from the political field (Pogliano 2019; Pogliano e Ponzio 2019).

²⁰⁶ Web page of PHARM: <https://pharmproject.usal.es/?lang=es>

3.4.2. Journalistic competencies, education and training

To become a professional journalist in Italy, and to be registered on the relevant list, journalists need to:

A) Complete an internship or school of journalism course.

- Complete 18 months of internship (Article 34 of Law No. 69/1963 and interpretative criteria at www.odg.it/leggi-e-documenti) and, in addition, attend one of the theoretical preparation courses, including “distance learning” courses, lasting at least 45 hours and accredited by the National Council or Regional Councils of the Order.
- Alternatively, to have attended for two years one of the schools of journalism recognised by the National Council of the Order of Journalists (www.odg.it/scuole-di-giornalismo).

B) Pass the examination of professional suitability (Article 32 of Law no. 69/1963).

For this reason, and in accordance with WJS (2013-2016), Italian journalists are well educated and have at least a college degree. However, the discrepancy between normative ideals and the everyday practice can be seen in the impossibility to fulfil a watchdog role in Italy. The journalistic practice is threatened by the instrumentalization of the media outlets by external actors, the weakness of the print press market and the low level of professionalism (Genli, Mazzoni & Mincigrucci, 2018).

3.4.3. Professional culture and role perception

In Italy, despite there being several stakeholders interested in enabling such positive conditions, there is little cooperation, if any, between them. For example, although this country is one of the few countries around the world that has a national association of journalists (*Ordine dei Giornalisti*), the main purpose of which is to supervise and protect its members, its codes of practice and social norms are fought over, challenged and not unanimously recognised or legitimised even by journalists themselves (Splendore, 2017a).

The professional culture of Italian journalism has mostly been studied based on ethics and autonomy parameters. According to some of the scholars that studied these topics, journalists that work for national newspapers and hold positions of responsibility in the newsrooms feel less autonomous. Mancini (2000) was the most recognized pioneer in talking about professional culture in Italy. For a little over ten years other authors began to grow the study framework, in which many international comparative studies transcend the national borders of Italy²⁰⁷. In the second decade of 2000s, Currant et al. (2013) comparatively analyze the internet phenomenon from the point of view of digital utopianism, empowerment, technological determinism, and online news. Esser et al. (2012) focus on the study of incidental learning and public affairs coverage on thirteen television systems focus on a comparative perspective. Mosca & Quaranta (2016) analyse the news diets, social media and non-institutional participation in three countries based on contextual characteristics and online surveys. And, like the last example in this regard, Curini (2020) studies the political parallelism and newspapers’ ideological slant.

In recent years, as we stated in the preceding paragraphs, the media and the journalistic profession in Italy have been marked by the digitization process that the profession is undergoing and

²⁰⁷ Lavazza (2008); Cornia (2010); Archetti (2010, 2016); Hopmann, Van Aelst & Legnante (2012); Gnisci & Nielsen, (2013); Ciaglia (2013); Markova and McKay (2013); Azzalini (2015); Comunello (2015); Splendore (2016); Büchel, Humprecht, Castro-Herrero, Engesser & Brüggemann (2016); Esser & Umbricht (2013); Van Dalen & Di Conza (2014); Mosca & Quaranta (2016); Gerli, Mazzoni & Mincigrucci (2018); Humprecht & Esser (2018); Bentivegna & Marchetti (2018); Mattoni & Ceccobelli (2018); Barbieri, Campus & Mazzoni (2019); Nozal, Cantarero, González-Neira & Valentini (2020); Curini (2020); Josephi & Oller Alonso (2021); Humprecht, Castro-Herrero, Blassnig, Brüggemann & Engesser (2022); Sorrentino & Splendore (2022).

the changes that journalism is experiencing due to periods of crisis, political interests, market demands and the evolution of the professional profiles and roles of journalists. Regarding this last aspect, journalistic competencies in Italy are mainly studied from the perspective of the professional roles of journalists continuously for a decade (Splendore, 2006, 2013, 2014, 2016d, 2017, 2018; Poletti & Brants, 2010; Vaccari, 2011; Domaneschi & Splendore, 2012; Gemi et al. 2013; Ardizzoni, 2013; Splendore & Legnante, 2014; Memoli & Splendore, 2014; Cobianchi, Del Sal and Splendore, 2014; Ciaglia, Mazzoleni, Mazzoni and Splendore, 2014; Splendore, Calian-dreo and Airoidi, 2016; Splendore and Rega, 2017; Binotto, Nobile and Rega, 2020; Bruno and Peruzzi, 2020; Splendore and Brambilla, 2021; Standaert, 2021; Sorrentino & Splendore, 2022).

According to results from some of these authors, most Italian journalists identify with the “monitoring role” and consider it to be especially important to report things as they are. The results from WJS study (2013-2016) about professional role orientations/priorities show that Italian journalists found it most important to report things as they really are (mean=4.60 and s=0.71), to be a detached observer (mean=4.47 and s=0.81), to provide analysis of current affairs (mean=4.13 and s=0.89), and to let people express their views (mean=3.82 and s=1.17). The relevance of functions such as the first two (“to report things as they are” and “to be a detached observer”) are common in Western journalism, nevertheless they are in contrast with the typical representations of Italian journalism. The two functions that carry the lowest level of support are “Support national development” (mean=1.32 and s=0.67) and “Support government policy” (mean=1.32 and s=0.65), (p. 2-5).

With specific regard to investigative journalism, Gerli, Mazzoni and Mincigrucci (2018), in a comparative study of Hungary, Italy, Latvia and Romania, found that the opportunity to fulfil a watchdog role in Italy is threatened by: (1) The instrumentalization of the media outlets by ‘external’ actors, (2) the weakness of the print press market and (3) the low level of professionalism (here mainly understood as the self-censorship of journalists).

In line with the perception of the role identified by Italian journalists, there is substantial agreement between scholars²⁰⁸, of an objectivism characterised by “limiting oneself to reporting reality as it appears”. However, the younger journalists are the ones who, from this evidence, differ the most. (Sorrentino & Splendore, 2022).

4. Publications, data sources and main monitoring actors of media usage patterns

The **domain of Media usage patterns** is well-researched in Italy, especially regarding access to media, diversity in the media system and relevance of public service media.

4.1. Research and monitoring that reflects access to the media and diversity of viewpoints in media system

Although Campanella (2003) is one of the researchers who at the beginning of this millennium focused on the study of media access and diversity in Italy, Bracciale is the author who has maintained the record of publications over recent years (Bracciale and Mingo, 2009, 2015, 206; Andretta and Bracciale, 2017; Mingo and Bracciale, 2018). In Italian media market there are three main concerns that raise fundamental questions about the diversity in media systems.

²⁰⁸ Garusi, Splendore and Kalfeli (2020); Delmastro and Splendore (2020); Humprecht and Büchel (2013); Fortunati and O’Sullivan (2021); Porlezza, Maier and RussMohol (2012); Bentivegna and Marchetti (2019); Zerback, Reinemann, Van Aelst and Masini (2020); Wettstein, Esser, Schulz, Wirz and Wirth (2018); Splendore (2020); Bentivegna and Marchetti (2016); Splendore, Calian-dreo and Airoidi (2016); Cobianchi, Del Sal and Splendore (2014).

Firstly, the significant ownership concentration for free broadcast TV that has now persisted for over 20 years. Two companies control 87.2% the Italian broadcast television market: the public *RAI* and the Berlusconi family's *Mediaset*. Secondly, the high concentration of advertising investment in the field of television. For several years, Italian television has received over half of the total advertising investments made. And, thirdly, the political corporate relationship in Italy. A prime example of this was the investor founder Silvio Berlusconi, who served as prime minister three times: in 1994, from 2001 to 2006, and again from 2008 to 2011 (Richeri & Prario, 2016).

In addition, the media have an increasingly closer link with social networks. According to Valeriani and Vaccari (2016), inadvertent encounters with political content on social media are likely to reduce the gap in online engagement between citizens with high and low interest in politics, potentially broadening the range of voices that make themselves heard. In line with this result, a study by Mosca & Quaranta (2016) finds that social movements and protesters use online platforms extensively to inform and mobilize other citizens by-passing the gatekeeping function of traditional media. For all these reasons, and despite the high level of media concentration in Italy, there is a growing proliferation of media options to consume news, and a considerable proportion of their sample opt-out of news use or have a low-source, low-frequency news media diet (Castro et al. 2021).

The Italian media users have full access to media and preferred channels (97.4%) (AGCOM, 2018; Ramirez de la Piscina, Zabalondo, Aiestaran and Agirre, 2016; Mosca & Quaranta, 2016; Curini, 2020). Also, they offer high relevance to media news because 94.9% of them watch/read news in their average day (AGCOM, 2018; Mosca & Quaranta, 2016; Curini, 2020; Bentivegna & Marchetti, 2019; Ceron and Splendore, 2018, 2019; Durante & Knight, 2012; Mosca & Quaranta, 2017; Bentivegna & Marchetti, 2014; Stier, Kirkizh, Froio & Schroeder, 2020; Steppat, Castro-Herrero & Esser, 2021).

4.2. Relevance of news media

The relevance of public service media is a topic analysed mainly by research institutes and Italian institutions. The *Autorità per le Garanzie nelle Comunicazioni* (AGCOM), as an independent Italian regulatory and guarantee administrative authority, watches over the General Public Broadcasting Service based on the principles laid down by the Italian Constitution and by the European Union. It is important because, for example, the public channel *RAI* is the television news program with the highest number of viewers (AGCOM, 2020). Hence, AGCOM not only regulates aspects in that area, but also establishes itself as the main regulatory body for aspects such as relevance, access, preferences, quality, and functionalities of news media.

The mission of the General Public Broadcasting Service is based on the principles laid down by the Italian Constitution and by the European Union in the “TV without Frontiers” Directive of 1989 and subsequent amendments, the 9th Protocol on Public Television annexed by the Treaty of Amsterdam of 1993 and the subsequent Communication of the Commission of the European Communities 2009/C 257/01 published in the Official Journal of the European Union of 27 October 2009.

Public service obligations are defined by all these sources, by Law No. 249 of 31 July 1997, Law No. 112 of 3 May 2004, the Consolidated Law on Audiovisual and Radio Broadcasting Media Services, approved by Legislative Decree No. 177 of 31 July 2005, and the Service Contract signed with the Ministry of Communications. According to Article 45 of the Consolidated Law on Audiovisual and Radio Broadcasting Media Services, public service broadcasting must guarantee the following, thus setting the minimum mandatory content, which may be supplemented through the Service Contract:

- a. the broadcasting of all public service television and radio transmissions with full coverage of the national territory, insofar as science and technology allow;
- b. an adequate number of hours of television and radio broadcasts devoted to education, information, training and cultural promotion, with particular regard to the promotion of theatrical, cinematographic, television, including original language, and musical works recognised as being of a high artistic level or more innovative; this number of hours shall be defined every three years by resolution of the Authority; entertainment broadcasts for minors shall be excluded from the calculation of such hours
- c. the broadcasting of the transmissions referred to in subparagraph (b), in a proportionate manner, in all time slots, including those with a large audience, and on all television and radio programmes;
- d. access to programming, within the limits and according to the modalities indicated by the law, in favour of parties and groups represented in Parliament and in regional assemblies and councils, of the associative organisations of local autonomies, of national trade unions, of religious denominations, of political movements, of political and cultural bodies and associations, of legally recognised national associations of the cooperative movement, of associations of social promotion registered in the national and regional registers, of ethnic and linguistic groups and of other groups of relevant social interest that request it;
- e. the establishment of a company for the production, distribution and broadcasting of radio and television programs abroad, aimed at the knowledge and enhancement of the Italian language, culture and enterprise through the use of the programs and the diffusion of the most significant productions of the national audiovisual panorama;
- f. the broadcasting of radio and television programs in German and Ladin for the autonomous province of Bolzano, in Ladin for the autonomous province of Trento, in French for the autonomous region of Valle d'Aosta and in Slovene for the autonomous region of Friuli-Venezia Giulia;
- g. the broadcasting, free of charge, of messages of social utility or of public interest that are requested by the Presidency of the Council of Ministers and the broadcasting of appropriate information on the feasibility of Italian roads and motorways
- h. the broadcasting, at appropriate times, of content specifically intended for minors, taking into account the needs and sensitivity of early childhood and developmental age;
- i. the preservation of the historical radio and television archives, guaranteeing public access to them;
- j. the allocation of at least 15% of total annual revenues to the production of European works, including those made by independent producers;
- k. the realization, within the deadlines provided for by law no. 112 of 3 May 2004, of the infrastructures for radio and television broadcasting on terrestrial frequencies in digital mode;
- l. the implementation of digital interactive services of public utility;
- m. compliance with the advertising crowding limits provided for by article 38 of the Consolidated Law;
- n. the articulation of the concessionaire company in one or more national seats and in seats in each region and, for the Trentino-Alto Adige region, in the autonomous provinces of Trento and Bolzano;
- o. the adoption of appropriate measures to protect people with sensory disabilities;
- p. the enhancement and strengthening of decentralized production centres;
- q. the implementation of distance learning activities.

Also, *RAI* is committed to guaranteeing the visibility of the country's linguistic minorities. Based on the agreements currently in force, *RAI* guarantees television and radio programming for the

following linguistic minorities in the German and Ladin-speaking areas of Italy, in the provinces of Bolzano and Ladin:

- German and Ladin in the provinces of Bolzano and Trento;
- Slovenian in Friuli-Venezia Giulia;
- French in Valle D'Aosta.

At an academic level, the role and relevance of public service media has also been analyzed in an appropriately manner since the end of the first decade of this millennium by Gardini (2004, 2008); Orofino (2011); Richeri (2018); Cola and Prario (2012); Castro-Herrero, Nir and Skovsgaard (2018), as the main examples.

In Italy there is uncertainty about the functionalities of media. In this regard, there is a question to be answered: is there sufficient demand to justify investments in infrastructure? In such a situation, the excessive fragmentation of the market and strong competition without proper regulation will discourage investment. The sector is moving to grow high-speed broadband networks and to diversify its offerings, but it is still unclear as to who will undertake the requisite infrastructure investments (Fortunati and O'Sullivan, 2021; Richeri & Prario, 2016; Valeriani and Vaccari, 2016; Toraldo, Vergari and Toraldo, 2015; Calenda & Mosca, 2007; Tosoni and Tarantino, 2013; Vaccari and Valeriani, 2018; Mosca & Quaranta, 2017). Until 2020, according to the “*Rapporto sul consume di informazione*” published by AGCOM²⁰⁹, the main sources of information were television (48.2%), internet (26.3%), newspapers (17.1%) and radio (8.4%). And, until before the Covid-19 pandemic, 94.9% of Italians watched/read news in their average day (AGCOM, 2018).

Today, according to the data from “2022 Digital News Report”, the media sector is now fully experiencing the impact of the digital transition. The main sources of information are online (75%) and TV (70%), social media (47%) and newspapers (15% in free fall for years). The social networks most popular for news are *Facebook*, *WhatsApp* and *YouTube* [TikTok (4%)]. However, the economic model of online media in Italy is still undergoing restructuring, since the percentage of users willing to pay for news is also low (12%).

And, of course, the functionality of the news media in Italy is directly related to their quality and the emergence of a marked cross-media phenomenon. Laura Carrer, journalist in *MilanoToday* and freelancer, is very critical about the quality of Italian media: “Quite bad in most cases. In fact, the integrity of newspapers on some levels no longer exists. There are many people who, precisely because they are freelancers, collaborate with some newspapers to let them know that they are doing them a favour, while there are other professionals within the newsrooms that do not work well”²¹⁰. For this reason, among others, although three quarters of the Italian population access the media for information purposes, 'only the medium of television retains its own pool of exclusive users (about 8% of the population) of exclusive users (the so-called “television” of the population). Finally, there remains a niche of Italians (about 5%) who do not access information at all (at least not through the mass media) (Corchia & Bracciale, 2020). In any case, the academy has a unfinished business regarding this subject that has yet to be investigated in depth.

4.3. Trust in media

Despite the relevance of the media as information services in Italy, the trust that users place in them is particularly low in Italy. The Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development

²⁰⁹ Link to download this report: <https://images.agi.it/pdf/agi/agi/2018/02/19/124325678-b198b2cb-affe-4842-b6b8-4e297aba9a82.pdf>

²¹⁰ Interview made by Martín Oller Alonso (August, 2022).

(2020)²¹¹ confirms that the level of trust in the Italian government is 35/100, one of the lowest levels in the world. According to Reuters Institute (2020), after an 11-percentage point fall in 2020, trust level recovered slightly in 2021, but is still relatively low. The most trusted brands are generally those that are known for lower levels of political partisanship (ANSA, SkyTG24 and Il Sole 24 ore). Least trusted are outlets with a pronounced partisan bias and the popular digital-born outlet (Fanpage, Libero Quotidiano and Il Giornale). A situation that, rather than decreasing, is currently increasing: On average, just 13% and 15% of users believe that the Italian media are independent of undue political and commercial influences, respectively (Digital News Report, 2022). A topic analyzed in greater depth by reports published by national research organization (AGCOM), international institutions (Reuters Institute) and projects (WJS, 2007, 2012, 2021). Even so, the increase in studies carried out from the academy (Iannelli, Splendore, Valeriani and Marino, 2020; Ricci and Splendore, 2021; Stefani, Cavicchi, Romano and Lobb, 2008; Pogliano, 2015; Bordignon and Ceccarini, 2020) is mainly due to the partisan nature of Italian journalism (Splendore and Curini, 2020) and to the strong influence of political and business interests on news organizations (Memoli and Splendore, 2014). Brands that are most trusted are generally those that are known for lower levels of political partisanship. Least trusted is the popular digital-born website Fanpage (Lovari, 2020).

What is clear from the European Union about freedom of expression on a comparative level in all European countries is that the lack of freedom and pluralism of the media can represent a further serious obstacle to freedom of expression as well as to that of receiving and disseminating information and creating, by weakening public trust in the media, a vulnerability to democracy (Servizio Ricerca del Parlamento europeo, 2019).

5. Publications, data sources and main monitoring actors of Media related competencies domain

The domain of media usage related competencies is analysed in a partial and unbalanced way, constituting itself as the least investigated research area. Parameters like users' cognitive abilities, communication competencies and ethical capabilities, and social context of media related competencies began to be investigated in depth less than a decade ago in Italy.

Regarding users' cognitive abilities, the most studied variable, although only recently, is the authenticity of communication. According to Vegetti and Mancosu (2020) people tend to perceive all partisan-consistent news as more plausible, but political sophisticates are better able to tell real from fake news. These authors conclude that while political information is affected by motivated reasoning, political sophistication can effectively reduce citizens' likelihood believe misinformation. As predicted, people are more likely to believe a news report by a source that has previously given them congruent information. However, this only holds if the source is fake. Furthermore, we use machine learning to uncover treatment heterogeneity in the data. Effects vary most strongly for various levels of trust in the mainstream media and for those having voted for the populist right (Bauer and Clemm von Hohenberg, 2021). Additionally, in a country like Italy, where the most popular news programs have determined for decades, and still determine, much of the country's political and public opinion²¹².

And, secondly, digital skills and literacy (Bracciale and Mingo, 2009, 2015, 2016; Andretta and Bracciale, 2017; Bracciale 2017; Mingo and Bracciale, 2018). The case of Italy is peculiar because the country suffers from digital backwardness due to the more conspicuous presence of

²¹¹ Website of OECD: <https://www.oecd.org/italy/>

²¹² Jeanpietro Mazzoleni is profesor at the University of Milan. This comment comes from a interview made by Sergio Splendore (June, 2022).

citizens who belong to the group of information “have nots” compared to other European countries, which results into the inability to fully exploit the benefits of digitalisation (Bracciale and Mingo, 2015; Mingo and Bracciale, 2018).

In addition to its novelty as a field of study, as is the case of digital literacy, its research is characterized by being carried out by a small group of scholars, as is the case of Bracciale, or researchers belonging to European universities and centers outside of Italy (Mannheim Centre for European Social Research; European University Institute). A trend that is maintained in all study areas of the domain of media usage related competencies (Open Society Institute; European Schoolnet).

The effects of this health crisis, together with the delay in the development of the users’ skills of Italian citizens, means that the use of media and media technology continues at quite low rates when compared to neighboring European countries. Italy ranks only 21st out of the 35 European countries according to the “Media Literacy Index (2021)” (Lessenski, 2021; Taddeo and Tirocchi, 2021; Selva, 2020; Cappello, 2019).

The social context of media related to media usage competencies, even though it has been investigated for a decade by European institutes and universities (eg. European Commission, University of Liège, Norwegian University of Science and Technology) and Italian researchers (eg. Mascheroni, 2012; Pillera, 2015), remains under-researched and the amount of literature in the field is still limited (Ranieri, Bruni and Kupiainen, 2018).

At the beginning of the second decade of this century, only 19% of Italian students in schools had a virtual learning environment (the average in Europe was 61%), and schools with VLEs offered external access with roughly equal levels of access to teachers and parents at all grades (European Schoolnet, 2012). Despite the general increase in the spread of technologies in recent years, regarding competencies in Italian socio-demographic groups, according to the results of Mingo and Bracciale (2018), there exists a relative “Matthew effect” in Italy: despite the general increase in the spread of technologies, we are witnessing a progressive impoverishment of the weakest sectors of the population: older people, people with disabilities, women, lower education groups, unemployed and “those in less-developed” regions.

In the domain of media usage related competences, variables such as rational argumentation in public communication, critical consideration of information and knowledge and understanding of contexts of communication (within the dimension of users’ cognitive abilities), self-expression ability, ability to listen, and to communicate in an assertive manner (within the dimension of users’ communication competencies), use of media and media technology, privacy and data protection skills (within the dimension of users’ skills), and users’ ethical capabilities are poorly studied. To the point that it is extremely difficult to find information about them in the Italian context.

5.1. Normative sources

The media usage patterns are determined by the media literacy policies (Cappello and Rizzuto, 2020; Ranieri, Fabbro and Nardi, 2019; Tirocchi, 2017; Silva, 2017; Ferro Allodola, 2020; Morgese, 2012; Bruni, Garavaglia and Petti, 2019; Felini, 2014). Despite some valuable attempts to introduce Media Education in Italian schools, unfortunately non-systematicity, non-organicity, and poor interdisciplinarity still shape the educational and teaching practices (Doni, 2015).

It is worth anticipating an aspect that is crucial for the possibilities of developing a deliberative communication context, which will be dealt with in more detail below. While there is no doubt that the Internet and social media platforms are intrinsically democratising technologies capable of enriching individual repertoires, this opportunity is highly dependent on the level of media literacy (Ferro Allodola, 2020) and digital inclusion (Andretta and Bracciale, 2017) in differ-

ent territorial and socio-cultural contexts. The understanding of and the access to communication structures is in fact an essential precondition for access to political and cultural citizenship.

5.2. Assessment of media related competencies among citizens

The Media related competencies domain can be considered because of the intertwined work of the three domains we discussed so far. In fact, the normative aim of any citizens is to develop preferences about the various policy issues under discussion, and they come to these preferences in part from the news they consume (Curran, 2002). As a result, journalism serves to provide citizens with the information they need to be free and self-governing (Strömback, 2005). Especially in the information society, deliberative communication strongly depends on the news media's ability to provide truthful information and to carry out argumentative discussions to solve problems and reach – at least temporary – agreement (Van Der Wurff *et al.* 2016).

A large body of work is devoted to understanding the mechanisms of diffusion of inaccurate and false news contents (especially on social media). However, a clear flaw in this strand of studies is evident: only a few of them have focused on the individual mechanisms by which people believe that news (Vegetti and Mancosu, 2020). In a similar vein, Bauer and Clemm von Hohenberg (2020) argue that even though the increasing spread of fake news represents one of the greatest challenges societies face in the 21st century, there is little understanding about how sources influence whether people believe and share what they read. If we consider the more than 200 bibliographic references that we have been able to collect about a ROs approach, we may assume that the Media Related Competencies domain is by far the least investigated in Italian academic literature.

Analyses of this kind would be particularly useful in Italy, where the level of media literacy is relatively low. Also, in the specifics of the school system, the situation could be improved. As noted by Doni (2015), despite some valuable attempts to introduce Media Education in Italian schools, unfortunately non-systematicity, non-organicity, and poor interdisciplinarity still shape the educational and teaching practices.

For all these reasons, Ferro Allodola (2020) highlights the urgent need to spread “media resilience”, that is the ability to be aware of the risks of false, incomplete, and obsolete information to which we are subjected on a daily basis and to be able to cope with it in order to be able to exercise control over our choices, decisions, and actions, both in personal relationships and in political and social life. As pointed out by Bracciale (2017), new forms of social *ghettoisation* are taking shape for those excluded from the circuits that allow them to exercise their rights of political and cultural citizenship, which are less and less linked to the methods of production, but more dependent on the effective capacity to manage information flows in the information society.

Ferro Allodola (2020) continues by stating that the empowerment of citizens through media resilience is only feasible if free and sustainable access to the information and infrastructures of the digital society is guaranteed. As a matter of fact, the utopia of the democratising narrative is based on (1) the idea of the Internet and social media platforms as tools capable of guaranteeing more solid rights of citizenship, (2) a more intense collective participation, thanks to the simplification in the processes of accountability made possible by the technological infrastructure, and (3) the redistribution of decision-making power into the hands of citizens, strongly dependent on the level of digital inclusion in the various territorial and socio-cultural contexts (Andretta and Bracciale, 2017). On the one hand, therefore, there is the deep transformation of democracy itself, because the new discourses on which it is built take place within a pluralised public sphere, in which the processes of mediation are closely linked to technological affordances; on the other hand, there emerges a downsizing of the pre-conceived opportunities for participation that sharpens the distance between elites and non-elites (*ibid.*).

In this context, the case of Italy is peculiar because the country suffers from digital backwardness due to the more conspicuous presence of citizens who belong to the group of “information have nots” compared to other European countries; which results in the inability to fully exploit the benefits of digitalisation (Bracciale and Mingo, 2015; Mingo and Bracciale, 2018).

6. Analysis of Research and Monitoring Capabilities and Quality: Comparative analytical overview of available research and access to the research

The last part of this report analyses what kind of data this sub-field can produce in terms of availability, recency, and continuity, the complexity of data-gathering, reliability, and availability of experts and research structures. In this way, we will be able to offer a holistic view of the study and research concerning the risks and opportunities in relation to deliberative communication and, consequently, social cohesion in Italy.

Splendore (2016) affirms, as far as Italian context is concerned, that when researchers want to retrieve data on the four domains that structure the analysis of deliberative communication, they may be faced with different types of problems:

1. Data are non-existent (nobody produces them).
2. Data exist but are not available in open and digital format.
3. Data exist, are in table format, are accessible and open, but have unprocessable extensions (pdf, scanned images, closed format).
4. Data exist, can be accessed, but are not provided in a tabular and structured format.
5. Data poorness.
6. Irregular spread of data.
7. Lack of reliability of data.

The existence of data does not seem to be a problem in Italy. In fact, there are many actors involved in the ROs sub-field concerning deliberative communication. Concerning the second kind of closure, despite extensive research conducted by scholars and research groups in universities, data are rarely made available. This is a habit that also characterizes the Italian organizations that may be regarded as a branch of Government or public body, such as the aforementioned AGCOM. Instead, data delivered by the transnational organizations that monitor media systems globally often suffer from the problems of points 3 and 4. For example, data conveyed by *Reporters Sans Frontières* are not processable and lack a tabular and structured format, which would facilitate their analysis. In addition, it has been shown that political and ideological issues affect the construction and structure of the measuring instruments used by the *Freedom House* (Giannone, 2010).

Actors offering data in a processable and structured format and with a high level of reliability unfortunately are presented with other types of closure. For example, the different large comparative research projects that collect data and produce comparative analysis over certain periods (like *Worlds of Journalism Study* and *Nepocs*) do not offer annual monitoring. In addition, *Nepocs* change periodically the subject of analysis. Moreover, the data offered by the Italian units in the media industry structures or linked to media industries are often poor in terms of available variables, which hinder cross-data analysis. Also, despite the fact that various Italian independent organizations or professional associations can be considered reliable, they offer data that are often only useful to themselves, thus not contributing to the spread of democracy.

Regarding the availability of data on legal and ethical regulation, journalism, media usage patterns, and media-related competencies domains in Italy, our result shows that, even though

there is relatively abundant and available information, there is an imbalance between the different domains (as we showed in the preceding paragraphs). Our collection of research and additional data (researchers, institutions, dates, among others) show in more detail which domains (and different measurables and variables inside them) are well represented and researched. And, of course, the lack or absence of certain kinds of research. There are abundant data concerning the domains of journalism. There is quite a lot of information about legal and ethical regulation and media usage patterns and little research focused on media-related competencies.

5.1. Comparative analytical overview of the sources and access to these sources

It can be inferred that the lack of cooperation between these actors involved in the communicative processes in Italy leads to a poorly supervised media environment and one therefore strongly influenced by both economic and political factors that are often strictly intertwined. For example, Cornia (2016) suggests that in Italy the digital transition has led to only moderate changes within the Italian media system and generated limited implications for pluralism of information because although the new media, compared to the traditional media, have lower technological barriers inhibiting entry, market and political factors still hinder the entrance of newcomers: it is only legacy outlets, which are in a position to invest in innovation, that are able to reach a large audience. In line with this result, Cornia (ibid.) also highlights that pluralism is not the automatic result of technological developments since there is a “chronic resistance to change within the Italian media system, where the lack of appropriate and effective media policies has allowed dominant players strongly connected with political forces to fix the rules of the game in their markets and to influence the regulation in their media sectors” (191). In a similar vein, Ciaglia (2013) highlights that: “The norms enforced in Italy seem perfectly tailored to the enduring iron duopoly, which continues to persist in spite of the emergence of a viable new competitor (*Sky Italia*) and the new possibilities engendered in the digitization of the Italian TV system” (p. 424).

The analysis of Evens and Prario (2013) reveals that this situation enables no single Italian mobile operator to provide a comprehensive supply of television channels that could compete with traditional offerings. In addition, Curran *et al.* (2013) suggest that a key influence that has constrained the development of independent online journalism is:

the success of established media organisations in extending their hegemony across technologies by setting up heavily subsidised news websites supported by extensive newsgathering resources, prominent brand names, and the ability to cross-promote. Faced by these superior resources and operating in a context where people expect online content to be free, independent news websites – with the potential to be different – have often struggled to survive (892).

Despite the relatively moderate change aforementioned, according to Curini (2020) the level of pluralism did not improve. The competition exacerbated by the multiplication of information channels due to the advent of Web 2.0 – during the first decade of this new century – and social media platforms have brought newspapers to slant the content of the news they produce. Their main objective is to cater to the prejudices of their regular readers. This process has also led RAI, the Italian Public Service Broadcaster, to follow commercial logic to survive (Mazzoleni and Sfardini, 2009). In this regards, Marco Gui, professor at the Department of Sociology and Social Research, University of Milan, shows his concern about the “increased of use of sensational content. A phenomenon that has always been a problem for Italian journalism, but in the digital world has multiplied”²¹³.

²¹³ Interview made by Martín Oller Alonso (August, 2022).

Beyond its traditional political parallelism (Hallin & Mancini, 2004 and recently corroborated by Humprecht et al. 2022), another reason why in Italy the economic and political factors that shape the media environment are often strictly intertwined is in regard to the fact that since Italian newsrooms in many cases lack the necessary resources to promote independent coverage, they tend to heavily rely on institutional sources (Tiffen et al. 2014; Splendore, 2020).

Journalism that requires more time and financial resources, due to the nature of the topics it covers, is particularly affected by this trend. For example, regarding migration coverage, there is an objective difficulty on the part of migrants to consider themselves as a legitimate source to express their point of view even on the issues that most directly affect them. For this reason, news concerning migrants is often presented in Italian media from the point of view of institutional sources and not from that of the actors personally involved in the events (Cerase, 2004; Gemi et al. 2013).

Moreover, since journalists covering immigration often lack the specific skills to put the events they report on into the broader context, even greater power to define the situation is given to actors from the political field (Pogliano, 2019; Pogliano and Ponzio, 2019). Regarding investigative journalism, Gerli, Mazzoni and Mincigrucchi (2018) found that the opportunity to fulfil a watchdog role in Italy is threatened by:

the instrumentalization of the media outlets by 'external' actors, the weakness of the print press market and the low level of professionalism (here mainly understood as the self-censorship of journalists) (34).

In this scenario, there is an urgent need for a place for collective reflection, where the actors from academia, those from within the profession, and those from the different authorities and associations concerning journalism can be brought together and interact. It seems to us that only effective cooperation between all these actors will make it possible to intercept, make sense of, and, if necessary, intervene in the current media environment.

6.3. Monitoring capabilities and the quality of data and knowledge

6.3.1. Data on research conditions and environments

Moreover, despite the presence of an official authority designed to ensure fair competition between operators in the information market and to protect users' consumption freedom (AGCOM), as already mentioned above, it is often criticised for not being autonomous from politics. In addition, despite a large amount of research carried out in the field of journalism studies and the presence of several specialised journals - especially those with the greatest impact previously described in this document - there is still little communication between academia and journalists. This is a long-standing problem of the Italian media system; as early as 1995 Agostini (published in 2013) observed that the professional profile that straddles journalism and research, which has been the strength of most journalism schools abroad, is an exception in Italy. For example, Sorrentino (2014) argues that one of the most frequent complaints from journalists to academic scholars relates to the timescales of research and scientific publication, which are much slower than the hurried responses journalists and the journalistic field need.

6.3.2. National databases, universities, centers of research and national institutions specializing in communication and journalism

Research in Italy is encouraged through the *Istituto Nazionale di Statistica* (ISTAT)²¹⁴ and the National Research Program (PNR), provided for by Legislative Decree 204/1998. The PNR guides research policies in Italy, which the administrations of the State contribute to the realiza-

²¹⁴ Web page of National Institute of Statistics (ISTAT): <https://www.istat.it/en/>

tion of with the coordination of the Ministry of the University and of Research (*Ministero dell'Università e della Ricerca*)²¹⁵. On 15 December 2020, the National Research Program 2021-2027²¹⁶ was approved at CIPE, as result of a broad and in-depth discussion initiated by the Ministry of University and Research with the scientific community, with the administrations of the State and regional entities, and extended, through a public consultation, to public and private stakeholders and civil society.

Under the Italian law 150/2000, the *Consiglio Nazionale delle Ricerche* (CNR)²¹⁷ was established with the aim of enhancing information provided by scientific Departments, research Institutes and offices by issuing press releases and notes and handling the overall media communication. The office of CNR releases the web magazine *Almanacco della Scienza* and makes available a daily press review operated in collaboration with a specialized service, monitoring thousands of newspapers, magazines, journals, as well as television and radio programs: a collection of the most relevant press platforms is also provided by email.

The CNR, in its webpage, shows the qualifications whose ISSN has been definitively validated, grouped by topics according to a Dewey scheme for macrodiscipline, adapted and simplified. Regarding:

- (1) Information science, data processing, computer science:
 - ISSN 2421-129X, Data value [txt] Bimonthly www.editricetemi.com
 - ISSN 2283-5997, The great software of Win Magazine [txt] Monthly edmaster.it
 - ISSN 2283-5717, Win Magazine. The great guides [txt] Monthly edmaster.it
 - ISSN 2421-2810, Libraries today trends [txt] Semiannual www.editricebibliografica.it
 - ISSN 2421-4663, EmergingSeries Journal [online] <http://www.emergingseries.net/index.php/es-journal>
- (2) Media, Topical Journalism, Publishing:
 - ISSN 2421-3675, Il Giornale della Provincia [Rome, txt] Newspaper www.ilgiornaledellaprovincia.it
 - ISSN 2420-8671, Front page Reggio [Reggio Emilia, txt] Newspaper www.primapaginareggio.it
 - ISSN 2421 -3217, Il Corsivo [txt] Weekly www.facebook.com/ilCorsivoettimanale
 - ISSN 2421-6666, L'Occhio indiscreto [txt] www.locchioindiscreto.it
 - ISSN 2465-1036, Saturday evening [online, <http://www.sabatosera.it/digital/>]
 - ISSN 2465-1095, Novara today online, <http://edizioni digitali.netweek.it/dmedia/books/151127novara/>

Among the most important organizations in Italy, the Communications Regulatory Authority (*Autorità per le Garanzie nelle Comunicazioni*, AGCOM) stands out. In particular, the *Osservatorio sul giornalismo* of AGCOM, that is “a privileged and direct tool for comparison with Italian journalists. In fact, within the Observatory, a series of questions are addressed aimed at bringing out the point of view of information professionals regarding the evolution of the profession, the quality and criticalities of their role in the current phase; the effects induced by technological innovation; the critical issues, challenges and opportunities associated with the current change of scenario; the need to search for new identities and new visions in response to the generalized crisis of the traditional communication sectors”²¹⁸.

²¹⁵ Web page of *Ministero dell'Università e della Ricerca*: <https://www.mur.gov.it/it/aree-tematiche/ricerca/programmazione/programma-nazionale-la-ricerca>

²¹⁶ PNR (2021-2027). *Programma nazionale per la ricerca*: <https://www.mur.gov.it/sites/default/files/2021-01/Pnr2021-27.pdf>

²¹⁷ Web page of National Research Council (CNR): <https://www.cnr.it/en>

²¹⁸ Website of *Osservatorio sul giornalismo*: <https://www.agcom.it/osservatorio-giornalismo>

Proof of its commitment to the current situation after the pandemic, AGCOM recently published a study about the journalistic profession and journalists: “*La professione alla prova dell'emergenza Covid-19*”²¹⁹. In this report, the AGCOM commission underlines the phenomena as the disinformation, the changes in the relationship between journalists and their informative sources and media system, and the new working conditions of journalists.

Although there are no official records of professionals dedicated to communication in all its fields (including journalism and media), in addition to these institutions of the state there are other associations, organizations and professional institutions related to the journalistic and related areas:

- Federazione Nazionale della Stampa Italiana (Fnsi)²²⁰.
- Consiglio Nazionale Ordine dei giornalisti²²¹.
- Aeranti-Corallo, Le imprese radiotelevisiva locale, satellitare e via internet²²².
- USPI - Unione Stampa Periodica Italiana²²³.
- Dipartimento per l'informazione e l'editoria. Presidenza del consiglio de Ministri²²⁴.
- ARTICOLO21²²⁵.
- Ossigeno Informazione²²⁶.
- Centro di Studi ed Iniziative Culturali²²⁷.
- Giornalisti Italia²²⁸.
- Associazione Carta di Roma²²⁹.
- Centro di Documentazione Giornalistica²³⁰.
- Fondazione sul giornalismo italiano “Paolo Murialdi”²³¹.
- Stampa del Consiglio Nazionale delle Ricerche²³².

As we anticipated in this report, universities and faculties of communication (and related fields) play a fundamental role in the specialization of professionals in these fields and the dissemination of research in Italy:

Degrees:

- ◆ Corso di laurea in comunicazione (Padova): Università degli Studi di Padova.
- ◆ Corso di laurea in comunicazione d'impresa, marketing e pubblicità (Roma, Lumsa): Libera Università “Maria Ss. Assunta”.
- ◆ Corso di laurea in comunicazione e dams (Arcavacata di rende): Università della Calabria.
- ◆ Corso di laurea in comunicazione e marketing (Modena): Università degli Studi di Modena e Reggio Emilia.
- ◆ Corso di laurea in comunicazione e psicologia (Milano): Università degli Studi di Milano.

²¹⁹ Link to this report: <http://bit.ly/3hbf1An>

²²⁰ Website <https://www.fnsi.it/che-cose-la-fnsi>

²²¹ Website <https://www.odg.it/>

²²² Website <https://www.aeranticorallo.it/chi-siamo/>

²²³ Website <http://www.uspi.it/Home.html>

²²⁴ Website <https://informazioneeditoria.gov.it/it/>

²²⁵ Website <https://www.articolo21.org/contatti>

²²⁶ Website <https://www.ossigeno.info/>

²²⁷ Website <http://www.piolatorre.it/>

²²⁸ Website <https://www.giornalistitalia.it/>

²²⁹ Website <https://www.cartadiroma.org/contatti/>

²³⁰ Website <http://www.cdgweb.it/cosa-facciamo>

²³¹ Website: <http://www.fondazionemurialdi.it/>

²³² Website: www.almanacco.cnr.it

- ◆ Corso di laurea in comunicazione e relazioni pubbliche (Catania): Università degli Studi di Catania.
- ◆ Corso di laurea in comunicazione e società (Milano): Università degli Studi di Milano.
- ◆ Corso di laurea in comunicazione interculturale (Torino): Università degli Studi di Torino.
- ◆ Corso di laurea in comunicazione interculturale e multimediale (Pavia): Università degli Studi di Pavia.
- ◆ Corso di laurea in comunicazione internazionale e pubblicitaria (Perugia): Università per Stranieri di Perugia.
- ◆ Corso di laurea in comunicazione linguistica e multimediale (Firenze): Università degli Studi di Firenze.
- ◆ Corso di laurea in comunicazione nella società della globalizzazione (Roma): Università degli Studi "Roma Tre".
- ◆ Corso di laurea in comunicazione, innovazione e multimedialità (Pisa): Università degli Studi di Pisa.
- ◆ Corso di laurea in comunicazione, lingue e culture (Siena): Università degli Studi di Siena.
- ◆ Corso di laurea in comunicazione pubblicitaria (Urbino): Università degli Studi di Urbino Carlo Bo.
- ◆ Corso di laurea in comunicazione scientifica (Torino): Università degli Studi di Torino.
- ◆ Corso di laurea in comunicazione sociale (Messina): Università degli Studi di Messina.
- ◆ Corso di laurea in culture per la comunicazione (L'Aquila): Università degli Studi dell'Aquila.
- ◆ Corso di laurea in filosofie e scienze della comunicazione e della conoscenza (Arcavacata di Rende): Università della Calabria.
- ◆ Corso di laurea in informazione, media, pubblicità (Urbino): Università degli Studi di Urbino Carlo Bo.
- ◆ Corso di laurea in linguaggi dei media (Milano): Università Cattolica del Sacro Cuore.
- ◆ Corso di laurea in lingue e comunicazione (Cagliari): Università degli Studi di Cagliari.
- ◆ Corso di laurea in lingue e cultura per l'impresa (Urbino): Università degli Studi di Urbino Carlo Bo.
- ◆ Corso di laurea in lingue per la comunicazione internazionale (Catania): Università degli Studi di Catania.
- ◆ Corso di laurea in media e giornalismo (Firenze): Università degli Studi di Firenze.
- ◆ Corso di laurea in pubblicità, marketing e comunicazione aziendale (Teramo): Università degli Studi di Teramo.
- ◆ Corso di laurea in relazioni pubbliche (Udine): Università degli Studi di Udine.
- ◆ Corso di laurea in scienze dell'informazione: curriculum in editoria e giornalismo (Messina): Università degli Studi di Messina.
- ◆ Corso di laurea in scienze della comunicazione:
 - BARI: Università degli Studi di Bari.
 - BERGAMO: Università degli Studi di Bergamo.
 - BOLOGNA: Università degli Studi di Bologna.
 - CAMPOBASSO: Università degli Studi del Molise.
 - CASSINO: Università degli Studi di Cassino.
 - CATANIA: Università degli Studi di Catania.
 - GENOVA: Università degli Studi di Genova.
 - LECCE: Università degli Studi del Salento.

- MACERATA: Università degli Studi di Macerata.
 - MILANO: Università degli Studi di Milano-Bicocca.
 - MODENA: Università degli Studi di Modena e Reggio Emilia.
 - NAPOLI: Istituto Universitario “Suor Orsola Benincasa”.
 - PERUGIA: Università degli Studi di Perugia.
 - ROMA LUMSA: Libera Università “Maria Ss. Assunta” and Università degli Studi di Roma “Tor Vergata”.
 - SALERNO: Università degli Studi di Salerno.
 - SIENA: Università degli Studi di Siena.
 - TORINO: Università degli Studi di Torino.
 - TRIESTE: Università degli Studi di Trieste.
 - VARESE-COMO: Università degli Studi dell'Insubria.
- Corso di laurea in scienze dell'informazione: comunicazione pubblica e tecniche giornalistiche (Messina): Università degli Studi di Messina.
 - Corso di laurea in scienze della comunicazione e dell'amministrazione (Teramo): Università degli Studi di Teramo.
 - Corso di laurea in scienze della comunicazione e dell'animazione socioculturale (Bari): Università degli Studi di Bari.
 - Corso di laurea in scienze della comunicazione e delle relazioni istituzionali (RomaLuiss): Libera Università Internazionale degli Studi Sociali Guido Carli.
 - Corso di laurea in scienze della comunicazione e giornalismo (Sassari): Università degli Studi di Sassari.
 - Corso di laurea in scienze della comunicazione: editoria e giornalismo (Verona): Università degli Studi di Verona.
 - Corso di laurea in scienze della comunicazione per i media e le istituzioni (Palermo): Università degli Studi di Palermo.
 - Corso di laurea in scienze della comunicazione per le culture e le arti (Palermo): Università degli Studi di Palermo.
 - Corso di laurea in scienze della comunicazione pubblica e d'impresa (Roma): Università degli Studi di Roma “La Sapienza”.
 - Corso di laurea in scienze della comunicazione politica e sociale (Milano): Università Cattolica del Sacro Cuore.
 - Corso di laurea in scienze e tecniche dell'interculturalità (Trieste): Università degli Studi di Trieste.
 - Corso di laurea in scienze e tecniche della comunicazione (Viterbo): Università degli Studi della Tuscia.
 - Corso di laurea in scienze e tecnologie della comunicazione:
 - FERRARA: Università degli Studi di Ferrara.
 - MILANO IULM: Libera Università di Lingue e Comunicazione.
 - ROMA: Università degli Studi di Roma “La Sapienza”.
 - Corso di laurea in scienze e tecnologie multimediali (Udine): Università degli Studi di Udine.
 - Corso di laurea in scienze umanistiche per la comunicazione (Milano): Università degli Studi di Milano.
 - Corso di laurea in tecnica pubblicitaria:
 - ROMA LUMSA: Libera Università “Maria Ss. Assunta”.
 - TRIESTE: Università degli Studi di Trieste.

- Corso di laurea in tecniche della comunicazione e della web economy (Viterbo): Università degli Studi della Tuscia.
- Corso di laurea in teoria e tecnica dell'informazione (Sassari): Università degli Studi di Sassari.⁷

Universities, however, have an unequal role in this area of research, depending on their researchers and communication departments²³³:

Best Communication and Marketing Universities of 2022 in Italy: Bachelor's Degree

1. Università di Milano Bocconi, 109,5 punti
2. Università di Trento, 106,5 punti
3. Università di Bologna Alma Mater Studiorum, 106 punti
4. Università di Trieste, 104 punti
5. Università di Bolzano, 103 punti
6. Università di Roma Tor Vergata, 103 punti
7. Università di Firenze, 98 punti
8. Università di Siena, 96,5 punti
9. Università di Roma LUISS, 95 punti
10. Università di Genova, 93,5 punti
11. Università di Pavia, 93 punti
12. Università di Parma, 92,5 punti
13. Università di Milano Bicocca, 91,5 punti
14. Università di Perugia, 91,5 punti
15. Università di Milano Statale, 91 punti
16. Università di Padova, 91 punti
17. Università di Milano Cattolica, 90,5 punti
18. Università di Ferrara, 90,5 punti
19. Università di Insubria, 88,5 punti
20. Università di Torino, 88,5 punti

Specialized Degree in Communication and Marketing (2022 ranking)

1. Università di Roma Tor Vergata, 102 punti
2. Università di Padova, 99 punti
3. Università di Venezia Ca' Foscari, 97 punti
4. Università LUISS Roma, 96 punti
5. Università di Bologna 95,5 punti
6. Università di Milano 94,5 punti
7. Università di Macerata 93,5 punti

²³³ Webpage of Censis: <https://www.censis.it/>

8. Università di Siena 93,5 punti
9. Università di Pavia 93 punti
10. Università di Torino 90,5 punti
11. Università di Palermo 90 punti
12. Università di Roma LUMSA 90 punti
13. Università di Perugia 89,5 punti
14. Università di Trento 88,5 punti
15. Università di Milano Cattolica 88 punti
16. Università della Calabria 87,5 punti
17. Università della Campania Luigi Vanvitelli 87 punti
18. Università di Roma - Link Campus 86,5 punti
19. Università di Verona 86 punti
20. Università di Milano IULM 85,5 punti

As far as journalism is concerned specifically (reform of the 2000s), the *Ministero dell'istruzione, dell'università e della ricerca* included 13 types of degrees in publishing, multimedia communication and journalism. And the Order of Journalists (2022) recognizes 11 in Italy²³⁴:

- Master Biennale in Giornalismo a Stampa, Radiotelevisivo e Multimediale Università Cattolica Sacro Cuore (Milano).
- Master biennale di I livello in Giornalismo della Libera Università di Lingue e Comunicazione IULM (Milano).
- Master biennale di I livello in giornalismo dell'Università degli Studi di Milano/IFG - (Scuola di giornalismo "Walter Tobagi") a Sesto San Giovanni (Milano).
- Master in Giornalismo "Giorgio Bocca" dell'Università di Torino (Torino).
- Master biennale di I livello in Giornalismo - Alma Mater Studiorum Università di Bologna (Bologna).
- Istituto per la Formazione al Giornalismo di Urbino (Urbino).
- Scuola di giornalismo radiotelevisivo di Perugia (Perugia).
- Scuola Superiore di Giornalismo "Massimo Baldini" dell'Università LUISS Guido Carli (Roma).
- Master biennale di I livello in Giornalismo della Libera Università SS. Assunta (LUMSA) (Roma).
- Master biennale di I livello in Giornalismo dell'Università di Bari (Bari).
- Scuola Post Laurea in Giornalismo dell'Università di Salerno (Salerno).
- Master biennale di I livello in Giornalismo dell'Università Suor Orsola Benincasa di Napoli (Napoli).

In Italy there are several journals focused on communication and its related fields, but only seven are indexed in Scopus: *Journal of Science Communication* (Q2), *Qwerty* (Q3), *Comunicazione Politica* (Q3), *Comunicazioni Sociali* (Q4), *Reti Saperi Linguaggi* (Q4), *Visual Ethnography* (Q4) and *Languages Cultures Mediation* (Q4)²³⁵.

²³⁴ Webpage of Ordine Dei Giornalisti: <https://www.odg.it/wp-content/uploads/2019/05/Q.I.-scuole-autorizzate-27-settembre-2018.pdf>

²³⁵ The rest of the information about these journals in the appendices.

6.3.3. Individual researchers in the domains related to deliberative communication

The **legal and ethical regulation domain** has been well-researched by Italian scholars over the last twenty years, although we must consider that the legal and regulatory norms determine this domain. Both at the legislative and administrative level (*Costituzione della Repubblica Italiana* and *Codice penale italiano*, *Autorità per le Garanzie nelle comunicazioni*, as main examples) and professional rules (e.g., *Ordine dei Giornalisti*, *Associazione Carta di Roma*). The domain of legal and ethical regulation is more studied at an academic level with regard to freedom of expression (defamation, privacy, disinformation, copyright, among others) and information (access to documents, the protection of journalistic sources, whistleblowing, trade secrets and transparency in media ownership, among others). One fifth (17%) of the research carried out on the four domains concerning deliberative communication in Italy focuses on this domain.

Although the first legal and regulatory references and studies were raised by the Government at legislative level (Constitution) and professional regulatory norms (*Ordine dei Giornalisti*), academic studies have been taking on greater relevance since 2013, becoming more noticeable in the last two years - A growth trend in research that is maintained in the four domains studied due to the greater number of high-impact publications that have been published in recent years. Not only at the national level, with special relevance to universities located in Milan (Pierri, 2020; Splendore, 2016, 2017; Mazzoleni, 2006), Rome (Grisolia, 2020; Martino, 2021; Bentivegna, 2020), Turin (Scamuzzi et al. 2021), Bologna (Razzante, 2005), Perugia (Mancini, Mazzoni, Barbieri, Damiani and Gerli, 2021), among others; but also at international level as Lugano (Porlezza, 2019; di Salvo, 2020; Puppis, 2007), Dublin (Cornia, 2016), Edinburgh (Craufurd Smith, 2021), New York (Molé, 2013).

The best researcher domain in Italy is the **Journalism field**. Specifically, in areas such as market condition, production, public service media, working conditions, organization, professional culture and journalistic competencies. More than half (56.4%) of the studies carried out on the four domains concerning deliberative communication in this country focuses on this domain. Although the reports that establish the professional regulatory standards in journalism published by journalists' associations (*Ordine dei Giornalisti*, *Carta di Roma*, AGCOM) stand out, academic studies have been taking on greater relevance in the last twenty years, especially since the beginning of the second decade of this millennium, for their constant growth and international relevance within the academic community.

In the study of journalism, notable universities located in Italy include Milan (Mazzoleni, 2006; Splendore, 2016, 2020; Carlo and Mazzanti, 2020; Mattoni and Ceccobelli, 2018; Calliandro and Airoldi, 2016; Rega, 2017; Vigevani; Curini, 2020; Garusi and Oller, 2022), Rome (Cultrera, 2006; Grisolia, 2020; Giglioni, 2004; Bentivegna and Marchetti, 2018), Perugia (Mancini, Mazzoni, Barbieri, Damiani and Gerli, 2021; Gerli, Mazzoni and Mincigrucchi, 2018), Naples (Bifulco, Tirino and Castellano, 2022; Marrazzo, 2020; Avvisati, 2015), Pisa (Bracciale, 2020; De Gracia, 2013; Martella, 2016; Mattoni and Ceccobelli, 2018), Siena (Bentivegna and Rega, 2020), Florence (Sorrentino, 2002, 2022), Parma (Ferrandi, 2011), Udinese (Fortunati, 2010), Ferrara (Gardini, 2004, 2008), Catania (Nicolosi, 2019), Bologna (Barbieri, Campus and Mazzoni, 2019), Venice (Azzalini, 2015), Piemonte (Pogliano and Ponzio, 2019), Udine (Fortunati, 2021), among others.

However, other universities are in different countries, in cities like Lugano (Portezza, 2016; Richeri and Prario, 2016; Corchia and Bracciale, 2020; Prario, 2005; Evens, 2012), Zürich (Humprecht and Esser, 2018; Humprecht and Büchel, 2013; Zerback, 2020), Dublin (Cornia, 2016; O'Sullivan, Fortunati, Taipale and Barnhurst, 2017), Oregon (Russ-Mohl, 2012), Hamburg (Engesser and Brüggemann, 2016), Louvain (Standaert, 2021), Oxford (Örnebring, 2013) and London (Dalpiaz and Ravasi, 2010; Markova and McKay, 2013).

This is mainly due to two aspects. First, because there are Italian researchers who study the journalistic context in Italy who work in universities abroad. Second, and gaining increasing prominence, the interest of universities from other countries and international comparative studies (WJS, Journalistic Role Performance, ECREA, PHARM, among others) have offered an external and comparative perspective of Italian journalism that has opened other interesting fields of study. At international level, the role of Switzerland stands out; Switzerland has a not insignificant research production due to its language parity, geographical proximity, and its professional link because a considerable number of Italian researchers work in Swiss universities (something that is reproduced in all analysed domains in this report).

The **domain of Media usage patterns** is well-researched in Italy since the second decade of this millennium, especially regarding access to media and diversity in the media system in universities in Rome (Mingo, 2009, 2015, 2018), Milan (Splendore, 2020; Mosca, 2017), Pisa (Bracciale, 2018; Andretta and Bracciale, 2017) and Bologna (Valeriani, 2018). The second variable most highlighted is the relevance of public service media, especially in universities located in Ferrara (Gardini, 2004, 2008) and Milan (Orofino, 2011).

For its part, functionalities of media (Toraldò, Vergari and Toraldò, 2015 from University of Salento; Calenda and Mosca, 2007 from University of Florence; Tosoni and Tarantino, 2013 from Catholic University of Milan; Fortunati and Vaccari, 2016/2021 from University of Southampton), trust in media (Splendore and Curini, 2020 and Ricci, 2021 from University of Milan; Memoli, 2014 from University of Catania; Lovari, 2020 from University of Cagliari; Stefani, Cavicchi and Romano, 2008 from University of Florence; Pogliano, 2015 from University of Piemonte; Bordignon and Ceccarini, 2020 from university of Urbino), and relevance of news media (Mosca and Quaranta, 2016 from University of Florence; Curini, 2020, Ceron and Splendore, 2018 from University of Milan; Bentivegna and Marchetti, 2019 from University of Rome; Stepat, Castro Herrero and Esser, 2021 from University of Zürich) according to users have matured in the last decade.

Other fields of study such as quality of news media (Corchia and Bracciale, 2020 from university of Pisa), media literacies policies (Doni, 2015 from university of Rome; Cappello and Rizzuto, 2020 from University of Palermo; Ranieri, Fabbro and Nardi, 2019 and Tirocchi, 2017 from university of Turin; Silva, 2017 from university of Verona) and access to media and channel preferences (Mosca and Quaranta, 2016 from university of Florence; Curini, 2020 from university of Milan) are incipient in Italy.

One fifth of the research carried out in the four domains concerning deliberative communication in Italy focuses on this domain (20.66%). Although the reports published by the *Autorità per le Garanzie nelle Comunicazioni* (AGCOM) stand out, academic studies have been taking on greater relevance since 2016. In the study of media usage patterns, featured universities located in center/north of Italy (Milan, Rome, Florence, Pisa, and Bologna). As in the rest of the domains studied, the Universities of Lugano (Richeri and Pario, 2016; Cola and Prario, 2012) and Zürich (Humprecht and Büchel, 2013; Castro-Herrero and Nir, 2018) maintain a strong link with Italy, systematically producing publications focused on this country in a comparative perspective.

The domain of **media usage related competencies** is analysed in a partial and unbalanced way, constituting itself as the least investigated research area. Only slightly more than five percent (5.9%) of the investigations carried out around the four domains concerning deliberative communication in Italy focus on this domain. Although there are some publications at the beginning of the second decade of this century, the truth is that it was not until 2017 when there began to be a certain systematization of these publications, mainly by a small group of researchers who work, mainly, at the Universities of Pisa (Andretta and Bracciale, 2017) and Rome (Mingo, 2018).

Similarly, some of the longitudinal data that exists for Italy around media usage related competencies comes from reports published by international institutes, mainly European (Bauer & Clemm von Hohenberg, 2021 from Mannheim Centre for European Social Research and European University Institute; Lessenski, 2021 from Open Society Institute; European Commission, 2012).

7. Conclusions

The extent to which these data are produced and properly analyzed may be an undeniable sign of the wealth of the *ROs sub-field* of deliberative communication in terms of both capabilities to regulate itself and propose policies able to exploit opportunities at the expense of risks. We can confirm based on our meta-analysis that this sub-field (ROs) in Italy maintains three different characteristics in terms of deliberative communication related to the four main domains (Legal and Ethical Regulation, Journalism, Media Usage Patterns and Media-Related Competencies):

1. It is characterized by a low level of collaboration: The actors involved rarely implement common strategies to reach the goal. A lack of collaboration that is increasing between academic training and research institutions, public bodies, specialized and statistical centers and institutes, and professional media and journalistic associations.
2. The work of those actors, except for public bodies, has a low level of recognition (e.g., scholars may gain their awards in terms of prestigious publications, but not in terms of publicity to a broader audience).
3. The data and analyses from universities, research institutes, professional associations, among others, rarely become attention when addressing public policies.

The Italian team of MediaDelCom assumed in the introduction of this report that the extent to which data is produced which is able to measure risks and opportunities for deliberative communication is a sign of the wealth of the ROs sub-field. As mentioned in the previous paragraph, the lack of data production does not seem to be a problem in the Italian ROs sub-fields. Accordingly, we can affirm that this peculiar Italian sub-field retains both the capability to monitor itself and to propose solutions to enlarge opportunities to the detriment of risks.

This wealth related to the ability to analyze ROs in the Italian context is essentially due to the definitive institutionalization in Italian universities of the communication disciplines (political communication, media studies, and more recently journalism studies). The academic sphere has ensured that the attention to these issues remains high. The little impact that these analyses have on the legislative process has been already discussed above. Of course, the production of data and reports in the ROs field does not depend only on academia.

In recent years, institutes or observatories have been created (and sometimes rapidly disappeared) that monitor the performance of the media in relation to the proper functioning of democracy. In this scenario, there is probably a lack of decisive help from the news media themselves. Newspapers that at least offer media critics capable of rekindling the debate on ROs are rare. A commendable example is the weekly newsletter “Charlie” published by the digital newspaper *Il Post*.

Beyond the availability of data and reports, it is necessary to note that those who produce them are unlikely to be connected/associated. In short, there is a parallel production between academia on the one hand and other private organizations on the other; this double-track leads to the incommunicability between the two.

As already we have discussed in this report, a weakness of this production of data and documents is the evident prevalence of the legal discourse about the production of policies. The con-

textual wealth and conflict (or in any case the non-existence of dialogue) results in the production of further risks.

By briefly reviewing the four domains it can be stated that:

About the (1) legal domain, the future of evaluations of ROs should take into account the conflict between open data vs privacy protection. Another aspect only mentioned and not dealt with in-depth, is instead that linked to the excessive production of laws (the already-mentioned domain of the legal context) which makes it more difficult to analyze, but above all to realize, the opportunities that the media transformation opens.

In the (2) journalism domain, beyond the ignored work of the academia, there is an evident conflict between actors who try to define the field of ROs. Journalists and their representative bodies on the one hand, and publishers on the other, try to increase their authority not so much to strengthen the democratic opportunities of media transformation but to survive the economic crisis. The result is the offer of divergent analysis and solutions that in practice risk transforming opportunities into risks (think of clickbait practices or reader loyalty in terms of polarization, or the proliferation of soft news).

Regarding the (3) media usage domain, it can be said that it is the context where the production of analysis and data is most present. Considering the characteristics of the network, we are witnessing an adaptation of the production of information content to the logic of the new media. In this situation, however, academic research and stakeholders see a weakening of the deliberative public debate. The debate around political misinformation is gaining increasing relevance among the general and academic audience. If a large body of work is devoted to understanding the mechanisms of diffusion of inaccurate/fake news contents (especially on social media), few studies have focused on the individual mechanisms by which people believe in that news (Vegetti and Mancosu, 2020). In a recent publication²³⁶ of Marco Gui, professor at the Department of Sociology and Social Research, University of Milan, highlighted the phenomenon of inconsistency in the choice of media, especially regarding the dissatisfaction towards of the contents. An example is talk shows where verbal attacks between politicians take place²³⁷.

Finally compared to the (4) media-related competencies domain, it can be said that it is the field in which Italian academic research intervenes least and in which the interventions of other actors are absent. The hypothesis is that these would be long-term structural interventions.

²³⁶ Gui, M., Shanahan, J. & Mina Tsay-Vogel, M. (2021). Theorizing inconsistent media selection in the digital environment. *The information society*, 37, pp. 247-261.

²³⁷ Interview made by Martín Oller Alonso (August, 2022).

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