



# TOGETHER FOR A FAIR DEAL FOR WORKERS



## TUAD: TRADE UNIONS AGAINST DISCRIMINATION CONFERENCE

29 April 2025

### SPEECH OF GIULIO ROMANI

The task of intervening in the concluding debate of a project that has seen us tackle all the issues of discrimination with a focus on the intersectionality with which it operates in everyday reality is far from easy. This work is very far from being finished.

When the project was conceived and financed two years ago, we were aware that we were bringing to the attention of the social partners and politicians a topic that had so far only been partially explored and understood.

The work carried out by the experts of the di Vittorio Foundation, Beppe and Francesca, accompanied by the Trade Unions that collaborated on the individual in-depth studies, making high-level meetings possible (FO, ICTU, FNV, UGT and CGIL), stimulated by the presence of the numerous experts and political speakers who took turns at the tables of the various events, coordinated by the anti-discrimination team of the ETUC (Marina, Mercedes and Sarrah) and the project steering committee, proved to be extremely interesting and engaging.

The Compendium produced is not only a collection of studies, experiences and good practices but is above all a solid basis for evolving the culture of anti-discrimination in a stable, solid and pragmatic way.

The period we are currently going through is certainly not the most favourable for this evolution. The advance of right-wingers throughout the democratic world coincides with the reactionary affirmation of mystifying ethical and economic theories: the 'prosperity theology'; the movements in support of the 'traditional family'; the 'theories of merit' that advocate the sole valorisation of the most efficient and capable, justifying the labour and social exclusion of the most vulnerable.

There is a push in the world and also in Europe towards retreat from the albeit insufficient progress achieved over time on the issue of civil, social and professional equality of people, regardless of gender, sexual orientation, age, physical ability or country of origin.

All the more reason why our work has been, is and will be valuable. But at the same time not definitive.





And all the more reason why there are inappropriate signs of second thoughts, or at least weakness, on the part of the political forces that had the courage and farsightedness to support it, while advancing decisive demands for progress on this issue.

The confirmation of the withdrawal of the proposal for a horizontal anti-discrimination directive that had been waiting to be transformed into law since 2008 would be a profoundly mistaken signal today: a surrender in the face of the atavistic uncertainties of some countries and the hostility of others that would only assign a deleterious success to the most reactionary political forces, making them even stronger and more successful in the collective perception of citizens.

On the other hand, we are convinced that, precisely in the midst of an attack on rights that have been won and those yet to be won, the collaboration between political and social partners should be strengthened, through dialogue and collective bargaining, in order to jointly build legal and negotiating instruments that support an inclusive, free, just and emancipated society, where people's wellbeing is the key to attracting and nurturing talent and creating a fully sustainable development model.

We think that, despite the difficulties, moving forward together on the issue of equality is still possible: there is a need for transparency in the decision-making process (who is causing the rethink on the proposal for a horizontal directive and why?), there is a need for a collegial commitment of the social partners, including trade unions, also at national level, there is a need to develop exemplary pilot experiences through collective bargaining.

A horizontal directive would have the opportunity to design a model for combating discrimination that is homogeneous throughout Europe and finally able to grasp the dangerousness of the intersection of the various pretexts of discrimination that constitutes the negative multiplier of the already deleterious effects of individual prejudices. This is why we would not want to give up on it.

And finally, we must give our attention to the advancing model of society imposed by the changes underway in the economy, demography, and international political, economic and social structures.

We must be ready for changes that will affect labour and workers. We have to prevent existing discrimination from being compounded by the application of unfair rules such as those, for example, affecting domestic workers, the majority of whom belong to the discriminated categories, who are deprived of many of the rights applied to other workers, starting with health and safety protections in the workplace. We think that continuing in our work also means not withdrawing from the development of studies and



their dissemination, and in this sense we expect that the final conference of this project can be ideally connected with the opening conference of a next edition for which we ask the EC to confirm its support.