

# COGITO ERGO SUM

Political think tanks in Italy



8

minidossier

July 2015

## **A census**

Basic information and activities

## **The network**

Relations between people and organization

# SUMMARY

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# INTRODUCTION

The Italian political system is experiencing a period of strong transformation, which originated from its heartland: political parties. More and more based on strong personalities rather than on shared interests, their role in the parliamentary debate is decreasing day by day, especially in the legislative production.

With party-switching becoming a growing phenomenon, the never ending birth of new parties and movements, the traditional party system is steadily losing importance. In the meantime many of the functions that historically were in the hands of parties, the sharing of ideas to generate a constructive debate on society, moved to a new home: political think tanks.

This MiniDossier has two goals: take a census of existing organizations in Italy, and analyze the network they created throughout the years

In the first chapter we recorded basic information about think tanks (and its members) by also looking at the activities they carry out. We were able to identify over 1.800 members that we organized by occupation, in order to point out the political orientation of these organizations. For each think tank we looked at location (headquarters) and birth (year of foundation).

The second part of this MiniDossier attempted to identify the ties between these organizations, and especially the network they managed to create throughout the years. There are two elements to point out: the presence of recurrent figures and a growing interconnection between these think tanks. Of the 65 think tanks analyzed, 43 have at least one member in another organization.

Many of the connections and relationships that historically were created in parties, now take place in think tanks. A clear example of this was the Vedrò Foundation that managed to have 5 of its members in the recent Letta Government: the prime minister himself, Angelino Alfano (vice minister and interior) Maurizio Lupi (infrastructures), Nunzia De Girolamo (agriculture) and Andrea Orlando (environment). In a historical period with many grand coalition governments, bipartisan movements such as political think tanks have a great chance to increase their influence.

The study takes in consideration foundations and associations that are still active, and that were born from the initiative of Italian politicians, or that have a strong political component. Only available information on the official websites of the think tanks was used.

65  recorded political think tanks

1.809  registered members

242  relationships between organizations

374  shared members between think tanks

9  Italian regions involved

The MiniDossier is based on official data found on the websites of each individual think tank up until June 25th 2015

## NORMATIVE REFERENCES

### Italian Constitution

- ART **18** Citizens have the right to form associations freely and without authorization for those ends that are not forbidden by criminal law. Secret associations and associations that, even indirectly, pursue political aims by means of organisations having a military character shall be forbidden
- ART **49** Any citizen has the right to freely establish parties to contribute to determining national policies through democratic processes

### Italian civil code

- ART **14** Associations and foundations should be constituted by public deed. Foundation can also be constituted with a will.
- ART **16** The memorandum and articles of association must contain the name of the institution, indicating its purpose, budget and headquarters, as well as rules on organization and administration. They must also determine, in the case of associations, rights and obligations of members and the conditions of their admission; and, in the case of foundations, the criteria and procedures for payment of annuities.  
The memorandum and articles of association may also contain rules on the extinction of the institution and the transfer of its assets.
- ART **40** The organizers and those who take on the management of the funds raised are personally and jointly responsible for the conservation of funds and proper use.

In the  
**65 think tanks**  
there are  
**557 politicians**  
and  
**554 members**  
of the academic world

# A CENSUS

## BASIC INFORMATION AND ACTIVITIES

To understand the real size of this phenomenon we needed to begin from the basics. Think tanks have been for a long time off the radar, and a real census has never been made. Beginning with the most popular ones, and then continuing our research with the big names of Italian politics, we recorded 65 active political think tanks.

What we found was a number of different organization, mostly associations and foundations. Most of them are based in Lazio (more than 60%), and were born between 2000 and 2009. From an analysis of their websites we discovered that their main activities can be categorized into two groups: the organization of events and seminars, and the publishing of reviews and journals.

Besides basic information, what emerged from this first study is the heavy role played by politics and politicians in each of these think tanks. Of the 1.800 members recorded, we were able to discover the occupation of 1.541. 36.15% of them are politicians and 35.95% come from academia.

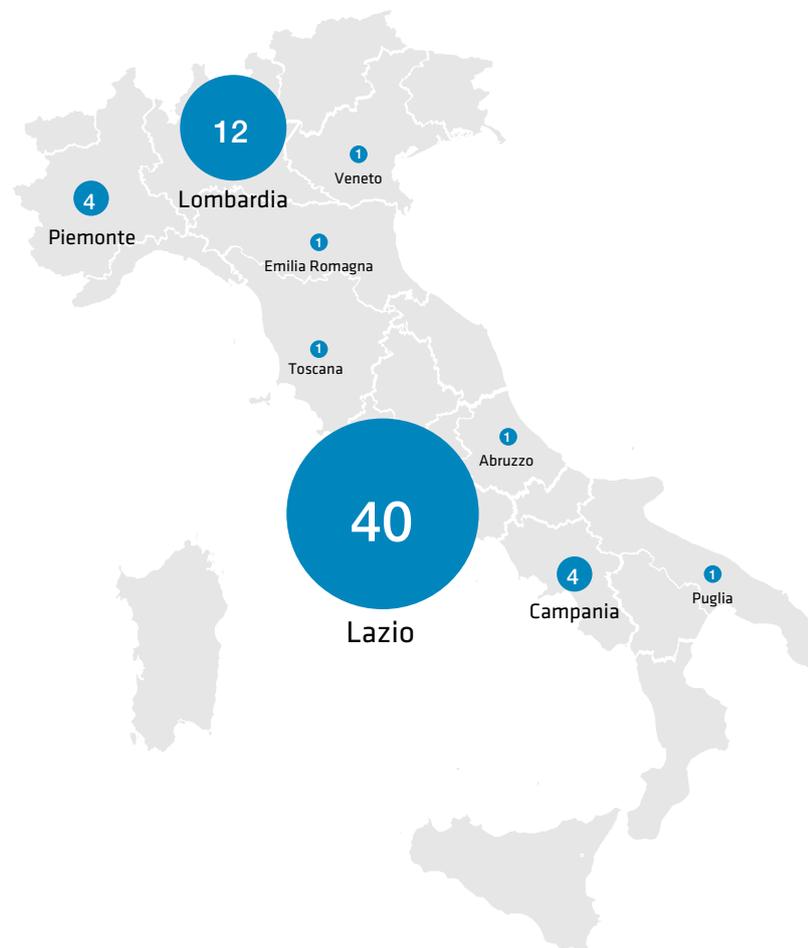
This work allowed us to place each think tank in a specific political area. 30.7% of them are connected to the center-left, while 24.6% to the center-right. A good amount of these organizations are either bipartisan or from the center of the political spectrum (together about 28%).

## LOCATION IN ITALY

A clear proof of the political nature of these think tanks, is that the wide majority of them are based in Lazio,

more precisely in Rome, the capital of Italy and home of the Italian Parliament. 12 of the 65 think tanks are based in Lombardia, while Campania and Piemonte have 4 each. In total, 9 regions are involved. Besides the above mentioned, we also have Abruzzo, Emilia-Romagna, Puglia, Toscana and Veneto.

### Where are the 65 think tanks based



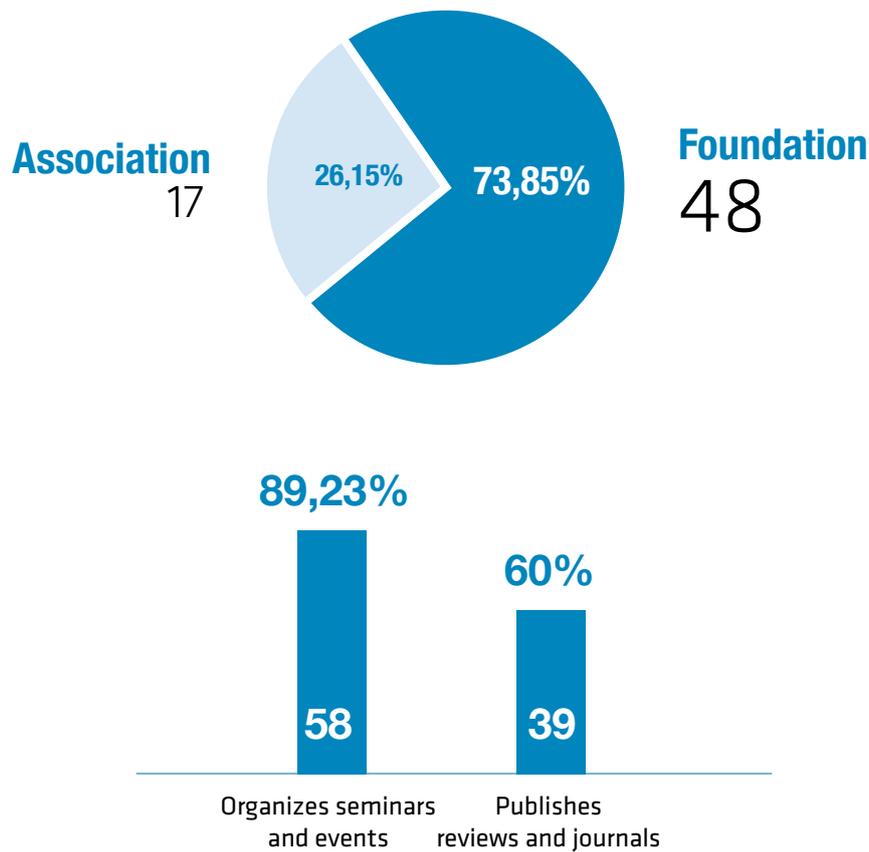
61.53% of Italian political think tanks are based in Lazio

## LEGAL FORM AND MAIN ACTIVITIES

Two are the legal forms used. 73.85% of the 65 think tanks are foundations, and the rest are associations.

They mainly carry out cultural activity, more specifically the organization of seminars and events, and the publishing of journal and reviews. 89% of them organize seminars, while only 60% are involved in publishing.

### Legal form and main activities



On the websites of 12.3% of the organizations there are no signs of any cultural activity being carried out.

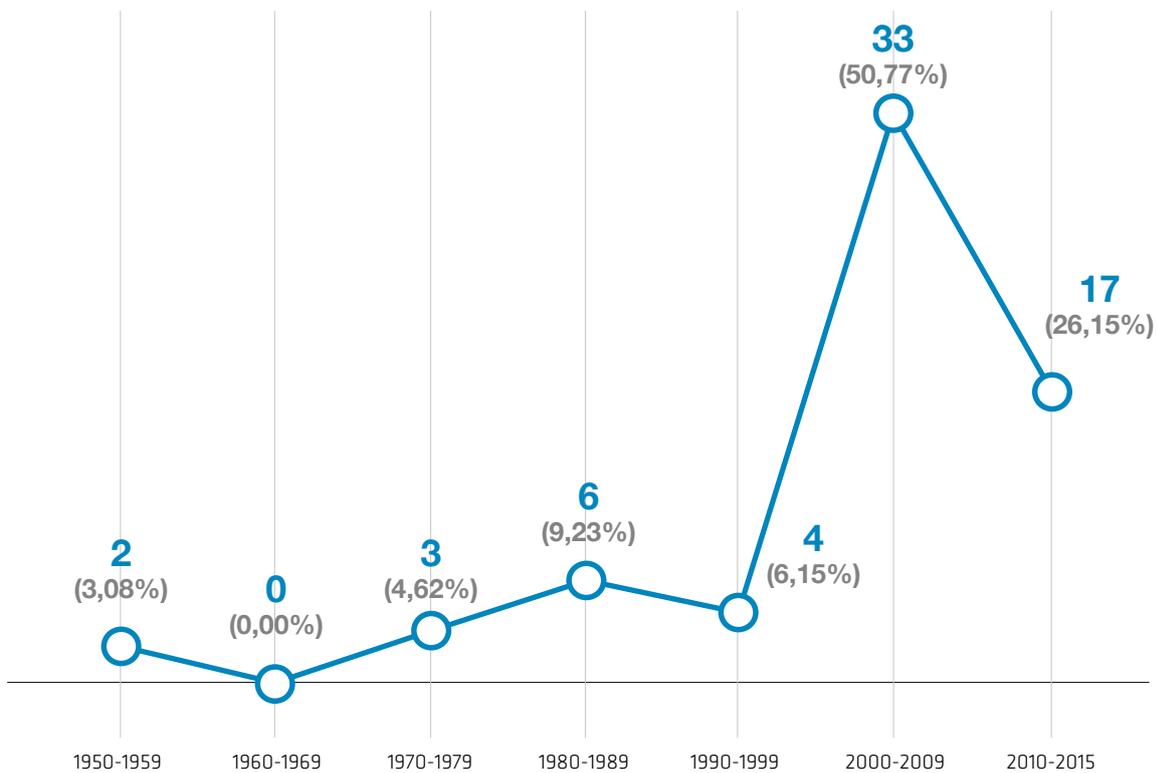
## YEAR OF CREATION

Political think tanks have been a part of Italy since the '50s, but the real explosion of the phenomenon took

place between 2000 and 2009, when 33 of the 65 think tanks recorded were founded. The first years of the new millennium gave birth to 50% of the organization. During the second part of the 80s, 10% of the recorded think tanks were created, more specifically we are talking about six organizations that were born between 1985 and 1989.

### When were they created

The timeline considers the year of creation only of think tanks that are still active



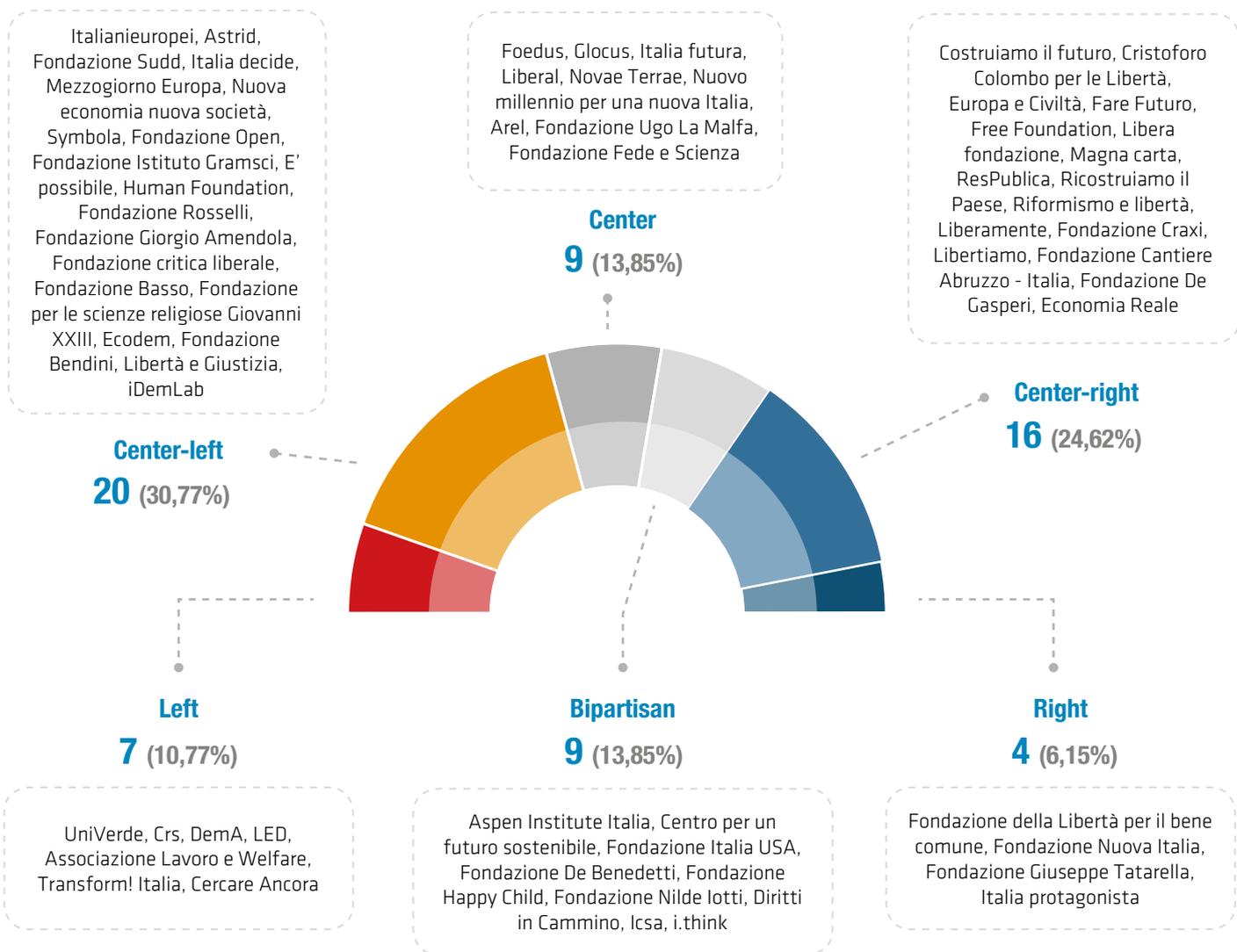
77% of think tanks analyzed were born in the last 15 years.

# POLITICAL ORIENTATION

By analyzing what they did and who was in them, we placed the think tanks in the political spectrum. 30.77%

of the organizations are close to the center-left, while 24.62% to the center-right. 13.85% of the think tanks are bipartisan, meaning that they are kept together not by a particular political ideology, but by a common battle or interest (for example think tanks concerned with health or national defence issues)

## The political orientation of the 65 think tanks



Think tanks mainly concern political areas of compromise (center-left, center-right or bipartisan) leaving more extreme factions (far right and far left parties) with only 11 think tanks.

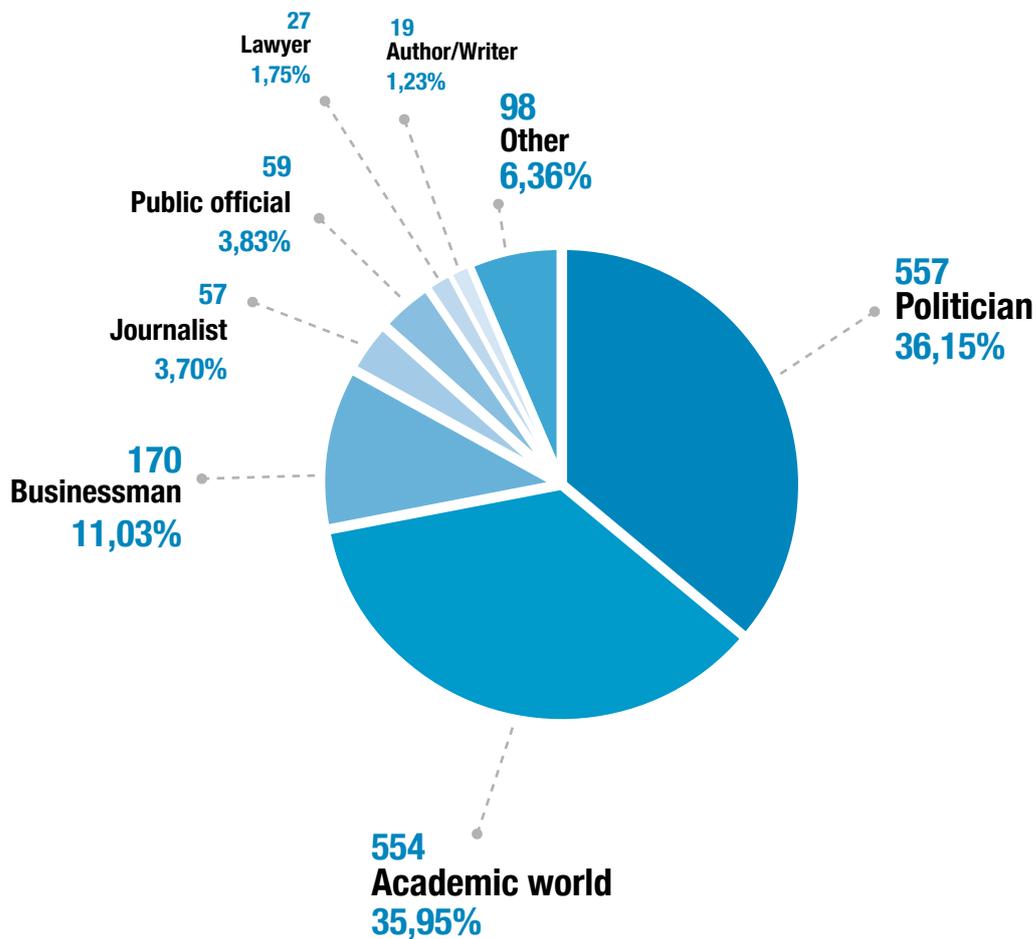
## OCCUPATION OF MEMBERS

Though these organization come to life with the main goal to do research, academia is not the biggest

component inside these think tanks. More than 1.800 members were recorded, and for 1.541 we were able to track down a specific occupation. 36.15% of them are politicians, and 35.95% come from the academic world.

### Think tank members and their occupation

The percentage is calculated on the 1.541 members for which we were able to track down a specific occupation



There are 554 members of the academic world in political think tanks

# THE NETWORK

## RELATIONS BETWEEN PEOPLE AND ORGANIZATION

What are the connections between these organizations? Because if we are talking about strong political actors, it becomes necessary to understand how they connect with one another. To understand the ties between the different organizations, we looked at the amount of members they share.

The analysis then took a qualitative route. Because one thing is to say that two specific organizations have three members in common, another is to discover that these members have management roles in both organizations. What we discovered is that these ties are not only numerically substantial, but also of high importance. Those that have a management role in a specific think tank, will most probably be treated the same way in others.

Furthermore, by looking at the four think tanks that have most connections with other organizations, we created four maps that show in a precise way how they are tied to them. This allowed us to discover a well organized network. These four organizations, for example, reach through its members 80% of the 43 organizations that have ties with other think tanks.

Ties that are made by people. Through our database we attempted to discover the most recurrent figures, and we found out that 20 different people have connection with three or more think tanks.

Another interesting element has to do with transparency. Though we are not talking about political parties, or public institutions where citizens have the right to know how money is spent, it is clear that the issue needs to be raised. Especially when, as in the case of the Vedrò Foundation and the Letta Government, the ties between government offices and political think tanks are evident. Our study shows that very few - not more than five - publish some sort of budget on their website.

**66%**  
**of think tanks**

have at least one member in another organization

**20 people**

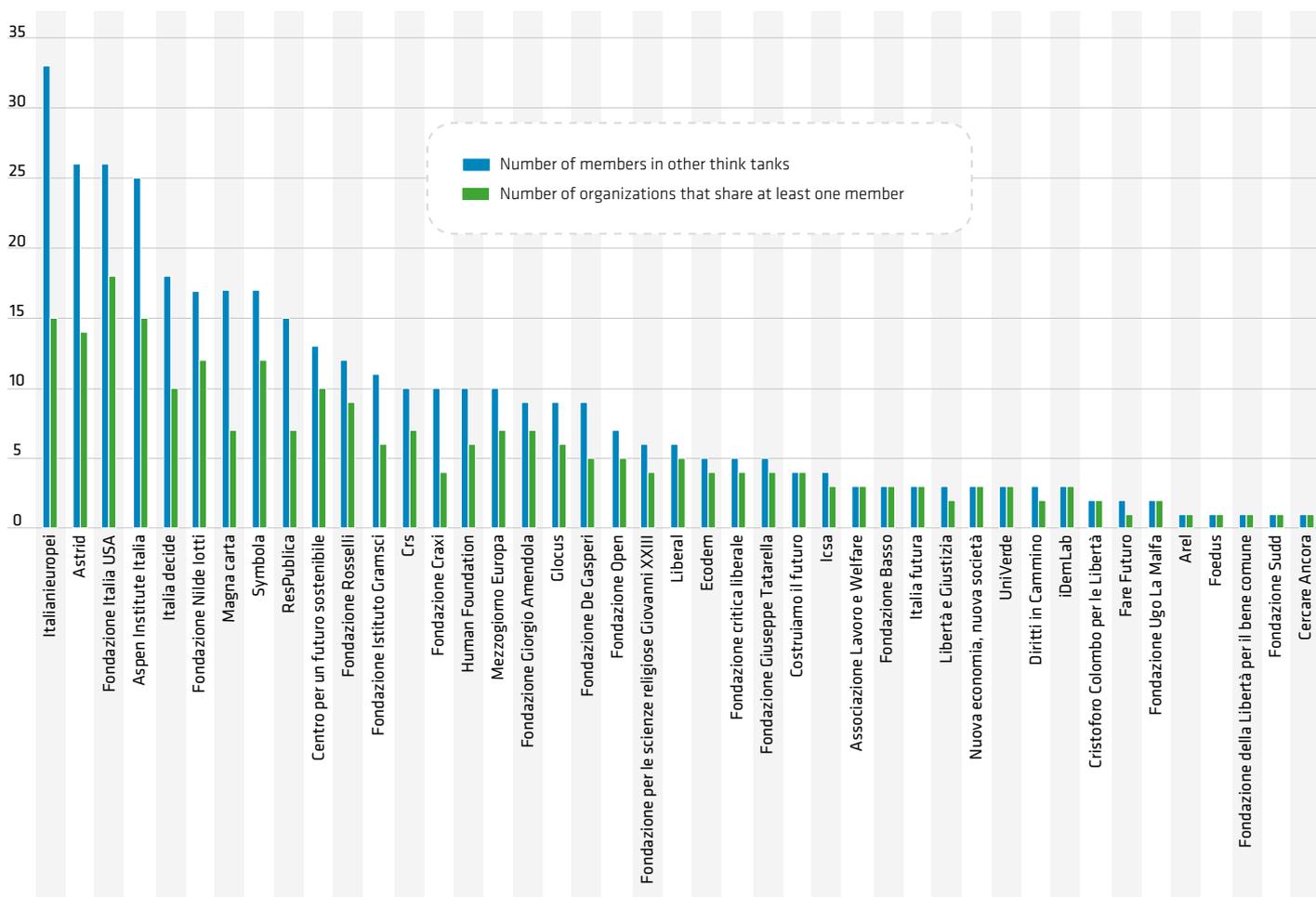
have a role in at least three think tanks

## THE TIES BETWEEN THINK TANKS

Of the 65 think tanks recorded, 43 (66%) have at least one member in one of the other organizations. We analyzed two types of connections for each think tank: on one side the number of members also in

other organizations, and on the other the amount of organizations that share at least one member. In the group of 43 think tanks, each one of them has an average of 9 members in other organizations, that allow for ties with at least 6 other think tanks. Italianieuropei has the most members in other organizations (33), and Fondazione Italia Usa has most connections with other think tanks (18).

### How many connections between the 65 think tanks



66% of think tanks have at least one member in another organization

# THE MAP OF CONNECTIONS

Four organizations appear to have an impressive amount of connections with other organizations: Italianieuropei, Astrid, Fondazione Italia Usa and Aspen. These four think tanks, with their network of connections, reach

80% of the 43 organizations that have some sort of bond with other think tanks. The people that make up these connections have variety of roles, that we organized in three groups: management roles, representative roles and research roles. What is important to point out is that often enough those individuals that are members of two or more organization, also have important roles in them.

## The network of think tanks

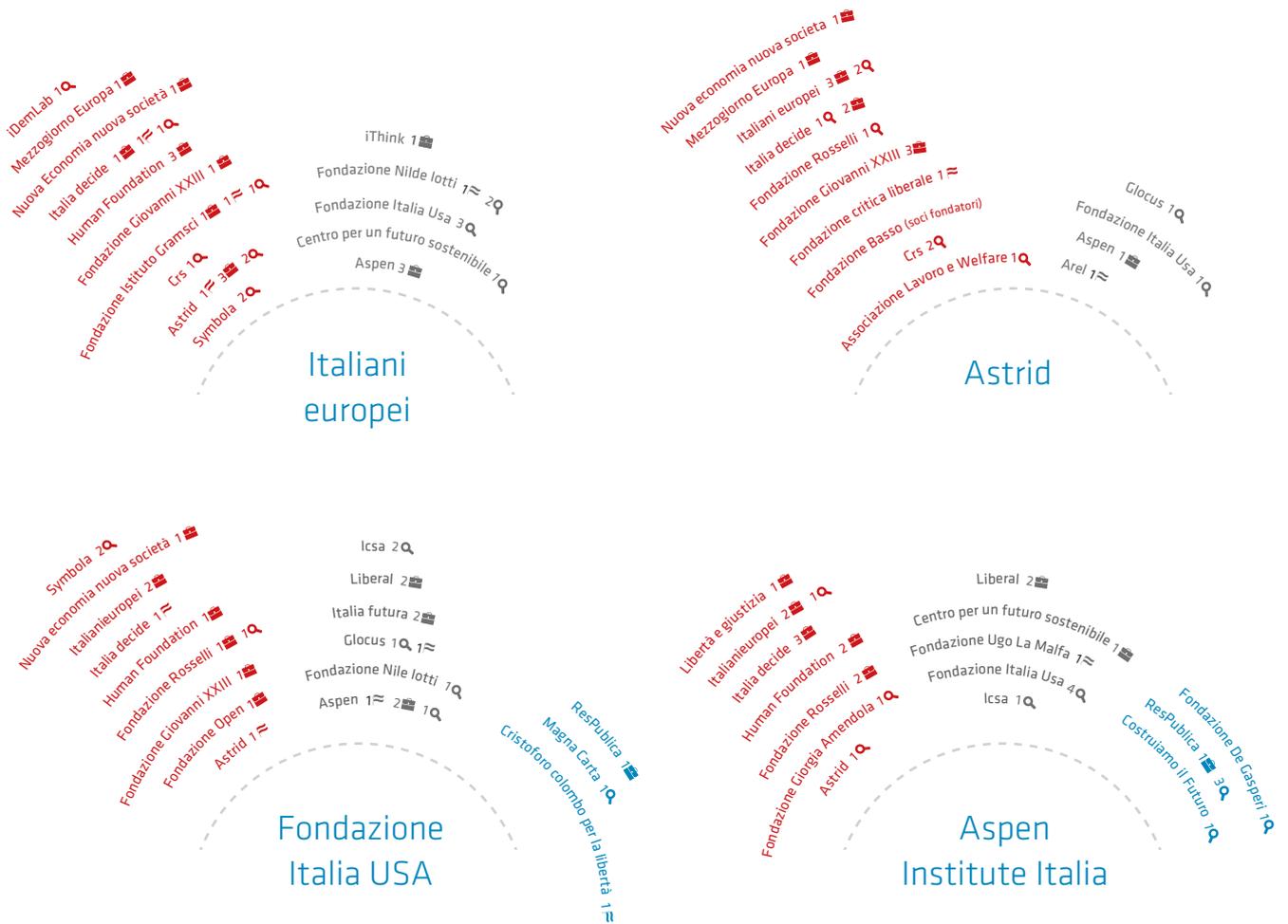
For each of the four think tanks we listed the organization that share at least one same member, specifying the role they have in them.

In **red** think tanks associated to the center-left, in **blue** to the center-right, and in **grey** those that are either bipartisan or from the center.

**Management roles:** executive positions, members of the board of directors and steering committees

**Representative roles:** presidents of the think tanks and honorary positions

**Research roles:** analysis and scientific roles, members of the scientific committees and those in charge of publishing



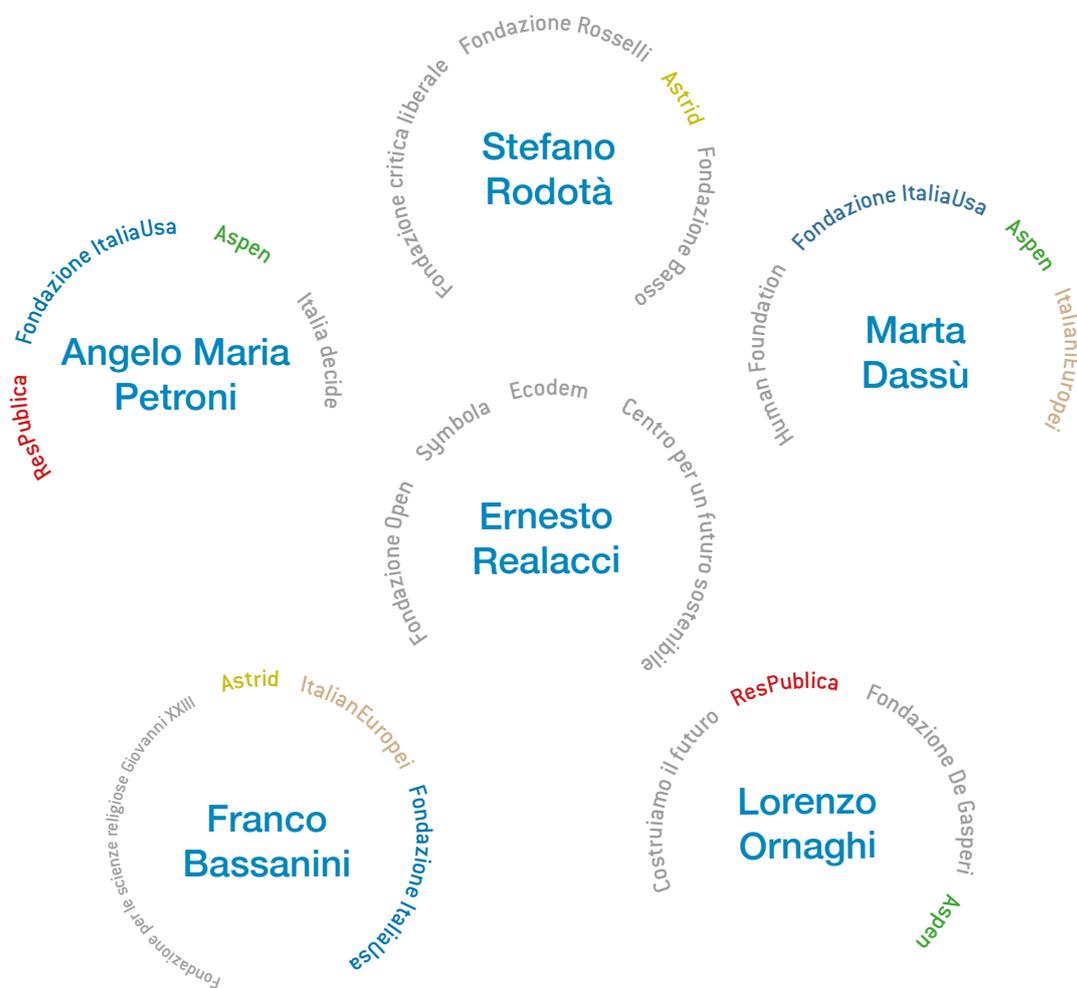
## MOST RECURRENT MEMBERS

By taking the complete list of the members of all think tanks we were able to spot out the most recurrent

names. In particular we noticed that 20 people have some sort of connection with at least three different think tanks. More specifically 6 of them have bonds to four different think tanks: Angela Maria Petroni, Ernesto Realacci, Franco Bassanini, Lorenzo Ornaghi, Marta Dassù e Stefano Rodotà.

### Most recurrent names in the 65 think tanks

Think tanks in grey only appear once, while the ones in color are recurrent

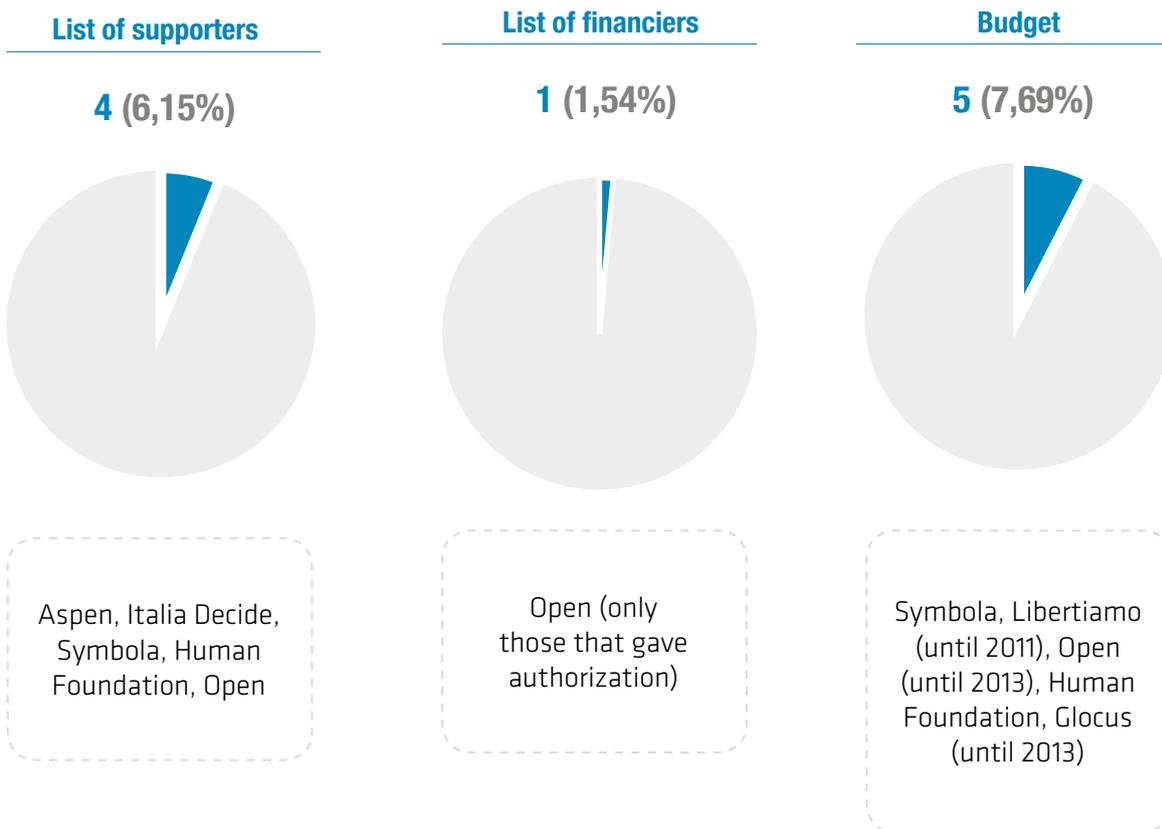


## TRANSPARENCY

Considering their growing political influence, it becomes necessary to understand the size of their economic power. Our research here was not very successful since very little information was available on the websites of the think tanks. The decision to not publish revenues and list of financiers is legitimate considering that we

are not talking about public institution, however we are dealing with organizations that have deep ties with our political system. While looking up information we discovered that only 5 organizations published some sort of budget on their website, and only two, Symbola and Human Foundation, have one updated to 2014.

### What do the 65 think tanks publish on their websites



Only one foundation, though with some limitation, published the list of financiers with the exact amount given, the Open Foundation.

## THE BIG NAMES

Our census began from those individuals that have been key for the growth of each organization. For each think

tank we identified the names of the people that are considered to be either the main actor in the creation of the organization, or that are currently the most important figure. In most cases we found this person to be a politician.

### The names behind the 65 think tanks

Organization	Name	Organization	Name
1 Arel	Francesco Merloni	34 Fondazione Open	Matteo Renzi
2 Aspen Institute Italia	Giulio Tremonti, Giuliano Amato	35 Fondazione Giovanni XXIII	Luigi Zanda
3 Associazione Lavoro e Welfare	Cesare Damiano	36 Fondazione Rosselli	Giuliano Amato
4 Astrid	Franco Bassanini	37 Fondazione Sudd	Antonio Bassolino
5 Centro per un futuro sostenibile	Francesco Rutelli	38 Fondazione Ugo La Malfa	Giorgio La Malfa
6 Cercare Ancora	Fausto Bertinotti	39 Free Foundation	Renato Brunetta
7 Costruiamo il futuro	Maurizio Lupi	40 Glocus	Linda Lanzillotta
8 Cristoforo Colombo per le Libertà	Claudio Scajola	41 Human Foundation	Giovanna Melandri
9 Crs	Mario Tronti	42 i.think	Ignazio Marino
10 DemA	Luigi De Magistris	43 Icsa	Paolo Naccarato
11 Diritti in Cammino	Mara Carfagna	44 IDem Lab	Salvatore Vassallo
12 E' possibile	Giuseppe Civati	45 Italia decide	Luciano Violante
13 Ecodem	Alessandro Bratti	46 Italia futura	Carlo Pontecorvo
14 Economia Reale	Mario Baldassarri	47 Italia protagonista	Maurizio Gasparri
15 Europa e Civiltà	Roberto Formigoni	48 Italianieuropei	Massimo D'Alema
16 Fare Futuro	Adolfo Urso	49 LED	Gennaro Migliore
17 Foedus	Mario Baccini	50 Libera fondazione	Giustina Destro
18 Fondazione Alcide De Gasperi	Angelino Alfano	51 Liberal	Ferdinando Adornato
19 Fondazione Basso	Stefano Rodotà	52 Liberamente	Mariastella Gelmini
20 Fondazione Bendini	Umberto d'Ottavio	53 Libertà e Giustizia	Sandra Bonsanti
21 Fondazione Cantiere Abruzzo - Italia	Fabrizio Di Stefano	54 Libertiamo	Benedetto Della Vedova
22 Fondazione Craxi	Stefania Craxi	55 Magna carta	Gaetano Quagliariello
23 Fondazione critica liberale	Stefano Rodotà	56 Mezzogiorno Europa	Umberto Ranieri
24 Fondazione De Benedetti	Carlo De Benedetti	57 Novae Terrae	Luca Volontè
25 Fondazione della Libertà...	Altero Matteoli	58 Nuova economia, nuova società	Pierluigi Bersani
26 Fondazione Fede e Scienza	Rocco Buttiglione	59 Nuovo millennio per una nuova Italia	Pellegrino Capaldo
27 Fondazione Giorgio Amendola	Sergio Chiamparino	60 ResPublica	Giulio Tremonti
28 Fondazione Giuseppe Tatarella	Salvatore Tatarella	61 Ricostruiamo il Paese	Flavio Tosi
29 Fondazione Happy Child	Paola Binetti	62 Riformismo e libertà	Fabrizio Cicchitto
30 Fondazione Istituto Gramsci	Giuseppe Vacca	63 Symbola	Ermete Realacci
31 Fondazione Italia USA	Barbara Contini	64 Transform! Italia	/
32 Fondazione Nilde Iotti	Livia Turco, Susanna Cenni	65 UniVerde	Alfonso Pecoraro Scanio
33 Fondazione Nuova Italia	Gianni Alemanno		

# CREDITS

## Openpolis network: platforms for those that ask questions

### Voisietequi.it

#### What do parties think?

For every single election we select the most important themes of the political campaign and ask parties to say their opinion on them (in favor/ against). citizens after having answered the same questions, have the possibility to find out which political party is closer to their position.

### Openpolitici.it

#### Who are the italian politicians?

the biggest and most up to date database on italian politicians. over 250.000 personalized pages with biography, political career, and timeline of past institutional postings for each elected representative for each institutional level: local municipalities, Regions, National and European Parliament.

### Openparlamento.it

#### What do politicians elected in parliament do?

Daily analyses on what happens in the chamber of Deputies and in the italian Senate. It is possible to monitor single MPs, specific subjects and single bills. We created various indicators useful to understand the differences between each MP in order to better value their work.

### Openmunicipio.it

#### What do elected municipal politicians do?

local municipalities can decide to take part in this project by "opening" their public data, and by making the doings of the town council more transparent and accessible. Each presented act, bill and motion is immediately published online to allow an open discussion with citizens. For this purpose, each document is analyzed, categorized and geo-localized.

### Openbilanci.it

#### Who do mayors spend local money?

We published the budgets of the past 10 years of over 8000 municipalities. Besides specific details for each local administration, comparisons, rankings and indicators allow users to have a better understanding of data and numbers at times complicated to understand.

**Openpolis** is a watchdog working for making italian politics more transparent. It is completely independent and does not receive any kind of funding from parties, politicians and associations and foundations to them connect. It has created and manages an online network that allows citizens to receive free and adless information based on data.

It constantly carries out research on e-democracy, e-gov, opendata and data journalism. It is one of the founding partners of the **Pan European e Participation Network** (PEP-NET), recognized and financed by the European Union, and it represents Italy in the **Parliamentary Monitoring Organizations** (PMO's).

Openpolis publishes a series called **"MiniDossier"**. Through a data journalism approach its goal is to verify, analyze and compare data from different official sources in order to suggest different point of views and tell different stories. On important issues and topics, such as politics and local finance, documented indexes and innovative indicators are created.

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