

NEEDS AND GAPS BRIEF NO. 1: ITALY

Authored by Maria Francesca Rita



“If we need a norm, it is a norm of attention”

Silvia Garambois, President of GiULia Giornaliste

“All these small information websites, Facebook pages that share these reports are actual outposts of civil resistance in some territories”

Claudio Silvestri, Secretary of the Unitary Union of Journalists in Campania (SUGC)

Attacks and threats against journalists remain an issue of concern in Italy. Women and local journalists are two of the most vulnerable groups.

Italian institutions are paying growing attention to the safety of journalists. At the end of 2017 a Coordination Centre, indicated by the European Commission as a best practice, was established within the Ministry of Internal Affairs. In addition, a committee dedicated to the protection of journalists was set up in 2014 within the Parliamentary Anti-Mafia Commission.

However, in Italy there is still much to do for gender equality. Inequalities in the media sector take different forms, including wage gaps, imbalance in presence at the management level, and different degrees of freedom to choose what to report about.

Women journalists often feel unsafe and uncomfortable even in their workplace. Outside the newsroom, women journalists are attacked for the sole fact of being women rather than because of what they write or say. They are often the target of online harassment by organised groups of haters, fake profiles, private citizens, up to businessmen and politicians. It is necessary to pay attention to these episodes. Turning away from social media, publishing articles anonymously, and leaving the journalistic career are all professional and economic strategies adopted by women journalists that contribute to the chilling effect of the media environment.

Another element is the special vulnerability of local journalists that is intertwined with the economic crisis of media outlets which are less and less able to cover local issues. Local reporters are increasingly working as freelance journalists or even independent bloggers. These reporters, who often cannot formally qualify as journalists, should be included in the category of human rights defenders for their commitment to expose political wrongdoings and criminal activities, eventually allowing the start of investigations in important cases. The desire to know and understand what happens at the local level becomes a pressing need in those places where corruption, organised crime, and shady economic activities take place. Those journalists active in such territories are particularly exposed to threats and attacks.

Facts

14,719

Journalists with a regular employee contract in December 2020. A decrease by 616 units or 4.02% in comparison to 2019 (INPGI 2020).



65

Alerts recorded on the Mapping Media Freedom Platform between 1 January and 31 October 2021 (6.6% of the total alerts registered in the period).



24

Journalists under a form of police protection mechanism (Ossigeno per l'Informazione 2021).



Local newspaper or television are the first source of news in 14 Italian regions (AGCOM 2017).



Journalists employed in local PSM decreased by 7% between 2005 and 2015 (AGCOM 2017).

A significant share of local journalism is carried out by non-professional journalists who are less and less protected.

14TH

Italy ranks 14th in the EU in the Gender Equality Index, 4.4 points lower than the EU average.



52,000€

Regularly employed women journalists' wage is on average 52,000 Euros, against men's 65,000 (INPGI 2017).



Women make up 11% of senior staff placed in decision-making positions in media organisations, compared to the EU's average of 30% (EIGE 2014).



85% of respondents to a survey conducted by FNSI confirm instances of sexual harassment in their professional life; in 35% of cases other colleagues were present, in 18.4% of instances someone intervened/tried to intervene (FNSI 2019).



Politics, organised crime, court reporting, and migration issues are the four subjects that attract most threats. The refugee crisis is the most harmful topic for women journalists.



According to the same survey, 19.3% of women journalists were asked to provide sexual services in exchange for a job, and 13.8% in exchange for a step forward in their career (FNSI 2019).

Recommendations

For Italian media outlets

- Grant women and local journalists more attention and protection in Italy.
 - Take actions to overcome the gender gap in the journalistic sector: as women journalists must have the same opportunity as their male colleagues to be at the management level, to cover a topic over another, and receive the same salary for the same position.
 - Combat tolerance towards or weak awareness of sexual harassment in newsrooms.
 - Acknowledge the value of women's journalistic work.
 - Engage support centres and unions in fostering solidarity with journalists who received threats, who are often left alone in their newsroom and on the territory. The work of support centres and unions is needed both at the local level and to ensure the journalist's connection with national and international organisations, in order to build a solidarity network.
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For unions and national support centres

- Strengthen networks with institutions and become a point of reference well known to every journalist.
 - Offer and promote compulsory training on gender-related topics in the media sector, modelled after the example of GiULia Giornaliste.
 - Draw on the good practice of the SUGC in the Campania Region, which provides legal advice services on the territory regardless of the professional status of journalists.
 - Focus also on the local level, where the vulnerability of journalists is also due to the fact that they are not as visible as their colleagues working for national media outlets.
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For international media freedom organisations

- Promote the “media security detail”, created by FNSI as a means to combat the sense of isolation of a journalist under threat, as a good practice for other EU countries. It can help journalists by giving visibility to their investigation and by assisting them on social networks, filtering the harmful contents and encouraging them to stay on social media.
- Strengthen their advocacy activities concerning the judicial system, as it is hard for journalists to push forward their complaints because of the slowness of trials.