

# The role of Soft Power to save the environment. Gentiloni and Rutelli at the first Italian conference

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## Soft Power Conference

"Launching a conference on Soft Power at this historic moment may seem counter-current, because the world is experiencing a new nationalism and growing difficulties, but it is precisely for these reasons that an initiative of this kind is so important. Nobody knows what the world will be like after the pandemic, but we will certainly experience the need to increase cooperation between nations on health, safety and research ". This is what Paolo Gentiloni states in the message that the European Commissioner for Economy sent to the first Soft Power Conference, organized by Francesco Rutelli in Venice from 31 August to 1 September at the Giorgio Cini foundation and the Prada foundation. The conference stems from the awareness that international dialogue and cooperation, despite the current difficulties, are more important than ever. And from the belief that a renewed Soft Power can support mutual understanding between nations, and between citizens, benefit the diversity and pluralism of cultures, business activities and world trade, helping to combat and reduce inequalities.

At the center of the first day – organized by the IED (Institute of European Democrats) – the fight against climate change and sea level rise. "It is a time when everyone in the world thinks they are going for themselves but the pandemic has shown us that more cooperation is needed to solve global problems. The climate emergency is the most important problem. Someone deluded himself that stopping the planes, traffic, large ships during the lockdown would save the environment. Unfortunately this is not the case ", Francesco Rutelli, founder and president of the Soft Power club Italia, told Gr1. "The impacts of the unregulated climate, due to human faults, do not stop for this small interruption. The great experts meet here in Venice because it is a city that symbolizes the wounds caused by the critical issues of climate change ".

Antonio Navarra, president of CMCC (Euro-Mediterranean Center on Climate Change), underlines the importance of being prepared for a future that risks overwhelming us. "We are taking up the challenge [dell'innalzamento del livello del Mediterraneo] with the deployment of sophisticated observation systems, the development of climate models and dynamic forecasting systems capable of anticipating extreme events 2-3 days in advance, giving time to countermeasures and appropriate actions. This is viable science, but if we do not want to fall into an ambush of the future, we cannot simply focus on implementing solutions, we must further support the development of models that will allow us to broaden our understanding, transform information into knowledge, knowledge in decisions and decisions in operational actions ".

Erasmus D'Angelis, secretary general of the Central Apennine District Basin Authority, speaks of a real "climate pandemic". "28 years after the Earth Summit in Rio de Janeiro, 5 years after the Paris Agreement, after 26 UN summits and hundreds of weather-climate disasters with damage, victims and environmental refugees, the world has not yet understood that warming global is the "climate pandemic" that has been going on for at least three decades. Venice shows that even for Italy it is the worst risk we have under our eyes, catastrophic for the future. However, this perception is missing, albeit relaunching by rigorous scientific studies and by the mobilizations of the younger generations ".

Such a challenge – D'Angelis notes – does not concern a single Department or a Ministry, but "the whole country in a transversal way, with the approach of a large national and choral public work and an authoritative control room at the Presidency of the Council with a format, a working method that creates connections between different worlds and interests that are so far distant or even opposed ".

Connections, in the fight against climate change, are at least as vital as information, in the dual guise of Big Data and Long Data. To underline its centrality is Alessandro Codello, theoretical physicist, researcher at the European Center for Living Technology of the Ca 'Foscari University of Venice and the Universidad de la Republica of Uruguay. "Big Data refers to a set of techniques and methods used in large database analysis such as those that have become available since the advent of the internet, social media, etc. With Long Data we refer to the study, through these techniques, of databases that have a particular temporal depth and are therefore of historical importance. Long Data is the intangible record of our past complementary to the tangible reality of our monuments, museums and cities. Italy is rich in Long Data! ". Long Data – explains the researcher – offers lessons from the past that are relevant to our decisions on topics such as climate change, pandemics and migration. In the case of Venice, techniques based on Long Data can be used to reconstruct the temporal distribution of extraordinary high water events directly from historical sources, and then correlate them with other exceptional climatic events such as cold winters and exceptional storms ".

From this point of view, Venice represents a case study for climate change in many time scales. The reason is explained by Pierpaolo Campostrini, director of CORILA, the Consortium for the coordination of research relating to the Venice lagoon system. "Climate changes are already present, but of some (which occur on short time scales) we have immediate perception, for others we do not have the same perception, especially because they occur on longer time scales. Compared to the rise in the average sea level, Venice has always been affected, since its foundation, when the sea level, compared to the (local) ground level, was at least 1.5 meters lower [...]. The current safeguard strategy aims at a "medium term", at the end of the 21st century, leaving the options open for the following centuries, but it also wants to maintain the status of the city of the island Venice, avoiding its transformation into a Disneyland or an archaeological park. How to put these elements together (environmental, cultural and social defense), in the face of climate change, is a question that requires non-trivial answers ".

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