

ANTONIO MARANO KEYNOTE SPEECH

**“Prominence, pluralism and new rules in the digital ecosystem” 12 March
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The democratic value of the broadcasting system

Authorities, Undersecretary, President of ANITEC-ASSINFORM, Ladies and Gentlemen,
the issue we are addressing today is not a technical matter reserved for industry insiders, but a fundamental question of democratic balance.

Television and radio are not merely market operators but services of general interest.

They are guardians of the right to information guaranteed by Article 21 of our Constitution. And when a democratic safeguard is weakened, it is not just an industrial sector that suffers, but the entire country.

The media – television, radio, and the press – is a unique strategic asset. It is not merely an industrial sector, but a strategic intangible asset.

It is the safety net guaranteeing the integrity of public debate and a nation's cultural sovereignty.

Publishers guarantee verified information, pluralism of opinion, social cohesion and cultural diversity.

They embody the country's capacity to set its own information agenda independently.

The imbalance with global platforms and the economic crisis

In recent years, we have witnessed a radical transformation, with major global platforms experiencing exponential growth in audience numbers and advertising revenue.

In just a few years, the revenues of ‘Over-The-Top’ services in Italy have risen from €2 billion to €7 billion, an increase of 250%.

This is not a neutral figure but a sign of a structural shift in value.

Broadcasters are legally accountable for what they broadcast and invest in original production, ensuring pluralism, inclusion and accessibility.

They support employment and the national tax base.

By contrast, platforms monetise content produced by others through non-transparent algorithms and data profiling, often exploiting regulatory gaps or shortcomings.

This is not competition but a profound asymmetry that cannot produce stable pluralism.

The last decade has marked an irreparable rift: the massive entry of OTTs into the advertising market

has undermined the basic principles of fairness.

For the Italian publishing sector, this is no longer a future risk but a reality: economic and industrial unsustainability is already a fact. The tipping point has been passed, compromising the inherent ability of businesses to guarantee informational sovereignty and the quality of public debate.

The centrality of Prominence and Digital Terrestrial

In this scenario, the issue of prominence takes on decisive importance, as access to content now passes through interfaces controlled by global entities.

The risk is that services of general interest will be relegated to marginal positions whilst OTT services receive dedicated buttons, pre-installations and privileged placements.

The regulation adopted by AGCOM therefore represents a fundamental step that affirms the primacy of citizens' rights over commercial logic. It is unacceptable for access to information to depend on private agreements between device manufacturers and global platforms.

Confindustria Radio Televisioni strongly supports the introduction of the blue icon, an essential tool guaranteeing the immediate visibility of the entire digital terrestrial offering on Smart TV interfaces.

It is precisely for this reason that our members will shortly launch a joint promotional campaign for this symbol, which allows direct access to free-to-air digital terrestrial or satellite channels directly from the home screen of new connected televisions.

Even the inclusion of remote controls with number keys is not a technical detail but a systemic choice to ensure universality.

President Dal Checco, whom I thank for being here, is well aware that this is not a conflict between the technology industry and the content industry.

It is a shared challenge.

Technology and content must grow hand in hand, but rules are needed to prevent value from being concentrated solely in the hands of those who control access to data.

We acknowledge the initial results achieved through collaboration with manufacturers – adoption of the TV channel icon stands at 100% of devices; remote controls with number keys at 75%. These results confirm that the path taken by our regulator is the right one and a viable one.

The defence of radio and mobility

The same rigour must be applied to FM and DAB+ radio, which must remain present and visible in vehicles.

Every day, over 27 million Italians listen to the radio in their cars.

Access via an IP interface certainly complements existing access methods, but it cannot be the only model the automotive industry imposes on the market, at the expense of the widespread coverage guaranteed by FM and DAB+.

Radio broadcasting is a resilient, democratic infrastructure guaranteeing professional content even in emergencies.

To mark World Radio Day, Confindustria Radio Televisioni launched the #RadioInAuto campaign. The initiative saw over 6,000 ad airings in just a few days, generating extensive coverage across all national and trade media.

Citizens have the right to be informed about what they risk losing, and the political class has a duty to act now to protect a medium that tangibly guarantees freedom and democracy.

Information sovereignty and appeals to the institutions

I would like to remind Undersecretary Barachini to bear in mind that information is not a secondary commodity, but a strategic infrastructure on a par with water, energy and communication networks.

When the selection, distribution and monetisation of content are governed by non-national entities, the information system becomes vulnerable to disinformation. At a time of profound historical change, this role must be recognised, exercised and promoted.

Ultimately, it is a matter of upholding the sovereignty enshrined in Article 21 of our Constitution in the face of the rise of a global technocracy, preventing it from reducing us to mere colonies.

For this reason, the structural rebalancing of resources is no longer a sector-specific demand, but a systemic necessity.

And this is why we are calling on the institutions to ensure that 5% of the turnover generated by the web giants in Italy is reinvested in the country's economy.

These funds must be earmarked for the support of culture and free, independent information.

To be clear: publishers are not seeking privileges, but fairness.

Conclusions

Prominence serves to protect citizens and is a safeguard of democracy. This applies to television.

It applies to radio.

It applies to those who are not tech-savvy, to those who need to be able to find verified information without barriers.

It is not technological nostalgia.

It is the protection of universal access. I would like to conclude with two quotes:

"The system is failing. The way people access content and the power of a few to control this gateway is undermining the spirit of democracy" (Tim Berners-Lee, inventor of the Web).

"Democracy is the power of an informed people" (Alexis de Tocqueville, philosopher).