



ANGELICVM

ROMA

PONTIFICIA UNIVERSITÀ S. TOMMASO D'AQUINO

ITALY VIEWED THROUGH THE LENS OF OFFICIAL STATISTICS: A COUNTRY OF ICE CREAM SELLERS AND PIZZA COOKS, OR SOMETHING ELSE?

November 30, 2023

16:30-19:00

Pontificia Università San Tommaso d'Aquino
Facoltà di Scienze Sociali
Largo Angelicum 1, Roma
Aula XI

- 16.30 Welcome and introduction
16.40 Lectio Magistralis of Stefano Menghinello
17.20 Respondents:
Cristiano Colombi (*Professor in the Faculty of Social Sciences*)
Philip Neri Rees, OP (*Professor in the Faculty of Philosophy*) -TBC
Roberto Bongianini, OFM (*Professor in the Faculty of Social Sciences*) -TBC
17.50 Reply from Stefano Menghinello
18.00 Discussion with the audience
18.30 Conclusions and aperitif



Dr Stefano MENGHINELLO

Born in 1969 in Fano (Italy). Degree in economics and social sciences at the University "L. Bocconi" in Milan and PhD in industrial economics and international business at the University of Birmingham, United Kingdom. From 1994 to 1998 he worked as research assistant at the University of Ancona, Department of economics, and at the University of Florence-Irpet. Since 1998, he has been working at the National Institute for official statistics in Rome, covering several positions. In particular, he held the position of Director of business statistics, Director of data collection, Head of Division of Foreign Trade and multinational enterprises statistics. He is currently the Director of economic analysis and PNRR data needs. He also held the position of Chair of the OECD Working Group on the Globalisation of the industry and he is currently the Chair

of the United Nations Committee of Experts on Business and Trade Statistics. In the meanwhile, he has been teaching economics (Circular Economy) at Faculty of civil and industrial engineering of University "La Sapienza" in Rome. Since May 2023, he has been appointed as visiting professor for the second semester of A.A. 2023-2024 at the Pontifical University of Saint Thomas Aquinas – Angelicum for a seminar module.

Mobile: +39 347 7032502, Email: menghine@istat.it.

Abstract

The aim of this lecture is twofold. First, it offers to the students of this University, and especially to foreign students, an objective point of view on Italy. Italy is considered by many as one of the most admired and, at the same time, less easy to understand country in the world. Since official statistics is based on numbers, it cannot capture the beauty and the spirit of a country, such as values, faith, and moral strength. The point of view provided by official statistics is nevertheless important. National Statistical Offices (NSOs) operate independently from the government and produce statistical data according to high quality international standards. Therefore, figures based on official statistics from different domains - economics, social, demography, and environment - are fully comparable across countries. Are small and family businesses located only in Italy? Are ice cream and pizza the most relevant industries in Italy? Is the crime rate in Italy the highest in Eu? Those are the kind of questions that can be answered with official data. Every year, ISTAT, the Italian NSO publishes a Report on the State of the Nation that highlights the persistent characteristics as well as the emerging phenomena of Italy. Some insights from the last edition are the following: the high number of hours worked per person as compared to other EU countries; the demographic decline is a common trend in EU countries but it is more severe in Italy; Italian medium size enterprises perform better than the German ones; and the high rate of dispersion in the network of clean water distribution.

Second, it focuses on the growing importance of data in nowadays society. On one side, data present, together with values, a very powerful tool to contrast uncertainty and the emotional aptitude that dominate the public opinion and, sometimes, the decisions taken by policy makers. On the other side, the misleading use of data can lead to uninformed and potentially bias choices with a negative impact on the individual person and the society as a whole. Some key questions on this respect are the following: what people think about their own country is consistent with official data? Can data be considered as a source of knowledge to be fully trusted? Are faith and values directly or indirectly measurable? The lecture will provide some concrete examples and stimulate some reflections. The answers to these quite complex questions are not easy since they lie at the frontier of several academic disciplines. In the opinion of the presenter, an integrated and cross-fertilised approach across different disciplines is needed to consistently reply to them. The scholars and students of the University of Saint Thomas Aquinas can provide a relevant contribution to those topics given its unique spiritual and scientific academic environment.
