

**THE DEVELOPMENT OF ARTIFICIAL INTELLIGENCE IN THE ITALIAN  
MEDIA SYSTEM**

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**Annotation:** This article explores the integration of artificial intelligence (AI) technologies in Italian journalism, examining journalists' perspectives, professional standards, and ethical considerations. Based on sociological studies conducted in 2024–2025 by the National Press Council of Italy and LUMSA University, it analyzes journalists' engagement with AI, the need for regulatory frameworks, and the preservation of core human journalistic values. The study also discusses the case of a fully AI-generated edition of the newspaper *IL Foglio*, highlighting challenges related to authorship, credibility, and journalistic responsibility. The findings suggest that AI functions primarily as a supportive tool to enhance journalistic efficiency rather than a replacement for human journalists.

**Keywords:** Artificial intelligence, Italian journalism, digital media, automated journalism, professional ethics, media regulation, AI-assisted content, *IL Foglio*

The rapid evolution of artificial intelligence (AI) technologies has triggered profound transformations across numerous sectors, with journalism being one of the most directly impacted fields. Contemporary research and practical investigations conducted in Italy indicate that AI is increasingly perceived not merely as a technological novelty but as a strategic and structural factor that is poised to shape the very future of the journalistic profession. This shift reflects a growing recognition among media professionals that the integration of AI tools is no longer optional but inevitable, influencing both the processes of news production and the standards of professional practice.

A recent comprehensive survey, carried out in late 2024 and early 2025 through a collaboration between the National Press Council (Consiglio Nazionale dell'Ordine dei Giornalisti) and LUMSA University, sought to capture the nuanced attitudes of Italian journalists toward the deployment of AI in their work.<sup>1</sup> The study involved 972 participants, encompassing both journalists and publicists, with a predominant age range of 43 to 58 years. This demographic corresponds to highly experienced professionals who occupy key positions in major editorial centers located in Rome, Milan, Lazio, Lombardy, and Tuscany. The geographic and professional diversity of the sample ensured that the findings were representative of the perspectives prevailing within Italy's most influential media strata, thereby providing an authoritative view on the intersection of AI and journalism in the country.

The results of this survey reveal a complex and layered understanding of AI among media professionals. A significant majority—approximately 80% of respondents—underscored the urgent need for rigorous legal and regulatory frameworks governing the use of AI in journalistic practice. These regulations are seen as essential not only for maintaining professional standards but also for safeguarding public trust in media outputs. Key among these regulatory concerns is the requirement for transparency: journalists insist that any AI-assisted content must be clearly identified, making it explicit to the audience when a machine has contributed to news creation. This emphasis on transparency reflects broader ethical considerations, highlighting the professional community's commitment to accountability and the ethical dissemination of information.

<sup>1</sup> Rainews.it 03.03.2025 <https://www.rainews.it/articoli/2025/03/intelligenza-artificiale-otto-giornalisti-su-dieci-chiedono-di-regolarla-8c1aa80b-a397-419f-b0b7-371bc3917fd1.html>

Despite the recognition of AI's potential to enhance journalistic efficiency, the overwhelming majority of Italian journalists maintain that the core human elements of journalism cannot be substituted by automated systems. Approximately 82% of survey participants affirmed that the role of a "real journalist" is inextricably linked to field research, direct observation, and the rigorous verification of sources. This illustrates a strong professional consensus: AI should serve as a complementary mechanism that supports the journalist, rather than as a replacement capable of assuming the full range of human judgment, intuition, and ethical discernment. Journalists expressed the view that while AI can assist with data analysis, drafting preliminary reports, or monitoring emerging trends, it cannot replicate the nuanced understanding, investigative acumen, and interpretative skills that human reporters bring to their work.

Furthermore, the survey highlighted a cautious optimism regarding AI's potential benefits. Participants acknowledged that AI could streamline routine tasks, such as fact-checking, summarizing large datasets, or generating preliminary drafts, thereby freeing journalists to focus more on in-depth investigative reporting and creative storytelling. However, respondents consistently stressed that the adoption of AI must be guided by stringent ethical standards, continuous professional oversight, and comprehensive training programs that enable journalists to use AI tools effectively while safeguarding journalistic integrity.

The study also revealed that, despite growing exposure to AI technologies, journalists' awareness and understanding of these tools remain incomplete and uneven. While certain applications have become relatively widespread, their integration into journalistic workflows is still largely experimental or limited in scope. For instance, automated translation tools are frequently employed, reflecting their utility in facilitating the rapid exchange of information across linguistic and national boundaries. In contrast, other AI technologies, such as image-generation software, are used only to a limited extent, and advanced applications in social media management, automated fact-checking, or the production of audio-visual content remain largely unimplemented in everyday journalistic practice.

Nevertheless, journalists acknowledge the potential of AI to enhance efficiency in the newsroom. According to survey data, 63.3% of respondents indicated that AI tools significantly reduce the time required for content production, while 60.8% reported that AI facilitates more efficient information gathering. These findings suggest that AI is increasingly viewed as a supportive mechanism capable of optimizing routine tasks. However, perceptions regarding the qualitative impact of AI are less optimistic: only one in five journalists believes that AI can improve the accuracy and reliability of source verification. This reflects a professional skepticism toward the ability of automated systems to fully replicate the critical thinking, judgment, and contextual understanding that human journalists bring to investigative work.

The mixed attitudes toward AI are closely linked to broader professional concerns. Approximately 50.2% of survey participants expressed apprehension that the use of AI could undermine content quality, potentially producing work that lacks depth, nuance, or contextual accuracy. Additional concerns highlight intergenerational differences within newsrooms, as younger journalists may be more willing to experiment with AI tools, while more senior professionals remain cautious. The risk of AI-facilitated dissemination of misinformation or fake news also emerged as a central worry, reflecting the ethical and social implications of introducing automated processes into public communication. These findings indicate that while AI offers considerable opportunities for efficiency and innovation, it simultaneously poses challenges to professional standards and the journalistic responsibility to the public.

Despite these concerns, Italian journalists display a pronounced interest in expanding their professional competencies in the field of AI. Approximately 70% of respondents reported strong

or full interest in specialized training programs focused on AI applications, while an additional 20% indicated moderate interest. The survey results reveal a nuanced demand for educational formats: the majority of journalists expressed the need for general introductory courses to develop foundational understanding, whereas others highlighted the value of practical workshops dedicated to AI-assisted data collection, analysis, and content creation. Beyond technical skills, respondents emphasized the importance of training that addresses automated fact-checking procedures as well as the ethical and legal dimensions of AI integration in journalism. These insights suggest that Italian journalists are not only aware of the potential of AI but are also actively seeking structured opportunities to incorporate it responsibly and effectively into their professional practice.

Government representatives also contributed to the study, providing insights into the regulatory and legislative perspectives surrounding AI in journalism. Alberto Barachini, State Secretary in the Presidency of the Republic, emphasized the need to move beyond the traditional dichotomy framing AI solely in terms of threats versus opportunities. He highlighted that a legislative draft currently under discussion in the Italian Senate envisions three fundamental principles for the responsible integration of AI in media: the protection of intellectual property rights, mandatory disclosure of AI-modified or AI-generated materials, and the explicit categorization of deepfake content as a distinct criminal offense. These measures are strategically designed to safeguard the integrity of information, maintain public trust, and prevent the misuse of emerging technologies in ways that could compromise ethical standards or legal compliance.

The research underscores an important nuance in the attitudes of Italian journalists: their goal is not to exclude AI from journalistic practice, but rather to employ it in a conscious, responsible, and systematic manner. Journalists perceive AI not as a threat to the profession but as a complementary instrument capable of enhancing competitiveness, efficiency, and adaptability in the rapidly evolving information landscape. Nevertheless, the successful adoption of AI hinges on several critical conditions, including transparency in its application, strict adherence to professional and ethical standards, and ongoing education to ensure journalists remain proficient in using AI tools without compromising the quality and credibility of their reporting.

A particularly illustrative example of AI's integration into journalism occurred on March 18, 2025, when the Italian conservative-liberal daily newspaper *IL Foglio* announced the publication of the world's first fully AI-generated newspaper edition.<sup>2</sup> This groundbreaking experiment represented a significant milestone in global journalism, challenging established notions of authorship, editorial responsibility, and professional reliability. According to the newspaper's editor, Claudio Cherasa, journalists' participation in the production process was intentionally minimal, limited primarily to posing investigative questions and curating AI-generated responses. All other functions, including topic selection, drafting of articles, and incorporation of citations, were executed entirely by AI systems. This case demonstrates the potential for AI not only to assist but to autonomously produce journalistic content, raising new questions regarding editorial oversight, accountability, and the ethical implications of automated reporting.

The *IL Foglio* experiment exemplifies both the opportunities and the challenges associated with AI-driven journalism. On one hand, it showcases the remarkable efficiency and scalability of AI, highlighting the potential to rapidly produce large volumes of content and explore new forms of data-driven storytelling. On the other hand, it also underscores the necessity for clearly defined professional standards, robust regulatory frameworks, and ongoing education to ensure

<sup>2</sup><https://www.theguardian.com/technology/2025/mar/18/italian-newspaper-says-it-has-published-worlds-first-ai-generated-edition> (04.09.2025)

that AI serves the public interest and complements, rather than undermines, human journalistic expertise. Collectively, these developments indicate that Italy is at the forefront of a global conversation about AI in media, providing a valuable case study in balancing technological innovation with ethical responsibility and professional integrity.

The development of artificial intelligence in Italian journalism demonstrates a transformative yet complementary role for AI technologies in modern media. The 2024–2025 studies conducted by the National Press Council and LUMSA University reveal that while AI tools can significantly enhance efficiency in content creation, information gathering, and analysis, they cannot fully replace the human journalist. Italian journalists emphasize the importance of transparency, ethical responsibility, and adherence to professional standards when integrating AI into editorial workflows.

The *IL Foglio* experiment exemplifies both the potential and the limitations of AI-generated journalism. It shows that AI can produce grammatically accurate, coherent, and structured content at speed and scale, yet it lacks human intuition, critical judgment, and the capacity to capture firsthand perspectives and social nuances. This underscores the enduring value of human journalistic competencies, including investigative rigor, ethical discernment, and narrative insight.

The findings indicate that successful integration of AI in journalism requires a balanced approach: one that combines technological innovation with continuous professional development, regulatory oversight, and ethical guidance. Italian journalists' interest in specialized AI training reflects a proactive effort to adapt responsibly to these new tools while safeguarding the core principles of their profession.

In conclusion, AI in Italian media serves primarily as a supportive mechanism. It enhances journalistic practice rather than replacing human expertise. Human judgment remains essential in producing reliable and ethical journalism. AI can increase efficiency and assist in data analysis and content creation. The collaboration between humans and AI ensures professional standards are maintained. This synergy preserves credibility, ethics, and social trust in journalism.

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