

ITALIAN BLOGGERS FACE SEVERE FINES WITH GAG LAW

LE 30 JUILLET 2010 FEDERICA COCCO

The Italian gag law threatens bloggers and podcasters with fines and seeks to subject them to the same control and regulation as traditional media.

The abominable gag law which is in the process of being approved by the Italian Chamber of Deputies includes a provision to fine bloggers who don't remove content from their pages within 48 hours of receiving a complaint. The fines go up to €25,000.

The move has been **described by Reporters Without Borders as “authoritarian”**, and

has appealed to European Council President



Herman Van Rompuy to intervene at the EU regional government level.

Under this law, bloggers and podcasters are being subject to the same control and regulation as traditional media outlets. Indeed, the mentality behind it is so retrograde that it appeals to a law introduced in 1948, which compels newspapers to ‘rectify incorrect information’ after it has been published.

This also implies that all blogs must be linked to a particular individual, and not just that, a legal entity which can be held responsible once its content is deemed inappropriate. In other words, goodbye to anonymous posting.

Though Italy is by no means Iceland – the first country in the world to allow for complete freedom of press thanks to legal package **“Icelandic Model Media Initiative”** - it is fair to say that it’s not likely to become a haven for freedom of expression anytime soon. What other countries are subject to such freedom-curbing laws? The **EU Observer has reported** that Ireland, Bulgaria and Romania are also facing similar ‘2.0 unfriendly’ policies.



“In January last year, Ireland passed an anti-blasphemy law under which you can be fined €20,000. When our organisation raised concerns about a journalist being jailed for blasphemy in the Yemen, they said right back to us: ‘But Ireland does the same thing,’ and to some extent they’re right.”



The long-term outcome is likely to be austere, intellectually and politically.

According to Arianna Ciccone, leading the movement against the gag law, “the web will be emasculated. The unique vitality and yes, freedom, of cyberspace will be reduced. Diversity of opinion will suffer as uncertainty, prudence and fear take the place of liberty of expression. Mainstream media frequently dances to other tunes. At risk is the future of independent news-gathering and opinion-sharing in Italy”.

Blogs at risk in Italy include:

Spinoza

Phonkmeister

Diritto alla Rete

Metilparaben

Beppe Grillo’s blog

Il Nichilista

Macchianera

These popular websites often include content that is extremely critical of government policy in Italy, some of them may be campaigning sites that have raised awareness on many fronts, and others are authored by ‘celebrities’ like comedian and outspoken activist Beppe Grillo. Read them now, while you can.

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1 ping

Les tweets qui mentionnent Italian bloggers face severe fines with gag law »
Article » OWNI, Digital Journalism -- Topsy.com le 30 juillet 2010 - 18:49

*[...] Ce billet était mentionné sur Twitter par damien douani, Pierre Mounier et steorfan, Owni. Owni a dit: [#owni] Italian bloggers face severe fines with gag law
<http://goo.gl/fb/y9LKQ> [...]*