

**INTERNATIONAL CONGRESS
FOR STUDENTS AND YOUNG PROFESSIONALS**

Law in search of Justice
“Giovani giuristi in dialogo”

*Adriana Cosseddu
Business Criminal Law
Sassari University*

By way of introduction just a few words about my own background. I teach at the university and in the more specialized program for the legal profession. My daily life and workplace bring me into contact with youth and students, through which I have come to appreciate their profound questions about the search for a more truthful understanding of law and legal practice, which goes beyond books and codes, to penetrate how law is practiced in today's society. In fact law cannot be just a “technique” or a “tool” if it is to join norms with experience and if it is to express something that informs all relationships.

Considering the classical definition of justice – “to give to each his or her own” – is it so removed from law, which now seems to be so malleable? Traditionally, law has been perceived as a vehicle to settle conflicts, to divide what is mine from what is yours, to define spaces of inclusion and exclusion. At the same time, constitutions, declarations, and charters for human rights cry out for a more robust understanding of justice.

What might be the role of law in reducing the distance that often emerges when we categorize the ‘other’ as stranger, poor, or foreigner? Can the law help us to go beyond the perception of the ‘other’ as impeding my own fulfillment toward recognition of equal dignity? When we discuss the concept of legality and respect for law, can we begin to imagine society as a place where duties are fulfilled and the common good is the consequence of an effort to go beyond individual interests?

This vision will certainly encounter obstacles. For example the economic rules of the market, its gains, consumption, and the reality of globalization present us with formidable challenges. Similarly, national borders are becoming increasingly permeable, inviting complex exchange and dialogue between persons and peoples. Against this backdrop, another phenomenon is emerging: economic freedom – which does not necessarily entail equal opportunity - has increased the gulf between rich and poor.

Profit, a legitimate goal, is often pursued through illegal means, leading to an increase of both crime and regulation. This intense focus on economic freedom can cause us to lose sight of the common good and to disregard work as the first resource and as a path to fulfillment of humankind. At times we seem to be searching in vain for the resources not only to resolve conflicts but also to generate a spirit of family among persons and people, which is mentioned in the Universal Declaration of Rights of Man. Furthermore, law in its regulatory function risks devolution into a mere production of norms which are distant from common experience.

This is the social reality that permeates the various themes chosen by the participants in this congress from different countries. Prior to the congress youth from Rome, Italy, Europe, Brazil, and the United States met in small groups to design workshops for us to discuss the role of law in addressing these various challenges. Here are your options:

- From Italy: “Democracy and Rights: National Legal Systems and European Union.”
- From Milan: “Law between Values and Legal Expertise” will explore the person as a value for her/himself and for the others taking the challenge of bioethics as a concrete example and will also discuss constitutional principles and the challenges of bioethics.
- From the United States: “Love of Neighbor as a Lawyerly Practice” focuses on the concrete dimension of the legal profession and the question of whether the principle of love of neighbor can inform how I interact with my client and opposing counsel.
- From Spain: “Reaching Justice through Dialogue” will explore how openness to the other may become an experience of justice that leads to justice.
- From Campania and Puglia (Italy): “Human Relationships and Regulatory Models: Organized Crime and Alternatives” reflects on the suffering which has marred their communities. In response to the problems of organizations that create inequality, imbalance, and leave room only for deviance and crime, they propose a horizontal model oriented toward building relationships and formulating common rules.
- From Sicily: “Protection of Rights and Process” explores fundamental questions of professional ethics that judges and lawyers face, particularly in their relationships with the clients.
- From Austria: “Migration and Justice” considers various solutions to the numerous challenges in this field.
- From Brazil: “Social Justice and Fraternity” explores social inequality, conflict, and the recognition of rights. It proposes fraternity as a principle which can highlight the ‘presence of the other’ and relationships which foster attention to duties and responsibilities. They take law of childhood and adolescence as a case study.

Workshop leaders will now present their content and methods and you will then be invited to choose one based on your preference of language and theme. While we will be divided into smaller groups, we remain united by the same commitment to look for answers to shared problems and, above all, to explore solutions in the light of our core theme of justice.