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Conference Report: The First Conference of the Società Italiana per la Ricerca nel diritto Comparato (SIRD) on ‘The New Frontiers of Comparative Law’ held in Milano

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The first Conference of the Società Italiana per la Ricerca nel diritto Comparato (SIRD) on ‘The New Frontiers of Comparative Law’ was held at the Università Statale di Milano on the 5th, 6th, and 7th days of May 2011, under the auspices of the Accademia dei Lincei. The purpose of the conference was to single out and to discuss promising themes for research in the field of comparative law by Italian scholars.

SIRD is the acronym of the *Società Italiana per la Ricerca nel Diritto Comparato* (www.sirdcomp.it), the new scientific society established by a group of Italian comparative law scholars in September 2010. The purpose of the SIRD is to advance research in comparative law and to encourage exchanges among scholars working in the same field. According to its by-laws, SIRD promotes the diffusion of the Italian comparative research and the worldwide circulation of new ideas, by way of congresses, courses, translations of Italian and foreign works, grants, and support to its members.

Founded by several distinguished Italian scholars (among them, to cite a few, Rodolfo Sacco, Antonio Gambaro, Guido Alpa, Giovanni Conso, Michele Graziadei, Alessandro Pizzorusso, and Gustavo Zagrebelsky), SIRD has recently been appointed as the National Committee of the International Association of Legal Science and now counts more than 200 active members.

Actually, ‘active’ is the right adjective to refer to the SIRD and to the spirit of its founders and its members.

The role of comparative law in Italian universities is remarkable: Italian universities are the home of around 200 chairs in comparative law, and the subject is compulsory in every law degree programme. Italian scholars have often been praised by the international academic community for their contributions to the development of comparative law studies and their inspiring research. We can mention in this respect the work done in the field of legal anthropology and the research carried out with respect to African, Chinese, Indian, and Far Eastern legal systems. The most recent developments in comparative law studies in Italy deal with the theoretical problems of legal translation, legal ontologies, and the use of cognitive sciences in comparative legal research.

This enthusiasm recently flowed into the SIRD, and its first congress, devoted to the ‘The New Frontiers of Comparative Law’, witnessed the renewal of this vibrant spirit.

As mentioned above, the aim of the conference was to convene Italian comparative law scholars to explore upcoming and promising fields of research. With this purpose in mind, the conference organizers presented a large selection of topics to the audience.

On the first day, Antonio Gambaro (University of Milano) addressed the methodological problems raised by recourse to quantitative methods and indicators to measure

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that laws and legal institutions achieve. Mario Serio (University of Palermo) unveiled the structure and the use of general categories in civil law and common law systems. Vittoria Barsotti (University of Florence) provided a lively picture of the interactions between Parliaments, Constitutional, and supranational courts.

The following day, Felice Casucci (University of Sannio) explored the pluralistic dimensions of European law. Gabriele Crespi Reghizzi (University of Pavia) brought the public to consider the many fascinating problems raised by comparisons involving the legal systems of the Far East and Africa. Michele Graziadei (University of Torino) reported vividly on the difficulties and achievements of the Italian scholars involved in the codification of European private law.

In the afternoon of the same day, Barbara Pozzo (University of Insubria) brilliantly discussed the past and the future of legal translation, and Raffaele Caterina (University of Torino) captured the attention of the audience with a learned account of the deepness of cryptotypes.

The last day of the conference covered themes ranging from the structure of religious legal systems to the place of comparative law in the area of public law. Roberto Mazzola (University of Piemonte orientale) presented his reflections on the relationship between soteriology and law by discussing religious systems of law. Claudio Sacchetto (University of Torino) surveyed the landscape of comparative fiscal law, its old pitfalls, and its new frontiers. Roberto Scarciglia (University of Trieste) made the case for the development of a cognitive approach to constitutional justice.

During each session, many interventions – both announced in the programme and from the floor – enriched the debate, offering a fuller picture of what comparative lawyers think about the themes discussed during the conference.

Undisputedly, the first Conference of the SIRD was an excellent occasion to exchange ideas and proposals among its participants. But, above all, it was an invaluable source of inspiration about new avenues in comparative law research. This initiative offered to all its participants the opportunity to discover and to deepen the knowledge of what comparative law research has achieved in several subject areas on themes representing the frontiers of the discipline.

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