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Open Data and work: data journalism experiences in Europe and Africa

How can open data contribute to the creation of new jobs and give oxygen to journalism, a fundamental pillar of democracy? How is journalism changing in times of open data?

This theme was debated in the important setting of the Festival of Economics by the operating unit Osservatorio Balcani Caucaso Transeuropa of the Centre for International Cooperation.

Open data, or data that can be freely used, reused, and distributed, are key to improving the transparency of public institutions, encouraging citizen participation, and fostering growth and innovation.

In Italy the open data market is just starting, both on demand and on the supply side and the same can be said for the data journalism: on the other hand there are concrete opportunities, as emerged from the data journalism experiences in France and Africa presented during the panel.

This indicates the possibility of a virtuous encounter between work, technology and open data; the different experiences compared highlight the goals to deal with and the limits to overcome.

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Within the framework of the festival, the meeting "Open data and work: data journalism experiences in Europe and Africa" was held by the Centre for International Cooperation. The topic was proposed by its operating unit Osservatorio Balcani Caucaso Transeuropa thanks to its experience in the project EDJNet - European Data Journalism Network. EDJNet uses data to tell about European policies and their impact on the continent's society and citizens.

With the moderation of ICC/OBCT researcher Giuseppe Lauricella, the contributors Francesca De Chiara, researcher of the Bruno Kessler Foundation, Jacopo Ottaviani, ICFJ Knight Fellow and data editor for Code for Africa, and Guillaume Duval, journalist for magazine Alternatives Économiques, discussed the relationship between open data, the creation of new jobs in journalism field and the transformation of existing ones.

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This opportunity is also highlighted in a study by the European Commission, according to which by 2020 open data will generate about 25,000 new job opportunities in Europe, bringing the total number of employees in the sector to 100,000. These are concrete possibilities, as emerged from the data journalism experiences in Europe and Africa presented during the panel by Guillaume Duval and Jacopo Ottaviani.

Experiences in which journalists, assisted by researchers and software developers, have encouraged the use of open data for their reports and articles. Duval pointed out the example of the editorial published by Alternatives Économiques for the EDJNet project, for which he developed an alternative index to evaluate unemployment; while Ottaviani presented various initiatives and data journalism's teams "made in Africa", such as Mwananchi Data Lab in Tanzania or InfoCongo, a portal dealing with deforestation and related issues on the example of InfoAmazonia.

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