

# infosannio.com

A populist-leaning Italian website that republishes political news, opinion, and unlabeled press releases without distinguishing between them.



**Proceed with caution: This website severely violates basic journalistic standards.**

**Score: 39.5/100**

## Ownership and Financing

Infosannio.com does not disclose its ownership. However, Raffaele Pengue, a former politician and the owner of an event planning company based in Benevento, told NewsGuard in a 2019 telephone interview that he owns the website.

Pengue told NewsGuard that the site does not run advertising, but told NewsGuard in 2019, that he is planning to add it in the future. Pengue did not disclose how the site generates revenue.

- ✓ Does not repeatedly publish false content (22points)
- ✗ Gathers and presents information responsibly (18)
- ✗ Regularly corrects or clarifies errors (12.5)
- ✗ Handles the difference between news and opinion responsibly (12.5)
- ✓ Avoids deceptive headlines (10)
- ✗ Website discloses ownership and financing (7.5)
- Clearly labels advertising (7.5)
- ✗ Reveals who's in charge, including any possible conflicts of interest (5)
- ✗ The site provides names of content creators, along with either contact or biographical information (5)

## Content

Infosannio describes itself under its logo as “the antidote to the singular worldview” (“L’antidoto al pensiero unico”).

The site primarily republishes articles on national politics from other Italian news organizations and blogs, particularly articles that favor Italy’s Five Star Movement. Articles are generally published in a rolling news feed, with the newest articles at the top of the homepage.

Content is sorted into approximately 100 categories, including Politics (Politica), Economy (Economia), Europe (Europa), Church (Chiesa), Mafia, Immigration (Immigrazione), and Investigations (Inchieste). The site also covers local news in Benevento and Caserta.

Typical headlines have included “The ghost of the future Christmas” (“Il fantasma del Natale futuro”); “Whoever has doubts is a denier and mentally ill. Are we slipping into a regime?” (“Chi ha dubbi è negazionista e malato mentale. Stiamo scivolando in un regime?”); and “Expansive Italian politicians. They are the highest paid in Europe” (“Carissimi onorevoli italiani. Sono i più pagati d’Europa”).

The website frequently republishes press releases in its news feed. The site invites users to “Click and send your press release” at the top of the homepage.

*Criteria are listed in order of importance.*

[More information.](#)

Pengue told NewsGuard that the website does not take payments to publish the press releases, and will read them before publication and vet them for accuracy.

## Credibility

Infosannio republishes articles from a mix of reliable news organizations, such as Il Fatto Quotidiano, La Stampa, and ANSA, as well as conservative websites that NewsGuard has found to have published misleading content, such as Libero Quotidiano, La Verità, and Il Giornale.

Headlines are often rewritten from original stories to add opinion, but generally reflect articles' content.

NewsGuard found one Infannio story that published misleading information about the COVID-19 virus. A September 2020 article titled "Chinese virologist Li-Meng Yan: 'Coronavirus was created in a laboratory in Wuhan'" ("La virologa cinese Li-Meng Yan: 'Il coronavirus è stato creato in laboratorio a Wuhan'") claimed that the virus "was engineered in the Wuhan laboratories and then escaped the lab, triggering the pandemic" ("nato nei laboratori di Wuhan da dove poi è uscito scatenando la pandemia").

The claim that the coronavirus was engineered and leaked from a military lab in Wuhan, China, where the virus first emerged, has been debunked by biologists, fact-checkers, and major health organizations. A March 2020 study published in the journal Nature Medicine concluded that the virus "is not a laboratory construct or a purposefully manipulated virus." An earlier study, published in February 2020 in the journal Nature, found that the COVID-19 virus is "96 percent identical at the whole-genome level to a bat coronavirus." In an April 2020 statement, the U.S. intelligence community said it "concur[s] with the wide scientific consensus that the COVID-19 virus was not manmade or genetically modified."

Infosannio regularly republishes press releases that it labels as either News or Italy. The press releases appear alongside news and opinion stories and are attributed to "Infosannio".

For example, a November 2020 story titled "Benevento: coronavirus emergency into ASIA, the clarifications of UilTrasporti" ("Benevento: emergenza coronavirus all'Asia, i chiarimenti della UilTrasporti") was labeled as news. However, the story was a republished statement

from the Italian union Uil about a controversy at an environmental health agency in Benevento. “Uil Trasporti, the most representative union inside ASIA, is forced to intervene, having read the extremely imaginative accusation made by another trade union that seeks to increase its narrow corporate representation by creating unnecessary alarmism among employees and towards the public opinion,” the article said. (“La Uil Trasporti Av/Bn, la sigla sindacale più rappresentativa in ASIA, è costretta ad intervenire avendo letto l’accusa quanto mai fantasiosa mossa da un sindacato che cerca di accrescere la sua risicata rappresentatività aziendale creando inutili allarmismi tra i dipendenti e verso l’opinione pubblica. Accuse imprecise ed infondate”).

A September 2019 story titled “M5S, Cammarano: ‘Burning Battipaglia, immediately extraordinary measures to save the Piana del Sele’,” (“M5S, Cammarano: ‘Rogo a Battipaglia, subito misure straordinarie per salvare la Piana del Sele’”), was labeled as a news story, but was instead a republished press release featuring a statement by Five Star Movement Regional Councilor Michele Cammarano about environmental damage caused by a tire processing depot fire. The article, quoting Cammarano, says the movement met with Italy’s environmental minister, who “immediately responded to our requests ... We need to create a network to restore dignity and clean air to the people of the Piana del Sele.” The article includes a reference to a “press office” at the end, although it is not clear whom the office represents.

Another September 2019 article, “Benevento: Prefect’s response to the CONAPO request, on the need to strengthen the supervision of the Casalduni site,” (“Benevento: risposta del Prefetto alla richiesta CONAPO, sulla necessita di rafforzare la vigilanza del sito di Casalduni”), also labeled as news, republishes a statement from the local firefighters’ union about a request to increase staffing in an area. The article does not carry a byline and is not identified as a press release.

Because Infosannio regularly publishes press releases by politicians and businesses alongside news stories, without attributing them or distinguishing them from

news, NewsGuard has determined that the website does not meet its standard for gathering and presenting information responsibly.

Asked about the unlabeled content, Pengue told NewsGuard in a telephone interview that the site is working on a change that would clearly label the press releases. As of November 2020, the website was still publishing press releases that were labeled as news.

Infosannio does not articulate a correction policy. Asked if the site publishes corrections, Pengue told NewsGuard, “No, on articles from ... which we take from other outlets ... no, actually we trust these media.” Asked if the website has published corrections in the past, Pengue said, “maybe there were corrections to do, we made them directly ... if we realized ...” However, NewsGuard could not find published corrections on the website and Pengue did not provide examples of them, which is why the website does not meet NewsGuard’s standard for issuing regular corrections.

The site publishes comments and opinions in an Editorials section. However, other articles that are opinionated regularly appear alongside news stories. While the website does not disclose an overall point of view, articles generally advance a populist, pro-Five Star Movement perspective.

For example, a November 2020 article labeled as News/Italy/Politics (cronaca/interno/politica) and titled “Why didn't Gad Lerner speak earlier?” (“Perchè Gad Lerner non ha parlato prima?”) commented on the Italian journalist Gad Lerner: “He who now comes to give lessons was silent as a coward he is” (“Lui che ora viene a impartire lezioni taceva da vile qual è”).

Another November 2020 article, labeled as Alessandro Di Battista/Five star movement/News/Italy/Politics (Alessandro Di Battista/Movimento Cinque Stelle/Cronaca/Interno/Politica) was written by by the former Five Star Movement politician Di Battista, and outlines what he believes the populist movement needs. Di Battista wrote, “The fare of every toll that makes its way into their pockets is a slap in the face of those lost in the Genoa massacre” (“Ogni pedaggio che entra ancora nelle loro tasche è uno schiaffo alla

memoria dei morti della strage di Genova”) referring to the 2018 collapse of the Morandi bridge, which killed 53 people.

A July 2019 post that was labeled as news and politics said that the “old Italian regime” hates Five Star Movement politicians because “you can't bribe, because you can't buy and with them you have to respect that damn law.” (“non si riescono a corrompere, perché non si riescono a comprare e con loro bisogna rispettare quella dannata legge”). The article added that Five Star Movement politicians have “reintroduced morality and legality in public life” (“reintrodotta moralità e legalità nella vita pubblica”).

Because Infosannio includes unlabeled opinion alongside news stories, often supporting a pro-Five Star Movement stance that it does not disclose, NewsGuard has determined that Infosannio does not handle the difference between news and opinion responsibly.

Pengue told NewsGuard in 2019 that some opinion articles were not labeled because of editing mistakes. Pengue also denied that the site has any political perspective.

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#### Transparency

The site does not disclose that it is owned by Pengue or identify its editorial leaders or staff.

The site lists a general email address to contact the newsroom.

The website does not run advertising and does not publish information about its financing.

Republished news and opinion articles on the site are generally credited to their original authors. However, unlabeled press releases are not always attributed, and most articles are also credited to Infosannio, which is why NewsGuard has determined that the site does not meet its standard for providing information about content creators.

Pengue told NewsGuard that he and two other people run the site. He refused to identify his colleagues. He said in August 2019 that the website planned to add more information about its owners, editors, and staff. As of November 2020, the site had not added information about ownership, content creators and editors.

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#### History

Infosannio was founded in 2008 by Pengue. “InfoSannio” is short for Information about Sannio, an area that includes part of the regions of Molise, Campania, and Abruzzo. In 2020, the website changed its domain name from Infosannio.wordpress.com to Infosannio.com.

Until 2015, Pengue was a politician with the local organization We Citizens for the South (Noi Cittadini per il Sud), which supported former Italian prime minister Silvio Berlusconi’s center-right parties Forza Italia and PDL.

*Editor’s Note: This Nutrition Label was last updated on Nov. 20, 2020, with a review of new content on the site and a change of the site’s name.*

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**Send feedback to NewsGuard:** [Click Here](#)

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Ownership and Financing

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Transparency

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