



ITALY

A TRADE UNION FOCUS ON THE SDGS

#HLPF2022

WORKERS DEMAND A NEW SOCIAL CONTRACT FOR RECOVERY AND RESILIENCE

COVID-19: WORKERS NEED DURABLE RESPONSES TO THE CRISIS

In the immediate response to the Covid-19 pandemic, in 2020, the Italian government implemented a series of measures aimed at protecting workers, stimulating the economy and labour demand, and supporting employment and incomes. Specific occupational health and safety protocols were also agreed at the tripartite level to safeguard the health of workers and prevent the spread of the virus. These agreements are still valid in the current period.

Moreover, in December 2021, the three Italian trade union confederations signed a protocol for the implementation of the Recovery and Resilience Plan of the European Union (PNRR), which provides for participation and prior discussion with trade unions on investments and reforms. The answer to the pandemic crisis of the Italian government for the upcoming years focuses mainly on three actions: a systemic reform of active labour policies through the Employability Guarantee Program; strengthening job demand and the supply system; and rebuilding the system of employment centres. In addition, the government launched in 2022 a national plan to combat undeclared work, along with a series of initiatives to improve women workers' conditions.

ARE TRADE UNIONS AT THE TABLE?

Approved in 2017, Italy's National Strategy for Sustainable Development is coordinated by the ministry for ecological transition, and it covers five strategic areas corresponding to the "5Ps" of the 2030 Agenda: people, planet, prosperity, peace and partnership. Consultations take place via the Forum for Sustainable Development, and trade unions participate in all five groups of the forum.

The sizeable economic and financial resources in the PNRR are an important means of implementing the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). The plan has six strategic aims that take the SDGs into account, in line with the EU Green Deal and the 2030 Agenda. Formal

dialogue between the government and social partners on the PNRR began at the end of 2021. In December 2021, the unions signed a protocol with the government, which will hopefully finally allow for a full dialogue on achieving a just transition.

Trade unions recommend greater participation of social partners to ensure the effective implementation of national policies aiming to achieve the SDGs. Indicators for the three dimensions of sustainable development (economic, social and environmental) should be used across all public programmes.

TRANSPARENCY



Regular access to limited information

CONSULTATION



Structured multi-stakeholder platform

SOCIAL DIALOGUE



Individual contributions from social partners to the national government



IS THE (DECENT) WORK GETTING DONE?

Challenges remain for Italy to meet **target 1.1 (eradicate extreme poverty)**. Rates of absolute poverty have increased since the outbreak of the Covid-19 pandemic, affecting 9.4 per cent of the population in 2021, with minors (13.5 per cent) and young adults (11.3 per cent) being the most affected. While there is a higher rate of absolute poverty in the southern regions, northern regions have also experienced a great increase since 2019. In-work poverty is also increasing. Regarding **target 1.3 (appropriate social protection systems)**, according to the last available data (2020), 82 per cent of the Italian population is covered by at least one of the social protection measures. The reason for many being excluded is that benefits are linked to occupational categories. Moreover, there are significant regional differences in access to public services.

Women are over-represented in informal and service jobs and in part-time jobs. The pandemic has affected women disproportionately, further increasing gender inequality in the country. Significant challenges remain to meet **target 5.4 (recognise and value unpaid care and domestic work)**. The proportion of time spent on this type of work in Italy is 13.5 per cent, and childcare services are insufficient. On **target 5.5 (ensure women's full and effective participation and equal opportunities for leadership at all levels)**, in 2018 only 23.2 per cent of senior and middle managerial positions were held by women, even though the proportion of women serving on boards and in the national parliament has increased significantly in the past decade as a result of quotas set by legislation.

Progress on **target 8.3 (formalisation)** has declined in the wake of the coronavirus crisis. Irregular employment in Italy is among the highest in the eurozone (12.9 per cent in 2018). The share of vulnerable employment was 16.9 per cent in 2019. Low economic growth has led to more low-wage employees. Italy also faces serious challenges in meeting **target 8.5 (full and productive employment and decent work for all)**. While average hourly earnings are in line with the EU average, GDP has not fully recovered since the 2008 global financial crisis. The employment rate is 62.6 per cent, far from the long-term objective of 78 per cent established by the European Green Deal. Italy also has a high level of precariousness and involuntary part-time work: the general average is 32.9 per cent, but this rate exceeds

36 per cent for women. The number of **young people not in employment, education or training (target 8.6)** is still of serious concern (23.3 per cent in 2021). Regarding **target 8.7 (end forced labour, modern slavery, human trafficking and child labour)**, migrants are particularly vulnerable to modern slavery. A law initiated by trade unions to fight gangmasters, particularly in the agriculture and construction sectors, is now in place. On **target 8.8 (protect labour rights and promote safe and secure working environments for all workers)**, 80 per cent of all workers are covered by national collective agreements. Trade union membership stands at around 30 per cent of the workforce. In 2021, the government took action to hire more labour inspectors and reorganise the service.

Significant challenges remain to meet **target 10.4 (policies to achieve greater equality, especially fiscal, wage and social protection policies)**. The labour share of GDP has declined over the past ten years and income inequality has increased. Regarding **target 10.7 (orderly, safe, regular and responsible migration and mobility)**, Italian law guarantees full freedom of association for all. In 2020, the new Law 173 introduced positive reforms, including a "special protection" permit for migrants with serious humanitarian reasons.

Unions are concerned about slow progress on **target 13.2 (integrate climate change measures into national policies, strategies and plans)**. Italy is already seriously affected by climate change. The government still needs to adopt a National Action Plan for Adaptation to Climate Change as foreseen by the European strategy for adaptation adopted in February 2021. Furthermore, the National Integrated Energy and Climate Plan (2020) needs to be revised to meet EU targets. The Italian National Recovery and Resilience Plan (NRRP) and the Ecological Transition Plan (2021) also fall short in terms of industrial policies and investment required.

There have recently been some improvements under **target 16.3 (promote the rule of law and ensure equal access to justice)**, including digital transformation for more efficient, transparent, and accountable institutions and services.

TRADE UNION ASKS TO LEAVE NO ONE BEHIND

To ensure an SDG-led recovery and resilience from the crisis, trade unions urge the Italian government to:

- tackle the causes of poverty and define both social and work inclusion pathways to fully take care of those in poverty through targeted measures and services;
- extend social protection systems, and work on improving the current guaranteed minimum income, which currently excludes a large share of those in need;
- introduce legislation to combat precariousness; ensure the NRRP promotes and measures stable, quality employment growth for all;
- counter rising inequality by strengthening national and corporate collective bargaining and, at the same time, ensuring progressive taxation for all incomes;
- strengthen the care system and the integration of social and healthcare systems;
- with an overall youth pact, overhaul national youth policies and ensure adequate resources; take action to improve the education and guidance systems and reduce the school dropout rate;
- extend the use of gender budgeting at all levels of public administration;
- ensure proper policies for workers with arduous and dangerous jobs and a closer relationship between workers' safety representatives and the institutions responsible for prevention and control; and
- implement trade union recommendations for a just transition as set out in the document "Una giusta transizione per il lavoro, il benessere della persona, la giustizia sociale, la salvaguardia del pianeta per una transizione verde dell'economia".



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