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# ITALY NATIONAL REPORT

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## OCTOBER 2019

The present report is a contribution to the 2020 review of the Beijing Platform for Action on the critical area J 'Women and media'. Twenty-five years since the adoption of the Platform for Action, it is necessary to assess the progresses made in promoting gender equality in and through the media, as well as the shortcomings, and the missed opportunities in making communication developments responsive to unequal gendered relations in our society.

At the same time, this is a moment to celebrate the importance of the Beijing Platform, and the role it has played over the years in fostering gender equality and gender mainstreaming in the media and in communication processes: informing policies and programs adopted by governments and public institutions; supporting civic and advocacy initiatives for gender-responsive media content; inspiring grassroots groups in the conduct of local campaigns to make women's voices heard; stimulating media outlets and companies towards improving women's working conditions and their opportunities to access decision-making positions.

Finally, as 2020 approaches, it is time to reflect on what Section J of the Beijing PfA still means, today, to all those who work towards making the media, both traditional and digital, gender-responsive, inclusive, diverse and plural. And it is time to appreciate and acknowledge the role of the Beijing Platform for the years to come.

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## Introduction

Twenty-five years ago, [Section J of the Beijing Platform for Action](#) (PfA) recognised the make or break role of the media and ICTs in shaping perceptions, opinions and norms that can either continue to render women and girls invisible victims, or shape a powerful new narratives of dignity and equality. The information and knowledge revolution of the last two decades constitutes the greatest change known to humanity since the industrial revolution, with implications that are and will be deeply gendered. This situation invites joint efforts to actualize Section J as well as a reconsideration of the goals set forth in Beijing, which include:

- Strategic objective J1. Increase the participation and access of women to expression and decision-making in and through the media and new technologies of communication.
- Strategic objective J2. Promote a balanced and non-stereotypical portrayal of women in the media.

Section J indicated a number of critical issues that, taken together, can be conceptualized as constitutive of the '*media gender in/equality regime*' of each country: in/equalities in media content and representation and in access to the media; women media professionals' working conditions, including pay gaps; women's participation in decision-making at all levels of media and ICT processes and structures; relevant policy development to make the media gender-responsive through a gender mainstreaming approach; media and information literacy; freedom of expression; and safety of women in media, offline in newsrooms and in the field.

Aware of the transformative potential of information and communication technologies, Section J in the Beijing PfA also included clause 234, stating that "advances in information technology have facilitated a global communications network that transcends national boundaries and has an impact on public policy, private attitudes and behaviour, especially of children and young adults. Everywhere the potential exists for the media to make a far greater contribution to the advancement of women".

To address these issues, Section J in the Beijing PfA also included Recommendations to governments, international organizations, media companies, civil society organizations, educational and research institutions. Amongst these: the support of education and training; the adoption of policies and programmes, as well as regulatory mechanisms and professional guidelines; the collection of necessary data and funding of focused research; the creation and recognition of women's media networks, including electronic networks; the establishment of media watch groups; the use of communication systems as a means of strengthening women's participation in democratic processes.

Stocktaking exercises have been made over the years - at international, regional and national level - to assess the extent to which the strategic objectives of Section J have been met. These have shown that across twenty-five years some progresses has been made, but inequalities persist in many areas, and new challenges have emerged as a result of the unprecedented development and dissemination of digital technologies that are transforming societies, communities' communication environments and individual experiences.

Today the [UN Agenda 2030](#) indicates the path to move forward, and includes Goals that speak directly to the concerns of Section J. In particular:

- Goal 5: Attain gender equality, empower women and girls everywhere (par 5b. Enhance the use of enabling technology, in particular information and communications technology, to promote the empowerment of women);

- Goal 9: Build resilient infrastructure, promote inclusive and sustainable industrialization and foster innovation (par 9c. Significantly increase access to information and communications technology and strive to provide universal and affordable access to the Internet in least developed countries by 2020);
- Goal 16: Promote peaceful and inclusive societies, rule of law, effective and capable institutions (par. 16.7. Ensure responsive, inclusive, participatory and representative decision-making at all levels including in the media; and par. 16.10. Ensure public access to information and protect fundamental freedoms, in accordance with national legislation and international agreements)

It should be noted, however, that the articulation of Agenda 2030 and the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) falls short in acknowledging and addressing many of the critical issues highlighted in Section J; problems that still characterize many countries and communication systems, including Italy. This is particularly true if we adopt a comprehensive reading of Section J, which includes the two broad objectives and specific areas of inequality, but also guidelines and recommendations to overcome those inequalities; and envisions roles that all interested stakeholders are called upon to play, if they are to contribute in making the media and communication gender-aware and responsive.

Indeed as 2020 approaches, efforts are made to streamline and synthesize the many persisting challenges to gender equality. The guidance note proposed by UN Women for the national Beijing +25 reviews clusters the ‘Women and media’ area under a broad theme ‘Freedom from violence, stigma and stereotypes’ (together with the themes on violence, women’s rights and the girl child), as well as under a second theme ‘Participation, accountability and gender-responsive institutions’. The point of the clusters is to align the Beijing PfA with the SDGs and “facilitate reflections about the implementation of both frameworks in a mutually reinforcing manner”.

There is a potential risk that Section J, with its detailed articulation of themes and challenges, will be diluted in the shuffle, with eventual attention skewed to only those issues that are explicitly spelt out in the SDGs. Moreover, this approach does not value the contributions made by networks like the [Global Alliance for Media and Gender](#), the [Association for Progressive Communication](#) (APC) or the International Association for Media and Communication research (IAMCR) to update Section J so as to make it responsive to the challenges of todays’ digital wagers (APC 2015; see also [Actualizing Section J conference](#), Madrid 2019).

In this context it is crucial to celebrate the 25<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the Beijing PfA by recognizing its centrality to any effort that has been conducted around the world to address the plural challenges to women’s communication rights. The Platform has paved the way for raising awareness; it has supported the efforts of advocacy groups; it has indicated directions and methodologies for monitoring initiatives; it has been the cornerstone upon which advocacy networks have mobilized from the global to the local.

We argue in support of strengthening the connections between the Beijing PfA and Agenda 2030, exploring and exploding all the possibilities that may derive from ‘actualizing’ Section J by making it relevant to current and on-going initiatives and processes – at the local, national, regional and supranational level - in due consideration of today’s global challenges of sustainability, poverty and inequality, social justice, climate change, technological developments.

In view of strengthening such connections - at conceptual but also practical level - in the present Report we provide a synthetic overview of the Italian situation, focusing on contemporary challenges to gender equality in and through the media, traditional and digital. We do so with the aim of:

- providing evidence of the gaps, shortcomings and opportunities in the Italian media and ICT context;
- highlighting the wealth of initiative (good practices) that resonate with the rationale of Section J and build on the Beijing PfA's understanding of gender equality and gender mainstreaming;
- showing how relevant a (re)articulation of Section J remains in view of supporting future efforts to develop a gender-fair and transformative communication environment in the country.

Based on this overview a series of country-focused recommendations are provided.

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## **Gender in/equalities in legacy and audio-visual media in Italy. In search of innovative practices to combat old and new challenges.**

### **Freedom of Expression at stake**

The overall situation of journalists in the country is dangerous and should be mentioned as this represents a huge challenge to media professionals' freedom of expression: according to a 2018 report by Index on Censorship and the European Center for Press and Media Freedom (2018, see also [Mapping Media Freedom](#)) Italy features as the first country in Europe where journalists' safety is threatened, with reported 83 cases between 2014 and 2018, including online harassment, personal assaults, but most of all intimidation, often connected to reporting activities on mafia issues. Crucial to reporting such cases is awareness of the issue raised by the work of [Ossigeno per l'informazione](#), an association which monitors press freedom in Italy.

According to the association ([Ossigeno 2019](#)) between 2014 and 2019 the number of Italian women journalists that have received threats was 358 (21% of all professional journalists whose cases have been identified, which are nevertheless only a minor part of a much larger phenomenon). Women journalists are therefore exposed to a double threat: as women and as professionals. Only in 2017, 106 women journalists have received sexist insults, threats (including sexual) and intimidations. Well known are the cases of Marilena Natale, who was assigned police protection due to threats received by a mafia organization, and of Lidia De Angelis who was physically assaulted in the street while performing her job. The most dangerous area for women media professionals are the Lazio region (34% of reported cases) followed by the Southern regions of Puglia, Calabria and Campania.

Women's freedom of expression is also challenged also by acts of violence against women (VAW) and gender-based violence (GBV), particularly against women working in the media sector. A recent study by the [International Federation of Journalists](#) (IFJ, 2018) with almost 400 women journalists in 50 countries found that 48% had suffered Gender-Based Violence (GBV) and 44% had experienced online abuse while working. Other two different global surveys conducted by the [International Women's Media Foundation](#) with 875 female media workers in 2014 and 597 in 2018 indicate that nearly two out of three journalists interviewed had been threatened or harassed online and slightly more had experienced physical threats or harassment (IWMF 2018).

In Italy, the National Federation of the Italian Press ([Federazione Nazionale Stampa Italiana](#) - FNSI 2019) in collaboration with other media bodies, under supervision of statistician Linda L. Sabbadini, promoted the first quantitative study carried out in the country to assess the status of sexual violence and harassment of women journalists. The sample included 1,132 female professionals, working in radio, TV, news agency, and print press. The results indicate that 85% of the female journalists interviewed had

experienced some form of sexual harassment or abuse during the lifespan of their professional careers; 42,2% have experienced these abuses in the last 12 months. These striking figures show that the Italian journalism has a sexual violence problem. The available data only concern offline experiences of abuse: as of today there are no data on online harassment and abuse of women media professionals working in the country.

A sign of the centrality of these issues in the Italian context is the collaboration between women journalists professional association [GiULiA giornaliste](#) and [VOX: Italian Observatory](#) on fundamental rights, to develop a project to monitor hate speech against women in the media. The theme is also central to the forth edition of the [Forum of women journalists of the Mediterranean area](#) (November 2019) where women professionals from across the Mediterranean region will gather with advocates and researchers to address a still relevant question “Are women’s rights human rights?”.

### **Gender Media Policies: missing in action**

Very little has been done in response to the Beijing Platform for Action’s calls for the adopting adequate legal instruments, policy provisions and mechanisms to support and protect women working in the media and to promote gender-responsive media content. Limited data are available in this respect as, again, no specific study has been conducted on the extent to which gender mainstreaming has been adopted in the media sector, across levels, platforms and companies.

The national legal framework for the media – Law n. 112 of May 3, **2004** "Norme di principio in materia di assetto del sistema radiotelevisivo e della RAI - Radiotelevisione italiana S.p.A., nonché delega al Governo per l’emanazione del testo unico della radiotelevisione" followed by a Single Text for Radio and Television - does not include any specific reference to gender equality or gender mainstreaming; it generically guarantees the “dissemination of advertising and telesales that respect the dignity of each person, without discrimination on the basis of race, sex and nationality...” (Art 4).

The Independent Authority for Communication ([AGCOM](#)) operates since 1997 to ensure open competition in the media market and protect fundamental rights of users and consumers. Nevertheless, its mandate does not include any specific provision on the promotion of gender equality in and through the media. In recent years AGCOM has issued guidelines, for instance related to the respect of human dignity and non-discrimination (see: Atto di indirizzo N. 424 of 2016; Atto di Indirizzo): in the preamble reference is made to the CEDAW convention but that is the only section where the word ‘women’ appear: no specific reference is made to inequalities, discrimination and biases they may affect women specifically in audiovisual services.

A development worth mentioning is Article 9 – ‘Parità di genere’ (gender equality) – of the national legal provision (Contratto di servizio, adopted in 2017) that licenses the public service broadcaster RAI: the article establishes the principle of equal opportunities in public media operations, to be promoted also by representing women in their achieved social roles in society. Article 25 – ‘Obblighi di servizio’ (service commitments) – of the same provision calls for the adoption of regular gender-monitoring of RAI content. A yearly report is produced by an independent company. The latest Report is available on the [RAI website](#) (Osservatorio di Pavia 2018).

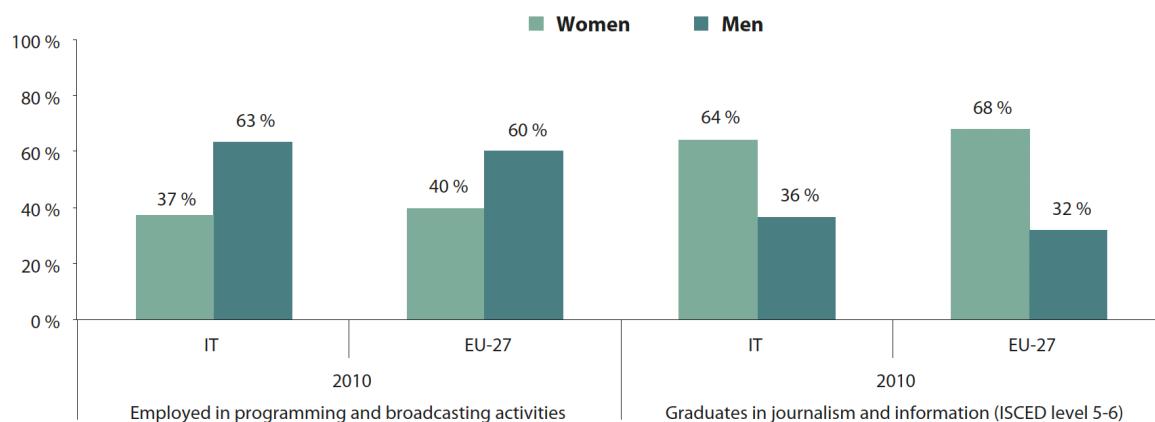
No specific study has been conducted on the commitment of individual media organizations to promote gender equality, either as policies (such as policy on sexual harassment in the workplace, dignity at work policy, policy relating to maternity or paternity leave, policy relating to harassment and abuses) or practical support measures (such as equality and leadership training, harassment advisor or equality department). A

[European Institute for Gender Equality Report of 2013](#) mapped the situation across the EU including Italy: the small number of Italian surveyed media (public and private) appeared to have some policies in place (EIGE 2013, p. 37), but there was no evidence concerning the extent to which such policies are actually implemented, nor of support measures adopted to guarantee gender equality in working conditions, career progress, prevention of gender pay gaps. In fact the realities of professional practices and media content suggest a lot more should be done to implement principles and meet the goals of Section J.

### Professional practices in news media: regimes of inequality

The situation of journalism in Italy shows that women are still discriminated. The number of women working in the sector has grown over the years, also as a result of the high number of women enrolled in communication and journalism courses. In fact women account for more than half of tertiary level graduates for media-related careers, but they make up less than half the workforce within media industry (EIGE 2013). To be highlighted are the result of a mapping exercise conducted by the UNESCO [UniTWIN Network on gender Media and ICT](#) (UNESCO 2019) which indicates that very few degrees in communication and journalism across the country include courses focused on/dealing with gender in/equality issues; none of these courses is compulsory, and an explicit institutional commitment is needed to recognize that gender-aware education should be part of the educational path of future media and communication professional.

Figure 1 – Women and men employed in the media sector and graduates in journalism and information in Italy and EU (EIGE 2013)



Source: Eurostat, LFS (lfsa\_egan22d), Eurostat, Education Statistics (educ\_grad5) (See Fig. 1.1 and Fig. 1.2, p. 16-17 in the main report).

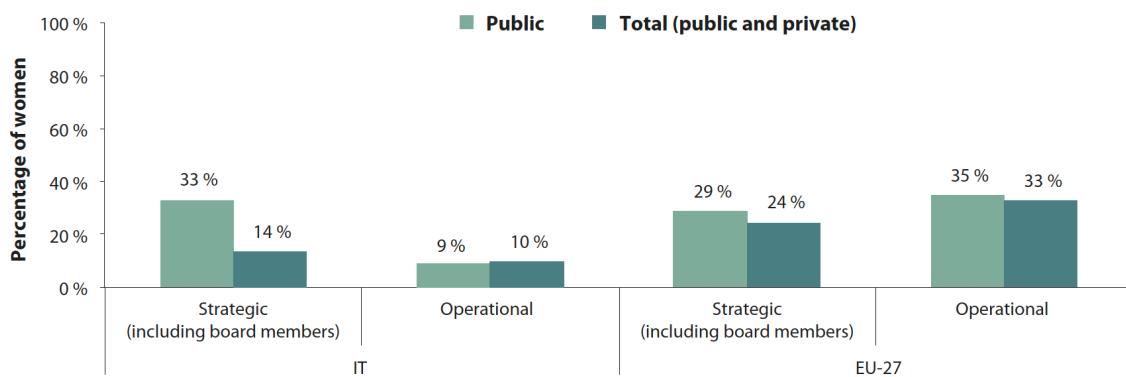
The II Report on the journalism world (AGCOM 2017) indicates that women today represent 41,6% of the employed journalists: in spite of the increased number of women employed in the media sector, persistent patterns of inequality in the form of under-representation, glass ceiling barriers to advancement, and low pay (in relation to men) still remain firmly embedded within the media sector. In a context where eight out of ten journalist are freelance, with little protection and very low wages (less than 10.000 euro per year, according to the LSDI Report 2015), according to the AGCOM Report women most easily fall into a specific category named ‘precarie’ (precarious jobs, declined in the feminine precisely because this emerges as a ‘gendered issue’). According to the most recent data from the pension fund of journalists (INPGI), the average annual salary for

women is 52.158, versus 65.009 for men. The gap is 19,57% and the biggest differences can be found in the top roles.

Discrimination is one aspect of media gender inequality in Italy, but widely diffused are also cultural and organizational cultures, which account for the still limited presence of women in decision making positions in news companies at strategic level (Chief Executive Officer and members of the board) as well as operational level (Chief Operating Officer, other Operational Managers, Heads of Directorate/Unit and Heads of Department). According to the above mentioned [EIGE Report](#) in the selected media organisations - RAI (public service), Mediaset (major private company), Corriere della Sera and La Repubblica (newspapers with widest distribution - across all management levels, women constitute around one-third (30 %) of senior staff placed in decision-making positions. However, when this composited figure is disaggregated into its component parts, it is clear that at the representation of women in decision-making posts decreases as the level of the position increases (16% in top level positions) (EIGE 2013).

Within the media sector, there are notable disparities between public and private media organisations relating to their commitment to gender equality. Public service companies, in general, can be expected to comply more fully with national codes and legislation in the area of promoting gender equality in decision-making positions than private organisations, as shown in Figure below.

Figure 2 – Percentage of women in decision-making positions and on boards in Italy and the EU (EIGE 2013)



Source: Data were collected in July-September 2012 (See Fig. 2.2, p. 28 and Table 1, p. 91 in the main report).

NB: The risk of double-counting individuals who could have had more than one role within the organisation was avoided by counting the person and not the position. The mixed organisations (public and private) have been included under public. Cognisance must be taken of the fact that the sample size was small and therefore the findings are indicative.

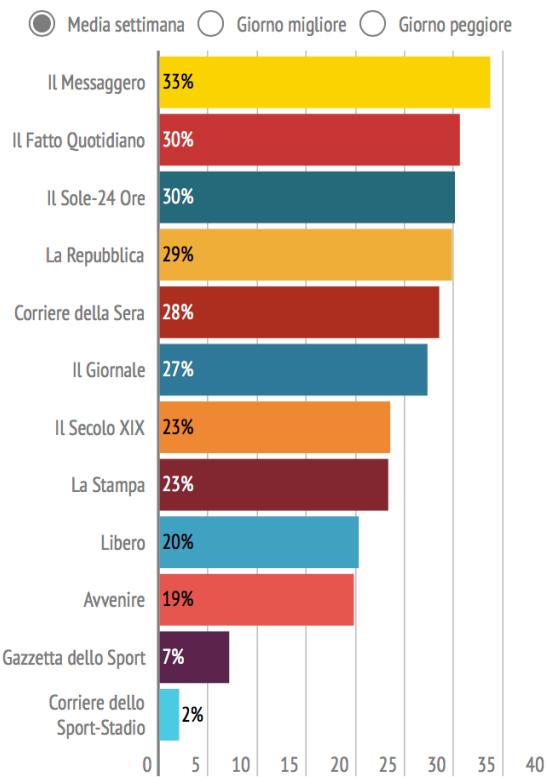
The EIGE study also considered the extent to which women are members of the boards of national independent media regulatory bodies, a position that is crucial to orientate the operation of media companies and their respect of the principles enshrined in their mandate, including non discrimination. The study showed that no single women was member of the board of the independent media regulator AGCOM in 2012, while the average amongst the 213 board member positions across the EU was 31 %. As of today the president and the commissioners of the AGCOM are all men.

## News media content: the slow pace of improvement

According to the [Global Media Monitoring Project](#) (GMMP) - the oldest and widest project on women in the news media content worldwide - over the past 20 years, the 'status' of women in the Italian news media has hardly changed. Although the news are increasingly presented and produced by female journalists (36% out of a total of 241 of news items in the 2015 edition), it is mostly men that 'make the news' as subjects, while women continue to be marginalised from the news agenda, in traditional as well as digital new media outlets (Azzalini & Padovani, 2015). If we take into consideration traditional media (radio, TV and newspapers), which have been monitored since 1995, some progress has been made: the visibility of women as sources or subjects of news has increased from a very low percentage of 7% to 21% (Azzalini & Padovani, 2016). However, Italy still scores below the European and global average (respectively 25% and 24% of women subjects) and still shows shortcomings in relation to the number of female journalists, particularly those working in the print media (see Figure 3 below), and in relation to the news topics addressed by women and men journalists, that leave soft news to women professionals.

Figure 3 – Female journalists in Italian newspapers (Newslab, October 2019)

### Le firme femminili sui giornali italiani



Furthermore, women as sources of news are seldom included as authoritative expert voices (see Table X below); while stereotyped representations accompanied by the irrelevance of gender-related issues persist in 2015. This demonstrates a profound gap between the advancement of women in society and the image of women (and men) as reflected by news media. For example, despite the increased participation of women in

political life and institutions, with percentage above 30% in 2015, women politicians are only 15% of all politicians appearing in the news (vs. 85% of men, out of a total of 231 news items); also, women subjects and sources of stories about politics and government are much less than men (15% vs. 85%; total 123 news items) (Azzalini & Padovani, 2015).

Table 1 - News subjects Function in news story, by sex (GMMP 2015)

	Female %	N
Do not know	57,1%	7
Subject	24,1%	323
Spokesperson	13,3%	105
Expert or commentator	18,5%	92
Personal Experience	28,1%	32
Eye Witness	18,2%	33
Popular Opinion	12,5%	8

A more positive picture emerges from the most recent monitoring of the public service broadcasting (RAI) conducted by the [Osservatorio di Pavia](#) in 2018. According to the study, gender inequality issues are being addressed in the planning of activities: one fourth of the (263) analyzed items make reference to them, with violence against women being the most discussed item. For what concerns the representation women and gender identities, these appear respectful of subjects (respectively in 98,3% and 98,8% of the analysed cases) and gender stereotypes appear to be challenged in 7,5% of cases. Yet there is space for improvement, both in relation to the presence of women and men in TV programs (37% versus 63%, a datum that is in line with similar monitoring conducted in France, Belgium and the UK) and to the persistence of overt and subtle stereotypes (respective 4,4% and 7,8%) (Osservatorio di Pavia 2018).

On the specific and highly sensitive topic of reporting about violence against women, and particularly femicide (the number of women killed have remained stable since 1992 around 0.6 to 0.4 per 100,000 females), worth mentioning is a recent study, conducted by the University of Torino in partnership with the Rai Research Center (ongoing study). Looking at 120 cases per year over two decades - most concerning Italian women murdered by Italian partners; the largest number of femicide in the Centre-North of Italy and in the largest cities – the study reveals that the trend in the news is to treat femicide news by building on police official data, which translates into repetitive and routine information; while it is rare to find in-depth news reporting. Femicide is treated as a newsworthy item, and the coverage appears highly stereotyped, rather than as an opportunity to problematize a major cultural and social issue. Nevertheless the research also highlights a mismatch between mainstream journalism on the one side, which is not accurate and remains inclined to follow routines, and commentaries on the other side, that try to overcome stereotypes and to increase collective awareness about these extreme episodes of gender based violence as a social, cultural and structural problem.

### Gender in/equalities in the film industry

Beside the news media, growing concerns worldwide arise from inequality issues in the film industry. As stated in a recent European Parliament briefing titled *The place of women in European film productions* “The sexual assault allegations brought against Hollywood producer Harvey Weinstein laid bare the painful reality for scores of women working in the film industry around the world. However, sexual harassment is seemingly

just the tip of the iceberg in an industry where gender inequalities relating to biased representation and pay are arguably systematic and pervasive" (2019, p. 1). Indeed, recent studies show that the structure of Europe's film industries does not support gender equality; rather inequality is being perpetuated by a combination of factors including the competitive habits of the marketplace, contemporary industry structures, the impact of new technologies and false assumptions about women's abilities and business risk.

In 2014 the European Audiovisual Observatory (EAO), published a study titled *Female director in European films* showing that only 16.3% of European films have been directed by women in the period between 2003 and 2012. According to the study European countries that produce the highest number of films - France, Italy, Spain and the United Kingdom - are also those with the largest number of films directed by women; but if we consider the share of films by female directors in relation to the overall number of films produced, the situation is reversed and countries such as the Netherlands, Finland and Sweden occupy the top positions, while the former group, including Italy, fall in lower positions with very low percentages of women directing films that make it to the market.

Another study, titled "Where are the women directors? Report on gender equality for directors in the European film industry", was promoted by the European Women's Audiovisual Network (EWA), a network of professionals from 47 European countries, focusing on the period 2006-2013. The Italian Report (Appendix V) was elaborated by the research unit of Directorate-General Cinema of the Italian Ministry of Cultural Heritage and Activities and Tourism (DG Cinema – MiBACT) and was the first DG Cinema survey on gender issues. The analysis focused on educational path, access to the film industry, issues of funding and market share. As per education, in the National Film School (Scuola Nazionale di Cinema), the share of female applicants to all courses is on average 39%, showing then a rather balanced composition. The share of female applicants is confirmed by the share of female graduates, that is 41,5% of all graduates. But the scenario changes dramatically when focusing on film directing courses: female applicants to film directing are only 17% of the total, meaning that women are discouraged from engaging in directing already during their educational paths. The next step in the route to directing is the enrolment in the film authors' register: at this stage, the female share decreases compared to the share of film school graduates, since registered female screenwriters and directors are only 25%. In relation to access to funding, the spend in the 2006 – 2013 period was shared per gender as follows: 15,6% of OPS (first and second works) support was awarded to female-directed films, 84,4% to male directed films; while of all films funded by the Italian PSB, Rai, in the 2006-2013 period, only 21% are directed by women. Finally, the analysis of box office results strengthens the previous figures: the market share of films directed by women is 2.7%, while male directed films' quota is 97.3%, meaning that when accessing the market, the gender gap widens up. The EWA study identified dual causes of scarcity of women in directing positions: one coming from women themselves and from a distorted self-perception which discourages them to engage in highly competitive and leading careers; the second cause connected to a limited trust from investors, either public or private, to bet on a woman-led project.

A most recent study, carried out by the Italian National Research Center – 'Dea - Donne e audiovisivo' (CNR 2019) - portrays an even more problematic situation: today only 12% of public funded films are directed by women, and still only 21% per film produced by the RAI have a women director. According to the study, less than 10% (9,2%) of films directed by women make it to screening; 25,7% of film producers are women, but only 14,6% are the women scriptwriters. Even lower numbers can be found in technical roles, such as camera and audio women are less than 10%; while 6,2% are photo director and 6% the women authoring sound track.

Clearly gender inequalities in the audiovisual sector and film industry are an integral part of a multi-dimensional regime of inequality across the communication environment; and therefore need to be acknowledged, fully understood and properly addressed.

### **Good practices in monitoring, research and advocacy initiatives for gender-responsive legacy media**

In the context of news and audio-visual it is worth mentioning the civic, academic and institutional initiatives that operate to make the Italian communication context more gender-responsive and equal.

At the institutional level, all the media unions - FNSI (National Federation of the Press), USIGRAI (RAI internal union) and ODG (Ordine dei Giornalisti) - have an Equal Opportunity Commission/Committee. In addition, at the sub-national level, most of the Journalists' associations have an Equal Opportunities Commission; but no systematic study has been conducted on their activities and impact.

Gender and media-related monitoring activities are carried out by observatory like [Gemma](#) – Gender and Media Matter (University of Rome); TV Fai-da-te (University of Bologna); and [Inchiaro](#) (University of Milan Bicocca). A prominent role is played out by C.A.R.E.S. – [Osservatorio di Pavia](#), which pays particular attention to women and television in their professional monitoring activities: the osservatorio has coordinated several editions of the GMMP; since 2011 it realizes a gender-focused monitoring of news broadcasts by the public and private channels of five European Countries (OERG); it also carries out monitoring activities on prime-time broadcasting on the generalist RAI Channels in response to the requirements for the public service included in the above-mentioned 'Contratto di servizio'.

Advocacy and transformative initiatives are carried our by [GiULiA giornaliste](#) – a women journalists professional association with 400 members across the country - is to struggle against bad practices of the media. They do so by organizing training activities for journalists in the country's regions, and publicly denouncing newspapers or television shows that don't respect the dignity and rights of women, particularly when they are victims of violence. They also produce texts and video materials on different issues, such as biases and stereotypes in the news (see the book "Stereotipi. Donne e media"), and discrimination in sport news ("Donne, media e sport"); and they promote fair approaches and fair use of language, particularly when reporting about gender-based violence and femicides ("Stop violenza. Le parole per dirlo"). On these matters, in 2017 GiULiA participated in the drafting and promotion of the '**Venice Manifesto of women and men journalists for the respect and gender parity in news and against all forms of violence and discrimination through words and images**'. This includes recommendations and guidelines for the respect of the right of women victims of violence and was signed by public authorities, politics, journalists, trade unionists in November 2017. Since then it has been widely recognized as a relevant instrument to produce fair and responsible journalism, and it is likely to be transformed into a deontological code for a better information by the Equal Opportunities Commission of the National Association of Journalists. The Manifesto is available in [GiULiA's website](#).

From the collaboration between the Osservatorio di Pavia and GiULiA giornaliste stemmed the creation of '**100 women against stereotypes**' (100 donne contro gli stereotipi), a dataset of women experts created in 2016 to promote a more realistic representation of women in Italian news media. The project aims at reducing the quantitative and qualitative gender gap in the news media (particularly in relation to news sources and expert voices) through a series of actions: a) an online database of CVs and contacts of female experts in different areas of knowledge, available to reporters and journalists, authors and creators of radio and TV programmes, as well as

companies, organizations, businesses, organizing institutions conferences, seminars, roundtables and other public debates initiatives; b) on- and offline awareness campaign, to give more visibility to female experts and raise awareness among media practitioners of the important role and responsibility of the media in promoting a balanced and non-stereotyped image of women. This is a collaborative project designed by the Osservatorio di Pavia (<https://www.osservatorio.it>) and the journalists association Gi.U.Li.A. (<https://giulia.globalist.it>) in collaboration with the Fondazione Bracco (<http://www.fondazionebracco.com/it>) and with the support of the European Commission Representation in Italy ([https://ec.europa.eu/italy/home\\_it](https://ec.europa.eu/italy/home_it)). Thanks to the support of the Open Society Foundation competition, Gi.U.Li.A. is now ready to “Expand the female talent pipeline in Europe”, creating a European network of similar databases across the region.

Other groups are also active in conducting advocacy to foster the principles and goals of Section J, including: [Pari o Dispare](#) (the Observatory on Gender Discrimination); [SNOQ](#), a movement which attempts to improve the social position of women in Italy; [Donne in Quota](#), a civic organization that fosters women's representation in society and politics. For instance, in April 2019 Donne in Quota and the Parity Network (Rete per la Parità) jointly promoted a plan to engage regional authorities for communication (Co.Re.Com.) in the development of a **Code of Conduct for gender-responsive audiovisual media**, defining guidelines to denounce sexism in tv (with a special focus on private TV) and participating in the upcoming edition of the Glocal Media Monitoring Project, an activity carried out by the Osservatorio di Pavia in parallel with the 2020 GMMP at global level.

Addressing a gap in the literature concerning gender based violence against journalists, a research project titled '**ADVOOCATE - Addressing visual imagery in online harassment and/or offline abuse against women (photo-) journalists**' (2019-2021, University of Padova) explores the complex interplay between online harassment and offline aggressive behaviour and physical attacks of female (photo-) journalists. Visual imagery has increasingly become a powerful tool for human rights practice, but also for harassment and abuse against women media professionals in the digital sphere. The project takes into consideration all aspects together and in their interconnections.

For what concerns the audiovisual sector, a '**Charter for parity and inclusion of women in film, audio-visual and animation festivals**' (Carta per la parità e l'inclusione nei festival di cinema, audiovisivo e animazione) - promoted by the international movement 5050\*2020 and, in Italy, by the associations Dissenso Comune and Women in Film, TV and media in Italy - was signed in August 2018 by the Venice Biennale with the Mostra d'Arte Cinematografica di Venezia (Venice Film festival) to promote gender equality in film, audio-visual and animation festivals. The Charter marks a commitment towards professional development and representation of women in the media industry, guaranteeing the rights and interests of women professionals in the sector. The Charter is available in English at: <http://www.5050x2020.fr>.

Italy (the University of Padova) has also co-coordinated a major EU-funded project – **Advancing Gender Equality in Media Industries** (AGEMI) – aimed at disseminating good practices to foster women's empowerment in the media and fostering relationships between media and journalism students and media practitioners, thus bridging the transition from education to employment. AGEMI has created a set of unprecedented resources: a Resources Bank of global good practices; a series of thematic learning units with video lectures and interviews with experts; an APP for mobile to conduct media monitoring activities. All such resources are translated in English, French and Spanish and are openly accessible online at: [www.agemi-eu.org](http://www.agemi-eu.org).

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## Gender in/equality in ICT and the digital challenge in Italy.

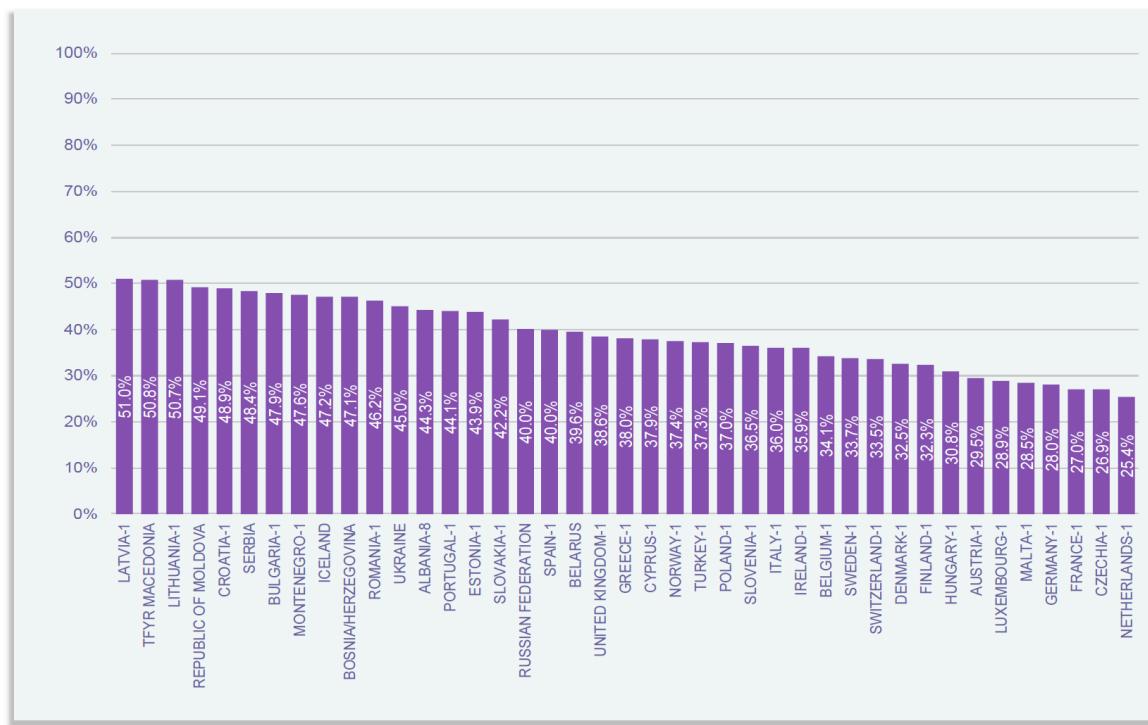
### Women in ICT and STEM education

Women's persistent under-representation in science, technology, engineering, and mathematics (STEM) education, occupations, and careers in various parts of the world and its negative impact on STEM labour force and research and innovation (R&I) have raised a number of concerns across the world and in the European region. These issues deserve particular attention in the Italian context as well.

As recently reported in *ACM Communications*, women earned 28.5%, 25.1%, and 18.1% of all bachelor-level computer science degrees in US in 1995, 2004, and 2014, respectively. These low and indeed decreasing percentages are confirmed by recent data gathered in all European countries: according to a Microsoft study of 2017 conducted in 35 European countries and 11.500 women, fewer than 1 in 5 computer science graduates are women; the country where young women live has a major impact on their attitudes to STEM (in some places, confidence is a major barrier, while in others, peer approval or lack of role models is holding them); and that the major drivers to foster girls in STEM are encouragement and mentorship, gaining practical experience, and having visible role models. In Italy all such drivers are yet to be developed and implemented.

Figure 4 – A breakdown of female researchers in Europe (UNESCO 2018)

Female researchers as a percentage of total researchers (HC), 2016 or latest year available



Notes: -1=2015, -8 = 2008.

Source: UNESCO Institute for Statistics, June 2018.

In the Academic Year 2017/2018 the presence of women in Bachelors in Computer Engineering was 21,01% and in Computer Science 12,23%; while in Master level Engineering was 14,83% and in Master Computer Science 16,32%, thus witnessing a strong under-representation of women and a very low access to career progression. A representation that has dramatically decreased over time, if we consider that women

enrolled in the courses of information science at the University of Pisa in the mid '80s were between 25 and 30% of the total population (Bodei & Pagli 2017) while in 2019 – a year that witnessed the highest enrolment of girls in STEM courses since 2009 – the overall percentage is 17,7% (Osservatorio Talents Venture 2019). The study also reports that girls perform better in their studies, but five years after graduation the average rate of occupation is 85% of women and 92% for men, and the pay gap is 25%.

Table 2 – Use of internet, internet users' skills, specialist skills, Italy and EU (Source: Eurostat)

	Italy		EU	
	Women value	Men rank	Women value	Men value
<b>1 Use of internet</b>				
<b>1.1 Regular internet use</b> % individuals, 2017	66%	25	72%	79% 82%
<b>1.2 People who never used the internet</b> % individuals, 2017	26%	24	19%	14% 12%
<b>1.3 Online banking</b> % internet users, 2017	39%	23	48%	60% 63%
<b>1.4 Using professional social networks</b> % internet users, 2017	11%	16	14%	13% 18%
<b>1.5 Doing an online course</b> % internet users, 2017	7.5%	9	7.6%	8.1% 9.5%
<b>1.6 Online consultations or voting</b> % internet users, 2017	8.4%	14	8.7%	9.9% 10.6%
<b>1.7 eGovernment users</b> % internet users submitting forms, 2017	30%	28	30%	57% 60%
<b>1 Use of internet</b> Score (0-100)	35.0	25		50.2
<b>2 Internet user skills</b>				
<b>2.1 At least basic digital skills*</b> % individuals, 2017	40%	26	47%	55% 60%
<b>2.2 Above basic digital skills*</b> % individuals, 2017	17%	26	22%	28% 34%
<b>2.3 At least basic software skills*</b> % individuals, 2017	45%	26	52%	58% 62%
<b>2 Internet user skills</b> Score (0-100)	37.9	26		53.1
<b>3 Specialist skills and employment</b>				
<b>3.1 STEM graduates**</b> Per 1000 individuals aged 20-29, 2016	11.2	19	16.4	13.1 24.9
<b>3.2 ICT specialists</b> % total employment, 2017	1.0%	20	3.8%	1.4% 5.7%
<b>3.3 Unadjusted gender pay gap</b> % difference in pay, 2016	19%	17		19%
<b>3 Specialist skills and employment</b> Score (0-100)	38.9	18		43.9

*Notes:*

\* Data for Italy refers to 2016.

\*\* EU average refers to 2015.

According to the 2018 Women in Digital (WiD) Scoreboard - a tool to measure and evaluate the participation of women in the digital sector developed by the EU Commission which brings together 13 indicators under 3 areas: Internet use, Internet user skills and specialist skills and employment – Italy sits at the very low end of the spectrum (see Table 2 above); only 14,2% of IT specialists are women (16,7% is the EU average); and digital competences decrease drastically as the age of women increases.

Despite their increasing rate in education and their better performances, Italian young women remain largely under-represented in technical-scientific tracks. This formative segregation, due both to enduring gender stereotypes and to a peculiar structure of Italian education system, tends to exclude women from strategic and highly valued professions in IT sector, with the risk of creating a dual labour market in the 4.0 economy. In this context a multiplicity of challenges need to be addressed, including persisting stereotypes, the role and responsibility of educational agencies, cultural orientation and gendered relations in ICT-related working contexts, and the implications for future socio-economic development, but also the governance of future societies.

The problem of young women, particularly in STEM area, is not only connected to the difficulties of accessing a career but also to working environments, which are still – and perceived to be – unfriendly to women and exclusive; as well as a phenomenon that hits the scientific and research community as well as any other profession and job at any level of the Italian society: sexual harassment. In 2018 the Italian Association of Women in Science ([Associazione Donne e Scienza](#)), together with the [European Platform of Women Scientists](#) (EPWS), focused their 2018 Annual Conference on this subject to denounce how the long standing common perceived feeling that research organizations and universities are happy exceptions in a world of gender-based abuses must be totally reconsidered: a growing number of cases, denounces, trials and any kind of charge confirm that this is a worrying issue, it is widespread and affects women in research at all levels. The proceedings (Avveduto et al 2019) show clearly that female students, PhDs, scientists, researchers and professors, are not immune and suffer the same humiliating experience as millions of other women worldwide; and the situation is particularly serious in research contexts that remain male dominated like the STEM.

Finally, at the crossroad of digital and legacy media lies the fact that women in STEM disciplines are still portrayed in stereotypical ways in the popular media. A recent review of academic research, along with mainstream media quotes and images for depictions of women in STEM and women in computing/IT (Payton & Berki 2019) found that young women scientists' personality and identity formation continues to be influenced by the personas and stereotypes associated with role images seen in the media. This, in turn, can affect women's underrepresentation and career participation, as well as prospects for advancement in computing fields. This short-circuit between media representation and unequal access to STEM disciplines and jobs has not been considered seriously in the Italian context deserves adequate attention.

### **Good practices - Monitoring, research and advocacy initiatives for gender-responsive digital media**

In response to this challenging situation, efforts have grown in recent years to collect data, gain deeper understanding of causes and consequences, and to develop guidelines.

Current studies are beginning to explore which is the role of stereotypes and of media images in influencing young women's decision to choose ICT educational carriers; initiatives are conducted engaging students, teachers and families, so as to find ways to tackle persisting stereotypes from the family to the educational system. Exemplary of

these efforts is a project titled “**STEM women: a challenge for the school, an opportunity for businesses, a search for talents**” (2018-2020), carried out in the Piedmont region (coordinated by the Department of Cultures, Politics and Society of the University of Turin) aimed at building scalable and repeatable best practices to achieve virtuous cooperation mechanisms for the orientation of female and male students in their training and employment choices, and in getting them accustomed to employment environments with a high technological and innovation content. The research takes into consideration: characteristics, behaviour and attitudes of female and male students, the aims of the education system and its transformations; the expectations and needs of the economic system, its transformations and the actions implemented through public policy to facilitate partnerships between school and work. In order to develop the research project a network has been developed linking university, public institutions, school teachers and technological enterprises. A survey has been conducted on a sample of 572 high school students, aiming at measuring male and female STEM preference, quality of teaching orientation to future occupation and gender bias persistence; training meetings led by researchers and women leaders in technology companies are held in high schools; tours are organized at STEM firms; public meetings are planned where male and female students discuss cultural, economic and social implications of a wider female presence in the STEM professions will be realized in the final phase of the action research project. All this with a view to increase girls’ confidence in their scientific abilities and to encourage them to choose careers in STEM.

Women’s associations and networks are also promoting projects to remove these beliefs and attract young women into STEM and particularly into Engineering and Computer Science. Amongst these, worth mentioning is [\*\*Ragazze Digitali \(Digital Girls\)\*\*](#), a forward looking initiative of the University of Modena in collaboration with the Italian chapter of [\*\*European Women’s Management Development\*\*](#) and with the support of local public and private institutions. The project offers free of charge and practice oriented four weeks summer schools to high school girl students, and has involved some hundreds students over the past 6 years.

Awareness raising initiatives have also been developed, for instance, in the Emilia Romagna region, including activities that promote not only digital competences amongst girls and women (particularly older women and migrant women) but more broadly digital culture and understanding. In 2016 the region has signed a protocol for digitalization in schools to contrast the gender gap, and conducted workshops on robotics, coding, 3D modelling, open data engaging girls from secondary schools. They also organize summer camps and a ‘[\*\*STEM caravan\*\*](#)’ to support digital development in peripheral and marginalized areas.

Centred on overcoming stereotypes in STEM education and on promoting inclusive innovation is a EU-funded project [\*\*Gender4STEM\*\*](#), to which Italian researchers, teachers and community are participating. The project is developing a e-learning platform where educational and awareness-raising materials are available for use by secondary-level teachers. The digital platform includes a self-assessment tool so that teachers can take stock of their own gendered education practices and receive recommendations about content and materials to help them better manage gender diversity in their classrooms.

Connecting women working in the digital context is WISTER ([\*\*Women for Intelligent and Smart TERritories\*\*](#)), a network of women professionals and experts that fosters gender-aware innovation policies; acknowledges and integrate the needs, interests and competences of women in research and in public debates; and fosters initiatives to overcome the gender digital gap, in view of better integrating social and technological innovation.

As far as ongoing efforts carried out at the academic level, to be mentioned are the activities and the web platform of the [\*\*Associazione Donne e Scienza\*\*](#). The association

operates to promote women's access and carries progress in scientific institutions and to structurally transform those institutions so as to become more inclusive and diverse. Most recently a major conference was organized by ACM Communications at the University La Sapienza (Rome, September 2019), titled "Diversity Drives Societal Change". The event brought together many women in the computing profession and related technical fields to exchange knowledge and experience and provide focused support for women who are pursuing their academic degrees and starting their careers in computing (see <https://womencourage.acm.org/2019/>).

All this testifies that the debate on the issue of gender under-representation in STEM and the digital world is on-going, and conversations are taking place in different venues; yet more institutional efforts should be made to connect these initiatives, and resources should be made available to create structural condition for these networks to share their visions and experiences in view of informing local and national institutional provisions and practices. Interestingly, the recently appointed Italian government has nominated a Minister for Innovation (the first since 2006 with a specific mandate for digital innovation) and a department for digital innovation is being organized. Minister Paola Pisano is a women academic, and since dal 2014 the director of the [Centro di innovazione tecnologica multidisciplinare dell'ateneo piemontese \(IcxT\)](#), Center for multidisciplinary technological innovation at the University of Torino). This is good news. What remains to be seen is how central the challenges of Section J and Goal 5 of the Agenda 2030 will be in the activities of the Ministry for Innovation and to what extent it will invest in harnessing the potential of existing networks that have developed expertise and knowledge in gendered innovation.

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## Recommendations

In due consideration of the evidence derived from available reports and studies, and of the on-going challenges to the development of a *media gender equal regime* in Italy, specific and implementable actions should be taken by government and public institutions, by media companies and ICT industries, by the research community and by a multiplicity of civic networks, in their respective role and, whenever appropriate, in a joint manner in order harness the potential of multi-stakeholder synergies.

### *Government and public institutions*

- A serious commitment should be made towards the full realization of the gender mainstreaming approach in national media, ICT and its governance. This implies a commitment to mainstream gender equality in national media policies and digital strategies; but also an explicit acknowledgement of the role and relevance of media and ICTs within gender equality strategies. In this context, a clear vision should be fostered to guarantee a gender equal composition of boards and councils of all media and IT public institutions (such as the AGCOM, Co.Re.Com, Agenzia per il digitale).
- Nation-wide and regional initiatives should be organized to raise awareness and promote public debate on the issue of women's misrepresentation in media content and of their marginalisation, particularly in decision-making positions and in ICT and STEM.
- Establishment of a sustained inter-institutional dialogue amongst competent authorities and with the participation of all interested stakeholders: media companies, media professionals, research and education community, civic

organizations, ICT developers. This should be organized on a regular basis and be institutionally supported, so as to develop the capacity to address the challenges deriving from future digital communication developments through adequate interventions, programmes and policies, with a forward looking gender mainstreaming perspective.

- Regular monitoring concerning the situation of women and men in the media sector (news and audio-visual) and IT industry – as per the critical areas of Section J - should be carried out, including a focus on carrier progress and access to managerial and decision-making positions. Such reporting should be integrated in all monitoring and assessment activities carried out as part of the Italian commitment to Agenda 2030 and the SDGs. Specific attention should be given to issues concerning harassment and abuse, offline and online, of women journalists and media professionals.
- Adequate resources – public and private - should be made available for the conduct of such research activities in order to produce methodologically sound analyses of gender inequalities in and through the media and ICT, in view of elaborating future relevant policies and evidence-based national programmes.
- Arrange measures - and establish ad hoc funds - to support media, audio-visuals and IT initiatives that are initiated and carried out by women and women's networks

#### *Media Industry Organizations and Professional Unions*

- Steps should be taken to address the lack of formal adoption of gender equality policies, self-regulatory frameworks and codes of conduct. The adoption of regulatory provisions should be accompanied by support mechanisms for monitoring (observatories and ad hoc Units), evaluation (regular gender-assessment plans) and implementation. These measures are important for an equality ethos to be firmly embedded in the organization's operations; to favour gender-sensitive transformation in the organizational culture; and to give clear signal that equality issues are taken seriously, thus fostering sustainability of gender-equal transformations over time.
- A gender mainstreaming commitment should be made by conducting regular monitoring of gender in/equality in the company – concerning both content and working conditions – and by promoting gender training activities, particularly targeted at company management (men and women) aimed at transforming the gendered cultures of working environments and supporting diversity, pluralism and respect for all differences.

#### *Government and higher education institutions*

- Introduction of gender-focused curricula, syllabi and programmes in all educational degrees that aim at educating a next generation of media, ICT and communication professionals, so as to promote awareness, knowledges and role models to young students.
- Develop initiatives to support the transition from training to employment, for girls and women that enter media and IT professions, including leadership training.

#### *Research Community*

- Researchers are called to further contribute to map out and critically investigate the gendered realities of media and ICT, with a particular attention for a) relevant policy measures and governing arrangements, b) the impact of digital

technologies on working conditions, and c) issues of harassment and violence, both within media and ICT working environments and in the conduct of professional activities. In carrying out such studies, researchers should rely on and connect to existing international networks - like the GAMAG's Policy and Research Committee, the UniTWIN Network on Gender Media and ICT, the European Consortium for Communication research and Education, the International Association for Media and Communication – and participate in transnational comparative projects.

- Resources should be made available by public agencies so that the scholarly community can carry out coordinated, action-based and transformative research plans, including analytical frameworks, multi-method approaches, multi-level perspectives. The findings deriving from these investigations should be channeled through the media and ICT communities and should constitute the bases for the future development of nation-wide programs, consistently with European standards and requirements.

#### *Civil Society Organizations*

- Civic and women's professional organizations should continue promoting awareness and disseminating knowledge about the challenges and opportunity of gender equal media and ICTs. Beside monitoring activities and advocacy intervention, towards both public institution and private entities, these actors have an important role to play in providing expert and diverse knowledges towards the formulation, adoption and implementation of policy measures - at the organizational, national and international levels - that will inform gender-aware media ecosystems and future technological developments.
  - Efforts should be made to connect the many different realities that promote initiatives to foster gender equality in the media and IT: sharing of information and good practices, fostering networks, development of joint activities, are crucial to harness the potential of bottom-up collaborations if they are to inform and influence the future development of the Italian knowledge society and its governance.
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