



(SIOI), Istituto Affari Internazionali (IAI) and The Siracusa International Institute for Criminal Justice and Human Rights. The Conference has a dual purpose: take stock of the status of freedom of public debate and information, in relation to the effective enjoyment of civil and political rights by citizens.

The debate will depart from the Italian case, with particular reference to the experience and data accumulated by the *Centro di Ascolto dell'Informazione Radiotelevisiva*, data not limited to electoral periods. The organizers aim to table a series of proposals to standardize and regulate minimal conditions to consent an effective and free public debate, full and legal access to information, and free electoral competitions in consolidated democracies. The overall objective is to thus propose minimum standards to the international community, to be adopted in all consolidated democracies, that ensure a fundamental level of effective democratic participation, rather than a merely formal democratic system.

We retain such a debate, involving institutional, judicial and academic actors, is long due, and wish to discuss the current issues faced by consolidated democracies with regard to information and public debate in depth, taking account therefore of the changed expectations and conditions due to new informational technologies, internet and social media. Changes that are taking place in a context of, on the one hand, a widespread regression of public debate and freedom of information and, on the other hand, an exponential growth of expectations favored by the emergence of new media. At the same time, rapid evolutions make it hard to find adequate responses to the problems and needs in and of consolidated democracies, especially considering the growing crisis of international institutions.

The debate offered in this Conference may present an effective counter-proposal to political populism. A key aspect is to render public debate in democratic countries as free and efficient as possible, in order to return to an effective benchmark for the democratic Rule of Law as a model of reference for the entire world.

We intend to study the rulings and experiences accumulated and documented by the United Nations, the Council of Europe (and in particular the compilations prepared on the theme by the Venice Commission; the Human Rights Committee and the European Court for Human Rights), and the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe, as well as the academic debate on the issue. Since no national system can be retained fully adequate to respond to the challenges of our time, the objective of the Conference is to promote the universality of the citizen's right to know further.

The Conference will consist of two sessions:

- 1) The Italian case: less and less freedom of information (not only in electoral periods); the

issue of lack in monitoring broadcast numbers; the increasingly visible failure to respect political, thematic, social, institutional and religious pluralism, as well as gender presence, in the media; mechanisms of agenda-setting; breach of rules (laws, regulations, AGCOM declarations and administrative judgements).

- 2) Proposals to define minimum standards and requirements at the international level to ensure the implementation of rules for an effectively free, correct, complete and professional information system in consolidated democracies.

More specifically, we invite politicians, academics, media, and national and international monitoring institutions to debate on:

- 1) the need for an independent media monitoring system, active both in electoral and non-electoral periods, and including audience ratings, with emphasis on political, institutional, thematic, social, economic, religious and gender pluralism, with data to be made available promptly and regularly to the public. Such monitoring should also be extended to social media platforms, a need seeming increasingly necessary, also to avoid the use of big data access to the mere economic exploitation of large corporations. Media broadcasting monitoring should include local broadcasters;
- 2) the need for journalism to be effectively free from orders and protected by appropriate safeguards, both professional/disciplinary and legal. To this end, minimum regulatory requirements should be set;
- 3) the need for a free and open advertising market in the broadcasting sector, with regard to its funding, without the discretionary allocation of public funds by Governments;
- 4) the need for pluralism in the control of media;
- 5) the existence of effective legal regulations to prevent abuse and protect the above principles, based on the effective freedom and ethics of journalists and the media rather than the political allotment of informational spaces;
- 6) the need for an independent collegial body for the application in first instance of the established standards, composed by persons that are independent from public authorities, political parties and private entities with a stake: an independent committee for the implementation of regulations in the broadcasting system, with the possibility of recourse with timely and effective response;
- 7) the establishment, within international institutions (EU, OSCE, Council of Europe), of continuous monitoring activities for a complete, legal, correct and free information system in the different democratic countries;
- 8) a redefinition of public broadcasting services' tasks and language, taking new media and novel use into account.