

# ResetDOC

## Annual Report 2019

### OVERALL EVOLUTION

At a structural level, the key novelty of 2019 for ResetDoc was the strengthening of its American-related structure. Whereas our association has ensured recognition as a 501(c)(3) organization in the US since many years, the past year saw indeed the realization of a significant step forward. We received for the first time a substantial support of \$200.000 for the next two years (2020-21) from the Carnegie Corporation, specifically addressed to strengthen our US-based structure. That has allowed us to proceed in the shaping of the American structure, which comes to be known as Reset Dialogues US, as well as to consolidate the role of prof. Jonathan Laurence (Boston College) as managing director of ResetDoc and executive director of Reset Dialogues. We could thus bring the legal seat of the latter to Boston, Massachusetts, and hire a part-time executive assistant, Ms. Amara Donovan.

A significant achievement of last year was also the securing of a \$100.000 grant from the Henry Luce foundation aimed at supporting the launch of the second edition of the Casablanca Seminars and Summer School (see below). That has allowed for the reduction of the amount of funding from ResetDoc on projects. A similar contribution is expected in 2020 to support the Carthage Seminars project (see last section).

On the European side, ResetDoc was able to strengthen its structure at its Milan headquarters: the leaving of the former events and communications officer and the maternity leave (from September) of the projects coordinator (Mrs. Chiara Galbersanini) was compensated by the enrollment of three new resources, covering the main different areas of ResetDoc's work: Mr. Simone Disegni as editorial coordinator; Mr. Marco Lucidi as web and communication manager; Ms. Sofia De Benedictis (from mid-year) as events manager.

At an operational level, such structural consolidation has allowed ResetDoc to strengthen and broaden its mission of fostering dialogue, education and high-level scientific insight on cultural, political and religious pluralism through a growing number of activities.

This included in particular conferences, seminars, summer schools, online and off-line publications.

Overall, in the past year ResetDoc organized cultural and scientific gatherings across four different countries, bringing together some 800 people. A detailed list of such events can be found below. Following is a brief summary of the activities realized.

### CONFERENCES

Winter 2019 saw the completing of a successful cycle of conferences on the "Illiberal Trend" spanning across the world in Milan, in cooperation with the University of Milan: the last two invited lecturers in January and February were prof. Mark Lilla and prof. Chiara Saraceno.

Two other conferences marked the engagement of ResetDoc and Reset Dialogues to foster scientific debate on such topic in the US: a one-day event at the Italian Academy of Columbia University in New York in March (*The Trap of Polarization and the Erosion of Democratic Discourse*) featuring a number of high-level speakers; and a two-day academic conference on *Resetting Liberalism* held in November in Williamsburg in cooperation with the College of William & Mary.

The challenges ahead for democracies, especially in contexts of economic degradation, were also at the center of an international conference organized in Tunis in September, in cooperation with the Arab Center for Research and Policy Studies (*The resilience of democracy in a troubling economy*).

The engagement of ResetDoc on fostering scientific insight into cultural pluralism was instead at the center of a three-days academic conference co-promoted with the Princeton University on *Comparative Secularism – Religious Liberty in the Public Sphere* (April).

## SEMINARS / SUMMER SCHOOLS

Building on the experience of previous years, in 2019 ResetDoc also promoted a new edition of its two main “longer-run” scientific events, the Venice Seminars (May) and the Casablanca Seminars (July). Whereas the latter stretches on a markedly longer timeframe, both events present a similar structure, featuring a Summer School for a restricted number of selected international students + a closing scientific conference open to the wider audience.

Last year’s themes of enquiry and debate were, specifically, *Sources of Democracy: Citizenship, Social Cohesion and Ethical Values* for the Venice Seminars; *Tolerance in Mediterranean Societies – History, Ideas and Institutions* for the Casablanca Seminars.

## MAGAZINE

The organization’s website [www.resetdoc.org](http://www.resetdoc.org) continues to also host a lively online magazine featuring high-level contributions at the crossroad between scientific production and journalistic coverage of topics and issues related to the core values cherished by ResetDoc: tolerance, pluralism, cross-cultural dialogue, the quality and threats to democracy at a global scale.

## MONOGRAPHS

Three scientific publications based on the work of the association were published over the course of 2019: the proceedings of 2018 Venice Seminars in the prestigious *Philosophy & Social Criticism* journal; an edited volume on the dimensions and challenges of Russian liberalism; a monograph on the migratory-demographic challenge in Europe-Africa relation (see below).

## **DETAILED PUBLICATIONS LIST**

- Ferrara, V. Kaul, D. Rasmussen (eds.), "Fountainheads of Toleration - Forms of Pluralism in Empires, Republics, Democracies", Special Issue: Venice Seminars 2018, *Philosophy and Social Criticism*, vol. 45, 2019
- R. M. Cucciolla (ed.), "Dimensions and Challenges of Russian Liberalism", Springer, 2019
- S. Torelli (ed.), "The Great Mediterranean Challenge", ResetDoc Monographs, 2019

## **OTHER OUTPUTS**

Through our constant flow of activities, as well as articles and publications, we increased the public which follows our initiatives and gets our contents and reflection proposals: both our newsletter and our Facebook page now reach out to over 3.000 people, while our Twitter account is followed by some 1.300 users. In 2019 a dedicated LinkedIn page was also created.

Our most prominent events were featured in a number of widely read media, in Italy and elsewhere:

- Our first event of the year, Mark Lilla's conference in Milan, was signaled and preceded by an intervention by the American author on *La Repubblica* anticipating the topics of his lecture;
- Our Venice Seminars in May were signaled and anticipated through a page-wide interview to Prof. Yael Tamir by our editorial coordinator Simone Disegni on *La Repubblica*;
- Our international conference on *The Resilience of Democracy* in Tunis in September was covered by a number of newspapers: Tunisia's *La Presse* and *Il Corriere di Tunisi*, Italy's *La Stampa* and *Avvenire*;
- ResetDoc's organizational credibility has also kept benefiting from the media exposure of its two main executive figures: chairman Giancarlo Bosetti, whose articles regularly appeared on *La Repubblica* and *Robinson* and whose latest book was featured on the main Italian newspapers; and executive director Jonathan Laurence, who in the last year was featured on renowned international media such as *Le Monde* and *The Economist*.

## MAIN PLANNED INITIATIVES FOR 2020

*11 March 2020*

### **The Divided Society**

PRESENTATION & ROUNDTABLE

The Italian Academy at Columbia University, New York

The event will consist of a presentation of our work on cultural pluralism and political liberties as well as a lecture on the issue of the divided society and a round table tentatively titled *Rediscovering Common Ground: Is It Possible?* Invited guests include Ian Buruma, Mark Lilla, Michael Walzer, Sheri Berman, Giuliano Amato and others.

*3-4 April 2020*

### ***Toleration in Comparative Perspective: Concepts, Practices and Documents***

CONFERENCE – University of California, Berkeley

There are various definitions of toleration. This workshop has adopted the concept of "toleration," as it is the most capacious one that we can use. Toleration refers to the practice of allowing those defined by difference to coexist without serious existential threat and it applies to the historical examples under consideration and some contemporary ones. While toleration reflects the practices of public authorities to ensure that groups defined by difference can coexist and that difference is endured, it also is used as tolerance in the contemporary understanding as an attitude, an ideological and cultural stance that reflects a positive view on diverse beliefs and communities. This workshop will encompass both definitions in order to be as inclusive as possible. Furthermore, the workshop and the volume will explore how these attitudes and cultural positions relate to the practice of public authorities.

*25 – 27 May 2020 Venice Summer School*

*28 – 30 May 2020 Venice Seminars*

### ***Communities and the Individual: Democracy's Building Blocks***

SUMMER SCHOOL + SEMINARS – Ca' Foscari University of Venice

The Venice Summer School will be held from the 25th to the 27th of May, and as usual, will be followed by the Seminars. This year, all events will be held at Ca' Foscari University. Venice Seminars 2020 aim to concentrate the discussion on the very notion and nature of community, asking to what extent the dichotomy

between community and individuals is irreconcilable and what the repercussions on the democratic process are.

*29 June – 10 July 2020 Carthage Summer School*

*2-4 July 2020 Carthage Seminars*

***Cultural Pluralism and Political Liberties***

SUMMER SCHOOL + SEMINARS – Beit Al Hikma, Carthage

The Carthage School and Seminars will create a forum for in-depth and critical analysis of the relations between religion, history and political dynamics in European and Mediterranean societies. Participants will engage in a thorough review of legal and constitutional perspectives. The program will bring together top-tier academics from the Middle East and North Africa, the US, and Europe, alongside young scholars and international pool of young professionals and opinion leaders from the fields of education, journalism, and social media who have the abilities and potential to reach and engage with a wide public, to discuss vibrant issues of regional and world-scale importance.

*September 2020 (date TBD)*

**Global Challenges to Liberal Thought: A Comparative Perspective on Populist and Authoritarian Trends**

CONFERENCE – Václav Havel Library, Prague

From West to East, the spread of populist and authoritarian regimes is challenging the liberal order and undermining its core values. What are the roots of this phenomenon? And how can they be addressed? At the heart of Europe, a continent divided between the centuries-long aspiration to liberty and democracy and the recent nationalist, illiberal surge, Prague's Václav Havel Library will serve as the ideal venue to confront theories and interpretations of liberalism. This conference initially planned for January 2020 is expected to be held in September after being postponed due to several unexpected defections by invited speakers.

*October 2020 (date TBD)*

***Getting to Reconciliation: A Comparative Perspective***

WORKSHOP – Faculty of Islamic Studies Faculty, University of Sarajevo

This workshop will engage reconciliation in secular conflicts as well as secular humanist approaches, including philosophy and ethics. Thus, scholars may appeal to sacred texts in Abrahamic traditions and beyond or to the legacies of Gandhi and Mandela. The cases to be examined may include "classic" cases of internal reconciliation like Northern Ireland, South Africa, or the European Union, but the focus goes beyond situations of post-conflict resolution.