

**Pannunzio Society for the freedom of information**

# Declaration of intents

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# Brief introduction



## brief introduction

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We formed the *Pannunzio Society for the freedom of information*, among those who care about the fate of what Kant called “freedom of the pen,” and who intend to discuss and advance plans for reform inspired by the principles and criteria set out in the Blue Book.

The *Pannunzio Society* is an association that does not stop at an account of ideas, but is also committed to practical action in reporting the continuous violations, by now widely tolerated, of the current legislation. The Society does not limit itself to analysis, debate and concrete proposals, but will adopt, in Italy and Europe, all appropriate tools to pursue its goals of freedom.

The “Society” is inspired by the “Société des Amis de la liberté et de la presse” that arose in France in November 1817. Joined by such figures as Benjamin Constant, Achille de Broglie, Paul-Louis Courier, Jean-Baptiste Say, the Société, through a frenetic activity of appeals, petitions, letters and subscriptions to pay the penalty fines that opposition newspapers were assessed, was able to influence the reform of French legislation on the press. The experience was historically important because, for the first time, people formed associations to fight for the freedom of expression, showing that they understood that in their time – as in our time – freedom of expression assumed a strategic importance. Indeed, the attacks on freedom of the newest forms of communication can be seen as similar to those suffered by the printed press at the birth of that medium.

The *Pannunzio Society* also takes inspiration from the civil battles conducted by the “World” newspaper and by its editor and

founder, Mario Pannunzio, as well as by the “Salvemini Movement.”

The *Pannunzio Society* does not support any political party, and invites as members all those European citizens, across the entire political and ideological spectrum, who are concerned about the miserable state of information.

The *Pannunzio Society*, which grows by cooptation and by the membership of supporters, has determined that journalists may not exceed one-third of the membership, precisely to underscore that the Society's action is alien to the corporate spirit and concerns every conscious citizen.

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# Declaration of intents



## declaration of intents

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### 1. to be aware that the media are not free

In the new media age freedom of information is guaranteed to some extent by constitutions and laws but in reality the media are manipulated, other-directed, conformist. Journalists lose their role of witnesses to reality and are transformed into conduits for the transmission of the messages of others. The reader, the viewer and the listener are reduced to the role of unaware objects, without any rights. Now, the media identify ever more with their ownership.

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### 2. there is no democracy without independent information

Western democracies cease to be so in the absence of such a basic requisite of democracy as independent information. Now, the political game, especially in Italy, is visibly fixed through the manipulation of public opinion. We fought so hard for free elections, we need to start to fight for free opinions, that is to say, freely formed opinions.

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### 3. the three powers of the “public sphere”: for a new separatism

In modern societies, the comprehensive “public sphere” is composed of the political and state apparatus, the economic power, and the media power. These three powers, rather than being separate, are intricately intertwined. The public should be made aware of the damage created by the extreme distortion of information caused by the dependence of politicians on legal and illegal sources of financing, the damage generated from other-directed information by those economic and political powers; the damage created to the market by political bureaucracy and dependence on public financing.

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### 4. citizens, readers, consumers

We must establish, almost from nothing a “right of readers” who are currently not protected either as citizens (they are not guaranteed pluralistic or independent information) or as consumers. And yet, as buyers of goods, they are “consumers” (moreover, consumers of a product that is much more delicate than other goods because it conditions the public mind and the health of the democracy) and therefore, as consumers they should have at least the same kind of rights as buyers of any other consumer good, as regards transparency, the absence of commingling of interests, the absence of polluted news.

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### 5. information on the net

The Internet is the greatest medium that has ever existed, in terms of the size of the targeted public, and it is characterized by the absence of a strict separation between users and producers of information: anyone, in a few clicks, can read and produce. Information on the Net runs, therefore, along horizontal lines that constantly intersect the vertical lines of the traditional media and that, being horizontal, escape the logic and mechanisms of control which have, thus far, prevented the press, radio and television from freely exerting their fundamental role in any democratic country: the creation, through the free and independent reporting of the facts and of history, of a civil consciousness in the people, transforming them from passive subjects of democracy to its protagonists. Defending freedom of expression on the Internet means to defend this hope.

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### 6. a policy reform

Among the urgent reforms needed to safeguard democracy is real reform, legislative and otherwise, that will build five structural conditions, both to ensure freedom

of information and to establish the rights of readers and consumers:

1) establish the relevance of primary interest of a free and independent information, as a necessary component for the existence of a political democracy;

2) be aware that the freedom to inform can be ensured only by an actual plurality of sources;

3) pursue a policy that has as its aim the maximum possible separation between the powers of the "public sphere" and thus also between the economic power and that of the media;

4) recognize in the "information good" a status different from that of a simple consumer good, and then build a unique and specific form of governance for media companies which tends to progressively implement the principle of separatism between ownership of the means of journalism and its management, including through intermediate steps such as taking away the owner's control over informational content.

5) consider as fundamental the presence of the reader-consumer among the protagonists of communication.

