

Table of Contents

About SIGNIS	I
Structure & Membership	II
History of SIGNIS	III
SIGNIS Services Rome	IV
SIGNIS Activities & Objectives	V
Advocacy	VI
Media Education	VII
Cinema	VIII
Television & Video	IX
Radio	X
Internet	XI
SIGNIS Publications	XII
SIGNIS Logo	XIII

I. About SIGNIS

A Worldwide Network of Communication Professionals

SIGNIS is a non-governmental organization that includes members from over 130 countries. As the "World Catholic Association for Communication", it brings together professionals in radio, television, cinema, video, media education, the Internet and new technologies.

SIGNIS was created in November 2001 from the merger of Unda (International Catholic Association for Radio and Television) and OCIC (International Catholic Organization for Cinema and Audiovisuals). Its diverse activities include promoting films and television programmes (it has juries at important festivals: Cannes, Berlin, Monte-Carlo, Venice, Ouagadougou...), building radio, video, and television studios, producing and distributing programmes, supplying specialized equipment, training professionals, educating media users...etc.

SIGNIS is officially recognized by the Vatican as a Catholic organization for communication. It has consultative status at UNESCO, ECOSOC (United Nations in Geneva and New York) and the Council of Europe.

The General Secretariat is in Brussels (Belgium).

General Secretariat

310, rue Royale
1210 Brussels, Belgium
Tel: +32 (0)2 734 97 08
Fax: +32 (0)2 734 70 18
sg@signis.net
www.signis.net

President: Mr. Augustine Loorthusamy (Malaysia)

Vice-presidents: Mr. Peter Thomas (Australia)
Mr. Gustavo Andújar (Cuba)

Acting Secretary General: Fr. Bernardo Suate (Mozambique)

Director: Mr. Alvito de Souza (Kenya)

II. Structure & Membership

A Worldwide Association run by its Members

SIGNIS is a worldwide association. Its members are national associations grouped by regions of the world. There are six regions: Africa, Latin America, North America, Pacific, Asia, and Europe, as well as an International Group (composed of international organizations). In addition, individuals and institutions can become associate members.

All the regions and the international group are represented on the Board of Directors that decides the policy of SIGNIS. The members of the Board are elected during world or regional assemblies.

The decisions of the Board have to be endorsed by the Assembly of Delegates. The Assembly is composed by six representatives from each region and the international group (2 members of the Board and 4 other representatives). The SIGNIS Delegates are elected during regional assemblies every four years.

The administrative headquarters of SIGNIS, the General Secretariat, is in Brussels. There is also an office at the Vatican, *SIGNIS Services Rome*, which provides technical and material support to church and secular organizations all over the world.

SIGNIS has members or associates in more than 130 countries in the world. These members are Catholic media professionals working in diverse fields: Public and Catholic television, community radio, communications offices, universities and colleges, video production, media education organizations, film journalism, global communication organizations, etc.

In Africa: SIGNIS has national members in 32 countries in Africa, and one regional association: SIGNIS-Africa.

In Asia: SIGNIS has national members in 15 countries in Asia, and one regional association: SIGNIS-Asia (www.signiasia.org).

In Europe: SIGNIS has national members in 24 countries in Europe, and one regional association: SIGNIS-Europe.

In Latin America: SIGNIS has national members in 12 countries in Latin America, and one regional association: OCLACC (Organización Católica Latinoamericana y Caribeña de Comunicación, www.oclacc.org).

In North America: SIGNIS has national members in 2 countries in North America.

In the Pacific: SIGNIS has national members in 32 countries in the Pacific, and one regional association: SIGNIS-Pacific (www.signispacific.org).

International members: SIGNIS has 18 international members (www.intersig.net).

III. History of SIGNIS

A Merger of two Organizations: OCIC and Unda

SIGNIS was created in November 2001 from the merger of Unda (International Catholic Association for Radio and Television) and OCIC (International Catholic Organization for Cinema and Audiovisuals), both founded in 1928. They had similar objectives: **to bring together Catholics already working as professionals in the media** (OCIC in the field of cinema and Unda in radio and television). The interest of Catholics in these new media was understandable. They saw the opportunities offered by the mass media to present their views and opinions on life and the world. And so they naturally became involved in promoting education and values.

Catholics were involved in the new art of cinema from its inception (1895), seeing its worldwide influence on families and, above all, on young audiences. OCIC developed a positive approach to this new art. It **wanted to offer guidance to audiences and to discover and foster productions which promoted the same values as Christians did.** It called for the creation of national organizations dealing with topics such as childhood and cinema, and film reviews (an early form of media education). It also expressed its intention to collaborate with the film industry. One of its concerns was the promotion of 'good' films, both for education and entertainment.

In the same way Catholic radio producers realized by the end of the 1920s that radio had become, like cinema, an important means of spreading ideas, and could therefore influence the views of millions and connect them to Christian values. At its first international congress (1929) **Unda drew attention to the importance of radio for religious, cultural and social life.** In that spirit Unda invited Catholics to collaborate with radio companies (private or public) in making religious programmes and to foster Christian values. In the 1930s Catholic broadcasters worldwide had an optimistic view of the development of radio and, later, of the new medium of television. It could transcend frontiers and bring peoples and cultures together. It could be a means of exchanging cultural values, a way of fostering mutual understanding. Radio was thought of as the means par excellence for **reconciling peoples, fostering fellowship among nations and promoting peace.** Like OCIC, Unda too developed different aspects of media education.

After World War II and during the succeeding decades these principles found new expression in cinema, radio and television activities. From the 1960s, **Unda and OCIC began to hold joint meetings and assemblies and incorporated work on the small and grassroots media** that were then being developed. The 1980s saw the proliferation of video use, soon followed by rapid developments in information technology and the growth of digital media and the internet.

Since many members of Unda and OCIC worked in several media, and since media ministry was cross-media, the impetus for a combined Catholic Association for audiovisual media grew ever stronger, eventually **leading to the merger of Unda and OCIC as SIGNIS on November 21st 2001.**

IV. SIGNIS Services Rome

Providing Communication Technologies for Evangelization and Development

SIGNIS Services Rome (SSR) evaluates, promotes and provides efficient communication technologies for use in the spreading of Christian and human values, especially in developing countries. The Service has helped launch or set up local radio stations, satellite telephone systems, audiovisual and IT equipment, computer networks, Internet via satellite using VSATs (Very Small Aperture Terminals), etc. The service focuses on providing **cost-effective communications solutions** for people in marginalised communities and **connecting the unconnected**.

Internet

One of SIGNIS' main objectives is to **reduce the digital divide** between "digitally connected" countries and the rest of the world. That is why SIGNIS Services Rome provides an **Internet service via satellite** that covers all Africa: the VSAT system. Since 2002, SIGNIS Services Rome has been able to provide high-speed Internet connections via satellite to over 100 radio stations, universities, hospitals, communities, and non-governmental organizations. For each of these, SSR provides the equipment, including a small satellite dish and configured computers. SSR also offers its services as an Internet access provider, telephone calls via the Internet, access to the web and through its helpdesk service, assistance for remote terminal activations, customised grade of services based on the end-user requirements.

In addition, SSR trains the personnel that run and maintain the equipment in these operations to allow them to act as a first level helpdesk and technical reference for the customers they assist. This is part of SIGNIS commitment in providing them with the best possible and fastest service.

Radio / TV

SIGNIS Services Rome provides an overall radio service starting from an analysis of needs to the development of cost estimates, the purchase of equipment (transmitters, antenna systems, on-air and production studios, audio/video editing equipments) up to and including the launching of the radio station itself and its technical follow-up including the formation of service technicians. The Service has already set up **more than 60 radio stations** in several countries of Africa. Today there is a new demand for TV production and broadcasting equipments as community media in the continent develops.

Audiovisual & IT equipment

SIGNIS Services Rome offers a complete range of equipment for audiovisual production: studio and outside production (filming, sound recording, lighting), post-production (editing tables, computerized systems), video studio systems, duplicating systems and digital cameras as well as computers and IT equipment.

SIGNIS Services Rome
Palazzo San Calisto 00120 VATICAN CITY
Phone: + 39 06 69 88 72 55
Fax: + 39 06 69 88 73 35
ssr@signis.net

V. SIGNIS Activities & Objectives

Media for a Culture of Peace

The activities of SIGNIS cover all fields of audiovisual creation: promoting films or television programmes (it has juries at the important international film and TV festivals: Cannes, Berlin, Monte Carlo, Venice, Ouagadougou...), creating, producing and distributing radio, TV and video programmes, building broadcasting studios, supplying equipment, offering Internet services by satellite, training professionals, encouraging the use of new media, promoting media education etc.

The **primary objective** of all these activities is **to promote a Culture of Peace through the media.**

Since building peace in today's world necessarily involves the media, SIGNIS and its members have committed themselves to harness the power of the media to promote peace:

Through **media education:** by helping develop the capacity of the public, and in particular young people, to acquire an active attitude, a critical distance, and a freedom to make informed judgements about the media;

Through **advocacy:** by supporting the independence of the media in conflict situations and those who are working to build freedom of expression and human rights;

By providing a space for **inter-religious and intercultural dialogue** and democratic debate;

By promoting **just and truthful portrayals of different groups in society** and to open the possibility for all to participate fully in the communication process, especially the poorest people and countries;

By working to help **develop the capacity of the media to put individuals, groups and peoples into communication with each other.**

By organizing, supporting and promoting events that encourage a **Culture of Peace.**

In 2005, at the SIGNIS World Congress in Lyon, France, more than 150 Catholic media professionals participated in a two-day Peace Conference. The outcome was the publication of the **Declaration of Lyon**, which defines the challenges of media as it deals with conflict and offers guiding principles for Catholic communicators. In Lyon, SIGNIS members committed themselves to working with others **to enable the voices of the voiceless to be heard and the faces of the faceless to be seen.**

VI. Advocacy

Promoting Human Rights in and through the Media

Advocacy, or the **defence and promotion of human rights, justice and peace**, especially in the realm of the electronic media and communications, is one of the pillars of SIGNIS.

Advocacy means first, supporting and encouraging SIGNIS members to use their communication skills and possibilities to promote a culture of peace, and second, working with others to promote the common good in the media at national, regional and international levels.

SIGNIS pays particular attention to promoting and defending **communication rights and freedom of expression**; to enhancing and sustaining **cultural diversity and dialogue**; to supporting the contribution of **community and public media** and to overcoming the **digital divide**.

Through its **representation at significant world bodies** (UNESCO, United Nations, Council of Europe) and at world and regional meetings SIGNIS speaks up for Christian and human values.

SIGNIS **provides its members with information**, ideas and material to stimulate reflection, debate and action, especially in countries which do not have easy access to this kind of material. In addition to the website, there is also an advocacy web blog (<http://advocacynews.blogspot.com>).

SIGNIS **acts in solidarity with and publicizes the efforts of its members**, and others who share its values and are defending and supporting human rights.

SIGNIS **co-operates with other like-minded groups** and organizations active in this field, particularly with its sister organization, UCIP, the World Catholic Union of the Press and with WACC (the World Association for Christian Communication).

In 2004 and 2005 SIGNIS played an active part in the United Nations World Summit on the Information Society (WSIS) in several meetings in Geneva and Tunis and contributed to the final Civil Society Declaration, *Shaping Information Societies for Human Needs*.

Also in 2005 SIGNIS joined other civil society organizations in lobbying successfully for strengthening the UNESCO Convention on Cultural Diversity. In March 2005 SIGNIS made a significant contribution to the NGO Forum at the Kiev Council of Europe meeting of European Ministers of Communication.

In 2006 SIGNIS took the lead in setting up a new Council of Europe NGO Working Group on Media and Human Rights. The following year two highlights were the seminar *Peacemaking in the World of Film* (July 2007) and the TV and film festival on children's rights, *Facing Children* (November 2007) in collaboration with SIGNIS Romania.

Advocacy has become very important in the context of planning for the SIGNIS World Congress in 2009. Its theme is *Media for a Culture of Peace –Children's Rights, Tomorrow's Promise* with a special emphasis on the rights of the child. Events and activities around these topics are being held in every SIGNIS region in 2008. We are also collaborating with NGOs such as BICE (International Catholic Bureau for Children), Pax Christi and Search for Common Ground.

VII. Media Education

Using Media for the Betterment of the Person and Society

Media education should be seen as a movement from a critical awareness of the languages and techniques of the media, through analysis of the values they project and their influence on our lives, towards a responsible participation in the use of media for the betterment of the person and society. **The areas covered by SIGNIS in this perspective are very diverse:** advertising, radio, popular music, film, television, video and Internet.

A media educated person is able to create his or her own media statements, to engage confidently with media producers and to exercise actively his or her rights as a democratic citizen. So it is understandable that this work is **one of the most important fields of action of SIGNIS.**

The SIGNIS media education project aims to bring together worldwide experiences and achievements in this field. SIGNIS members want to come together to use financial, material and human resources more effectively so that they can give a coherent response to the "onslaught of national and global media" on people and cultures across the world. SIGNIS wants to **build a world network of media educators and/or media education organizations** – something which doesn't yet exist.

The predecessors of SIGNIS, Unda and OCIC, had a very long tradition in this field. In the 1950s, for example, Fr Lunders of OCIC was a founder of CIFEJ (International Center for Films for Children and Young People); in the 1960s and 1970s the organizations supported the Plan DENI initiative in Latin America and from 1989 to 2001 Unda produced its *Educommunication Magazine*.

International SIGNIS juries are present at the Zlin Festival (Czech Republic) and the Divorcine Festival (Uruguay) which promotes quality media content for children, and some National members (e.g., Argentina and Romania) are very much committed in these types of festivals in their own countries.

In 2007, in Johannesburg, **SIGNIS participated for second time in the World Summit of Media for Children.** On that occasion a SIGNIS delegation of 11 media educators from all the SIGNIS regions joined 900 participants from across the world. The Summit was a thoroughly wonderful African experience. It showcased the diversity of the global children's media environment with a focus on developing countries' achievements.

After the International Symposium on Media Education organized in Lyon in 2005, a two-day meeting to start building an action plan for Media Education was held in Johannesburg. A SIGNIS **Charter for Media Education**, the mission, aims and strategies of the **SIGNIS Media Education Project** (SIGMEP) was written.

VIII. Cinema

Promoting Cultural Diversity and Christian Values through Film

The activities of SIGNIS in the field of cinema follow those developed by OCIC, the International Catholic Organization for Cinema. OCIC was created in 1928 to co-ordinate the work of Catholics active in the cinema world. The organization built a strong tradition of **writing and publishing on film** which included reviewing, critique, commentary and evaluation and consumer information that is still very much alive today, in print, on radio and television and on websites. With film journalism and criticism SIGNIS is also **integrating the field of cinema into media education**.

Many SIGNIS members have published books and theses on academic themes, pastoral activities through cinema and histories of local and national film cultures. Through its dialogue with the broad world of cinema, **SIGNIS is a bridge between the Catholic Church and the professionals**, making the presence of the Church in the cinema world more credible.

SIGNIS organizes **SIGNIS, Ecumenical and Interfaith juries in more than 30 film festivals** around the world, from the best-known, including Cannes, Berlin, and Venice, to more specialised festivals, including Mar del Plata, Zanzibar, Hong Kong, Fajr (Tehran) and Brisbane. In that sense it also offers its members different professional opportunities in joining these juries. It also means that in the festival activities the organization can offer a space of continuous dialogue with Catholics, Protestants, Orthodox, Jews, Hindus, Muslims and members of other religions. In 2007 SIGNIS celebrated the 50th anniversary of the international Catholic jury at the San Sebastian Film Festival with a tribute to the German film director Volker Schlöndorff. In 2008 a celebration was held at the Venice Film Festival for the 60th anniversary of the SIGNIS Jury.

As **SIGNIS defends cultural diversity in the media**, it is aware of the importance of promoting the cinema and audiovisual productions of those countries or those minorities who are absent or almost not seen in the global media world. It wants also to help give a face to the faceless, to the creativity and to the stories of those who are invisible.

Cinema, television, video and internet are growing together. Since the 1990s, working in the field of cinema means more and more contacts with the TV and video world, which are involved in film production (fiction and documentary). In that sense cinema activities are also part of the SIGNIS policy towards television and video producers. Today, and probably even more in the near future, the internet is an important disseminator of every aspect of cinema.

At the request of Latin American film makers the association started the **SIGNIS Post-Production Competition for Latin American films** in 1998. Ten years after launching this initiative SIGNIS has helped twenty films to be produced. In this decade SIGNIS has invested more than half a million US dollars in Latin American films to help promote a more just, human and peaceful society.

By its presence in the professional cinema world, through international seminars and conferences, the organization of post production competitions for Latin American films, assistance in production, distribution of films through its network of television producers and distributors and conservation of the film heritage, SIGNIS contributes in a concrete way to the **development of a cinema aimed towards human and spiritual values**.

IX. Television & Video

Bringing Together Catholic Television Professionals

SIGNIS wants to **support the production and distribution of quality TV programmes** throughout the world. To achieve this goal, **SIGNIS is organizing Seminars** that bring together TV producers, programmers and channels searching for opportunities for co-production or collaboration.

The first of these seminars was held in Cape Town, in 2003, at the Sithengi television market. Other seminars followed in 2004 in Strasbourg, in 2005 in Prague and in Lyon, and in 2006 in Madrid. The latest SIGNIS TV seminar was held in Buenos Aires, in March 2008.

SIGNIS has set up a dedicated website, <http://www.catholictv.tv>, to "share the best of Catholic TV". The website comprises an online catalogue of TV programmes to be viewed in streaming and a database of Catholic televisions and producers, among other useful information.

With the **international Catholic TV magazine project, SIGNS**, produced by SIGNIS and co-produced by various SIGNIS members around the world, SIGNIS is seeking to produce, market and distribute a **world-class high quality television magazine programme that reflects the diverse cultural life and work of the Church internationally**. The programme will seek to present stories that demonstrate a creative, prophetic voice. Following the production of two test programs involving producers from across the world, the third pilot edition of SIGNS is now being test marketed to prospective buyers.

SIGNIS follows the tradition of Unida (the former International Catholic Association for Radio and Television) in **awarding the best of television in festivals**. The international television festival of Monte Carlo is the most prestigious of them all. It is sometimes forgotten that this TV Festival began under the inspiration of Unida, which held its first International Catholic Television Festival in Monaco in 1958. The Monte Carlo Festival began in 1961 and Unida awarded the Unida Dove (now the SIGNIS Dove) from 1962.

The Monte Carlo Catholic television festival eventually led to collaboration with WACC (the World Association for Christian Communication) in holding, every three years, a **European Festival of Religious Television Programmes**, hosted by different national broadcasters. In 2004 the Festival was held in Warsaw and was hosted by Polish Television (TVP).

SIGNIS also gives awards at the Prix Italia. This international television, radio and web festival is an important showcase for public and private broadcasting organized by RAI, the Italian public broadcaster.

SIGNIS also collaborates with CRTN (Catholic Radio and Television Network, www.crtn.org).

X. Radio

Supporting the Development of Catholic and Community Radio

Radio, especially community radio, remains one of the most effective media in the world today and is especially important in parts of Africa, Asia, Latin America and the Pacific.

SIGNIS supports the development of community radio and Catholic radio stations, and promotes existing radio networks and associations. There are dozens of Catholic radio networks and associations across the globe. Some of these networks, especially in Latin America and Europe, have existed for some time now. Others, in particular in Africa, and Oceania have emerged more recently.

SIGNIS does not intend to establish its own Catholic radio networks. Rather, **SIGNIS seeks to reinforce existing networks** and encourage interaction between networks to enhance the shared learning experience. SIGNIS policy is one of subsidiarity and promoting professional collaboration

At its General Assembly in Lyon, France, in 2005, SIGNIS brought together Catholic radio networks from across the globe for a "Consultative Seminar" to get their input in defining the Association's policy in the field of radio.

SIGNIS members in Latin America have been in the forefront of the development of community and educational radio in the region. The community radio networks in Latin America are legendary in their creative use of radio for development and the promotion of human rights.

In Africa SIGNIS supports an expanding network of radio stations. SIGNIS workshops and seminars for African Radio professionals have focused on capacity building, shared experiences and creative production for conflict resolution and peace building.

SIGNIS seminars and workshops enable local FM radio stations to debate creative ideas, appreciate and review production techniques and share problem solving solutions. They generate communities of practice that **stimulate creative production** in community radio stations in Africa.

As a strategy SIGNIS intends to develop its international partnerships with international organizations experienced in radio production for **peacebuilding, conflict management and development** and reinforce the capacity of Catholic radio stations at the service of marginalized communities.

In addition, *SIGNIS Services Rome* has traditionally provided **technical consultation and equipment to radio stations**, especially in Africa. (see page on SIGNIS Services Rome)

XI. Internet

Connecting the Catholic World

The rapid growth and expansion of the Internet, especially the World Wide Web, has fundamentally changed the media landscape. As an association of Catholic media professionals **SIGNIS is exploring how best this new technology can be harnessed to serve the common good** and enhance the quality of communication for the majority of people.

On a practical level SIGNIS is interested in the Internet as a means to **disseminate information** among its members and to the wider world in a creative way. In addition to the **international SIGNIS website** run by the General Secretariat (www.signis.net), most SIGNIS members have their own websites and some individuals are developing their own blogs.

Another of SIGNIS' main objectives is to help **reduce the digital divide** between those countries closely "connected" to the global digital highways and those in the poorer regions of the world which are still struggling to "connect" to their own towns and villages.

That is why SIGNIS Services Rome provides an **Internet service via satellite** that covers all of Africa: the VSAT system. Since 2002, SIGNIS Services Rome been able to provide high-speed Internet connections via satellite to over 100 radio stations, universities, hospitals, communities, and non-governmental organizations across the continent.

SIGNIS provides its clients with equipment, including a small satellite dish and computers already configured to use the service. SIGNIS also offers its services as an Internet access provider, including SIGNIS e-mail addresses, telephone calls via the Internet, and access to the web. In addition, SIGNIS trains the personnel who run and maintain the equipment.

SIGNIS also **promotes and participates in activities and events** bringing together Catholic communicators involved in new information technologies.

In 2005 at the SIGNIS World Congress, in Lyon, a workshop on E-Learning and Online Communities brought together SIGNIS members from different continents to share experiences and to develop ways of working together.

SIGNIS is working to use the potential of the Internet for **distance education and to build a real global network of learning that will link individuals and communities across the digital divide.**

XII. SIGNIS Publications

Keeping up to date on the Initiatives and Diversity of Today's Catholic Media

SIGNIS has its own website (www.signis.net), and publishes a quarterly magazine, **SIGNIS Media**, an electronic bulletin, **SIGNIS Webnews**, and an Annual Report, as well as brochures and specialised books.

SIGNIS Website

The SIGNIS website, www.signis.net, aims to be a reference point for all Catholic communicators. It offers information about the organization, its members, its services, its publications and its activities. It profiles SIGNIS as an international organization active in all fields of the media in order to promote a Culture of Peace. It brings news from Catholic media around the globe.

SIGNIS Media

SIGNIS Media is a trilingual magazine (French, English and Spanish) published every 3 months. It is intended for SIGNIS members and those interested in SIGNIS, bringing them regular information on the activities of member associations, in each of the regions of the world, as well as a general idea of international programmes.

SIGNIS Media provides a unique insight into the international world of radio, film, television, video and internet in more than 130 countries. It gives the reader a broad picture of current initiatives taken by the Catholic world in all fields of communication. It covers the films awarded prizes by the SIGNIS or ecumenical juries in the most important film and television festivals worldwide.

SIGNIS Webnews

SIGNIS Webnews is a free electronic bulletin sent every two weeks to the e-mail address of members and other interested people. This bulletin provides a speedy update on activities and events involving media, festival awards, the association, and the presence of the Catholic Church in the world of communication.

Annual Reports

SIGNIS publishes annual reports on the activities of the association. These reports can be downloaded in PDF format from the SIGNIS website (www.signis.net).

Books and brochures

A complete list of SIGNIS books and brochures can be found on the website (www.signis.net). The publications can be purchased on the web through the SIGNIS online bookshop.

XIII. SIGNIS Logo

An Expression of Peace and Dynamism

The SIGNIS logo was created in 2001. Its stylised dove, in the form of an arrow, is meant to express the core message of the association, promoting a Culture of Peace through the media, as well of the dynamism of SIGNIS and its members in the constantly changing world of media.



Using the logo

The SIGNIS logo is the property of SIGNIS and can only be used in its original form. To obtain the SIGNIS logo in JPEG, TIFF or EPS, please contact Lawrence Pieters: lawrence.pieters@signis.net.