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33rd

Italian

PROBONO

Roundtable

MINUTES

PRO BONO ITALIA

Brief minutes of 33rd Italian Pro Bono Italia Roundtable,
held in Milan on Wednesday 19th February 2020 at Studio
Legale De Berti Jacchia Franchini Forlani

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PARTICIPATION

55 attendees (see attached LoPs)

INTRODUCTION

G. Carotenuto, Co-founder and President of Pro Bono Italia (PBI), welcomed the 55 attendees to the RT, in particular the **new members** Gianni, Origoni, Grippo, Cappelli & Partners, Freebly and Studio Legale Capello, summarising ongoing projects and **upcoming events**, among which PBI's presence during the 2020 Milan Civil Week and the participation at the Frankfurt Round Table in March, as well as the release of the survey regarding private individuals request on CILD's website.

G. Carotenuto specified that the roundtable would follow the same **format** of the last one in Rome: a panel on a specific topic presented by an expert followed by a debate, with the topic being **Fake News and Disinformation**.

C. Fussi, Studio Legale De Berti Jacchia Franchini Forlani's partner, joined in welcoming the participants and briefly described his firm's history focusing on pro bono activities as well as the circumstance leading his firm to be one of PBI's founding partners.



NGOS' PRESENTATION COORDOWN

M. Fuga, communication manager, introduced the organization. Founded in 2003, COORDOWN is the "Coordinamento Nazionale delle Associazioni delle persone con sindrome di Down", representing 72 associations with the common aim of "not leaving anyone behind" at school, in sport activities, at work and in social life. One of COORDOWN's goals is to guarantee the same opportunities and rights to everybody, even going beyond the protected category according to law itself. Two very important events are scheduled for 2020: World Down Syndrome Day on March, 21st and National Syndrome Day on October. They need legal support to appeal against right's violation (see attached presentation).

ManagerNoProfit (MNP)

S. Vitelli, Secretary General, presented MNP. In 2015 Federmanager organized a workshop for retirees and future retirees and thirteen participants, in 2016, decided to combine their experience and founded the association. MNP offers free professional and soft skills advisory to nonprofits. Today MNP counts on 60 members volunteering to assist with their skills 45 organizations. Nonprofits' requests are assessed and assigned, according to the required skills, to selected members, who often flank the organization's staff working together as long as needed. Most common requests are on Third Sector Reform, software solutions and training.

They need legal advice to support their in-house counsel (see attached presentation).

CRIVOP

M. Recupero, Co-founder and President, presented the NGO. Founded in 2003 in Messina (Sicily), CRIVOP stands for "Cristiani Volontari Penitenziari", a voluntary association working in penitentiaries. They work inside penitentiaries on a national level, to activate a path of human and relational change. CRIVOP trains volunteers providing assistance within the penitentiary and creates awareness projects at school and with family members of detained in prison. They need lawyers to support the problems that inmates have while in prison (see attached presentation).

Rete Migrazioni e Lavoro (RML)

R. Andreini, voluntary, introduced the organization. RML is an informal network founded in 2018 promoted by organizations, associations, corporates and nonprofits, groups and individuals who work in favour of social inclusion and job placement of foreign people: asylum seekers, refugees and migrants with various forms of protection. The simple structure puts in communication all various realities and accompanies these people towards a job: language teaching, connection with other realities and empowerment training. RML's goal is to create a job orientation desk. They need help for asylum seekers, refugees and migrants in order to obtain a residence permit.

PRESENTATION OF BOCCONI UNIVERSITY'S LEGAL CLINIC

Prof. Melissa Miedico, former Director of the postgraduate program in Law at Bocconi University and Bocconi University's Legal Clinic representative, presented the legal clinic. The project has been launched with the academic year 2019/2020 and includes the activation of 3 legal desks in Milan: one located at Bollate Prison, in collaboration with Bicocca University, another in San Siro area, in partnership with Politecnico di Milano, and the last one dedicated to legal counselling for startups. This legal clinic program aims to

provide students an innovative training opportunity of "learning by doing": while engaged in real world law practice scenarios, they receive supervision and mentoring guidance, as well as inspiration to commit to pro bono service in their future career.

This Legal Clinic project represents also the university's commitment in favour of communities and civil society, offering free legal assistance and rights protection to the most vulnerable.

The majority of beneficiaries is represented by foreign citizens and the most recurring requests are related to topics such as housing, work, jail sentences and reunification.



PANEL "FAKE NEWS AND DISINFORMATION"

G. Suffia, Information Law lecturer and PhD at the Information Society Law Center of Università degli Studi di Milano introduces the topic.

We live in contexts of **information overload** and this abundance of stimuli can have serious implications for the quality of information, which as a matter of fact has proven to be too often vulnerable to manipulation. Fake news can easily attract the attention and shift people's perceptions by acting on their cognitive bias or by offering forms of quick judgement. Therefore, **fake news, misinformation and disinformation** are powerful tools for those willing to whip up hybrid threats and manipulate public opinion. Resilience of information and the news media are an essential part of the overall **resilience** of society. Until a few years ago, the sources of information were numerous but controllable. Nowadays, with fast technological advances and the **pervasiveness of internet** connectivity, geography of communication has no boundaries and information may reach very distant points and in a few hours can become viral, regardless of its correctness. Every day, an massive amount of **data** is constantly produced on the web and **algorithms**, originally conceived for the commercial market to drive information diffusion, can be maliciously exploited for manipulative purposes, like building consensus or rapidly leading to extreme polarization of opinions.

Other insightful and valuable contributions to the discussion came from the panelists:

- **M. L. Stasi**, Senior Legal Officer at ARTICLE 19, London
- **Vincenzo Tiani**, Digital Policy Advisor, Teacher and Journalist, Bruxelles
- **Giovanni Zagni**, Director of Pagella Politica, Milan (see attached presentation)

The debate pointed how **social networks** play an important role in the exponentially fast and wide spread of disinformation, as they are able to attract and engage millions of people by giving them a platform where sharing ideas, often being uncritically picked-up and redistributed to an even larger audience by traditional media. Those platforms were in principle neutral, however, they came to acquire a greater socio-economic value, and became a powerful tool quickly exploited to address and manipulate massive audiences, hence raising new questions concerning social networks' responsibilities as well as the relationship between classical mediation institutes of representative democracy.

In 2018 representatives of online platforms and leading social networks - Facebook, Google, Twitter and Mozilla - as well as advertisers and advertising industry agreed on a self-regulatory **Code of Practice** to address the spread of online disinformation and fake news. This Code and other initiatives set forth by the UE Commission represent essential steps in ensuring transparent, fair and trustworthy online campaign activities.

Fake news and hoaxes are widespread terms but often used improperly. It is important to recognise differences between **different types of mis- and disinformation** since some contents can simply be false but harmless and others are intentionally fabricated or manipulated to deceive and do harm.

Obviously, censorship cannot be a solution in democratic society, but we need to acknowledge our systems' vulnerability and work towards a transparent, ethical and fair data management to reduce the odds of malicious actions.

34th Italian Pro Bono RoundTable

Initially scheduled on 6 May 2020 in Rome, at Studio Legale Gianni, Origoni, Grippo, Cappelli & Partners, due to the health emergency the meeting is currently postponed until further notice. Details on the new date and participation options (virtual or in-person, if allowed) will be announced as soon as possible.