WORKERS DEMAND A NEW SOCIAL CONTRACT

ITALY

A TRADE UNION FOCUS ON THE SDGs

#HLPF2026

WORKERS NEED GENUINE DIALOGUE AND DECENT WORK REFORMS

The Italian government has adopted a sustainable development strategy ahead of its July 2026 Voluntary National Review (VNR), yet the SDGs are not adequately integrated into national planning and budgeting. Implementation is led by the Ministry of the Environment and Energy Security, and while the SDGs are present as objectives in the activities of ministries such as the Ministry of Tourism and the Ministry of Infrastructure and Transport, it is still lagging heavily behind. While recent energy crises inflated household energy costs, due to heavy reliance of Italy on fossil fuel imports, Italy's funding for sustainability remains insufficient. Democracy, peace, disarmament and respect for international law and human rights are essential prerequisites for sustainable development, on which it is imperative and urgent to focus all our efforts to implement the 2030 Agenda.

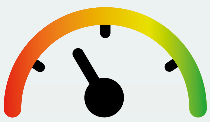
While the government references SDG 8 across several National Recovery and Resilience Plan (PNRR) missions, active labour market policies lack a comprehensive strategy focused on job quality, stability, and rights and full employment. Trade unions note that results regarding wages, workplace precariousness, and safety remain highly limited.

ARE TRADE UNIONS AT THE TABLE?

The governance framework for the SDGs in Italy is structurally deficient and does not adequately involve social partners. Despite their efforts, trade union involvement in the formulation of national SDG policies is limited by the absence of a genuine multi-stakeholder platform on SDG planning and implementation. While trade unions participate in the Sustainable Development Forum, the Forum has no specific consultative functions for labour issues, lacks representative criteria, and operates strictly under timelines dictated by the Ministry. Notwithstanding these difficulties, trade unions have provided input on the Sustainable Development Goals at every opportunity, however the inputs have been not taken on board by the government .

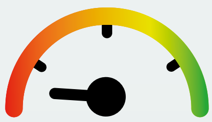
Furthermore, the national government does not involve social partners in SDG monitoring and implementation. Major strategic policy revisions, including seven unilateral modifications to the PNRR that cut decarbonization funding, and the submission of the National Energy and Climate Plan (PNIEC) to Brussels, occurred without social dialogue or prior consultation. Re-engagement remains limited to technical sessions, and does not amount to true tripartite co-governance.

TRANSPARENCY



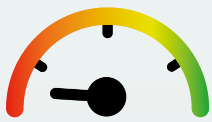
Irregular access to limited information

CONSULTATION



No consultation process at all

SOCIAL DIALOGUE



Social partners not involved in defining and realising government's SDG national plan

IS THE (DECENT) WORK GETTING DONE?

Italian trade unions emphasize that major structural crises and regressive reforms severely undermine the 2030 Agenda.

- **SDG 1:** Domestic metrics expose deep insecurity; in 2024, **8.4%** of households live in absolute poverty and **10.4%** in relative poverty, while **8.2%** sit precariously just above the line. The 2024 Inclusion Allowance (Assegno di Inclusione) replaced universal anti-poverty support with a selective model, cutting beneficiary households by half compared to 2022 (**833,000 vs 1.69 million**). In-work poverty is structural; **10.2%** of employees are at risk, exacerbated by a **7%** drop in real wages between 2021 and 2025, the sharpest decline in the OECD. Having a job no longer guarantees an escape from poverty.
- **SDG 5:** Outdated 2013–14 data remains the sole reference point on care work, women spend **21.4%** of their day on domestic work versus **8.9%** for men. Consequently, female employment stands at a low **56%** (dropping under **40%** in the South). The gender pay gap stays at **11.8%** compared to the average. In-work poverty affects women (18.5%) three times more than men (6.4%). Women hold **36%** of managerial roles but only **18%** at executive levels, facing a further **27%** managerial pay gap. Despite board quotas reaching **43%**, women comprise just **2.2%** of CEOs. Gender budgeting remains purely descriptive. While a significant legislative step is represented by Law No. 167, which introduced the Gender Impact Assessment, its implementation is dependent upon further decrees.
- **SDG 8:** Irregular employment rose by **4.9%** in 2023 to **3.13 million** full-time equivalent jobs (a **12.7%** rate), peaking at **40.5%** in the domestic work sector, and **17.6%** at the agricultural sector. National labour inspections reveal a staggering **74%** irregularity rate among checked firms. Temporary contracts making up **61.3%** of new hires in late 2025. Part-time work is another indicator of precariousness. **15.7%** of the workforce are part-time workers, and of these, **75.6%** are women. In 2025, Italy ranked last in Europe for both the overall employment rate (unemployment rate **6.1%**) and the female employment rate (unemployment rate **6.8%**), confirming a structural weakness in the labour market that particularly affects women, young people and areas in the South. Youth unemployment is at **20.6%**, and **30%** of mandatory disability hiring quotas remain unfilled. Italy counts **1.9 million** NEETs aged 15–34. Workplace accidents rose in 2025; migrant workers represent **10%** of the labour force but suffer **24.3%** of accidents, while the state provides only one inspector per **5,600** workers.
- **SDG10:** The labour share of GDP stood at **52.8%** in 2025, but the share allocated specifically to employee wages is just **39.4%**. The tax system exacerbates inequality through flat taxes for self-employment and repeated amnesties. No statutory minimum wage exists; wage floors rely on collective agreements. Under the decreto flussi migration policy, only **8%** of work permits resulted in actual employment in 2025, leaving migrants highly vulnerable to severe gangmaster exploitation (caporalato).
- **SDG 13:** The government's action on climate change is insufficient. The development of renewable energy sources is still hampered by regulatory uncertainties and regional and territorial constraints which, in many cases, hinder their implementation, whilst the structural dependence of the energy and industrial systems on fossil fuels continues, with serious repercussions on the climate, the environment, energy security, energy costs, the industrial system and employment
- **SDG 16:** Italy stands at Category 2 ("Repeated Violations of Rights") in the ITUC Global Rights Index 2026 due to frequent administrative strike bans, a security law restricting public assembly, and violent intimidation against agricultural trade unionists fighting exploitation.

ITALY

TRADE UNION ASKS TO LEAVE NO ONE BEHIND

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Trade unions call on the government to:

- Convene social partners for ongoing dialogue on the sustainable development strategy and immediately initiate a democratic process on the Just Transition, as provided for in the ILO guidelines and the ILC 2023 declaration.
- Support the productive system through innovation and training to create quality jobs, and enhance active labour market policies with personalized pathways to facilitate the entry and retention of young people and women.
- Strengthen enforcement by recruiting labour inspectors, increase checks and sanctions to combat undeclared work, and move beyond the quota system to facilitate the regularization of migrant workers trapped in exploitation.
- Introduce a universal instrument to combat poverty, and adopt redistributive fiscal policies aimed at broadening the tax base and strengthening the progressivity of the entire tax system.
- Ensure workers earn a living wage as defined by the ILO, by:
  - » CGIL: Establishing a statutory minimum hourly wage to protect the workers by introducing a constitutionally defined baseline that no contract can fall below. To support this foundation, enact legislation and define clear procedures to accurately measure and certify the representativeness of both trade unions and employers.
  - » CISL: Strengthening the selection criteria for national collective labour agreements that are more firmly rooted in sectoral statistics through the CNEL's national archive of agreements and ensuring that wages are defined by national collective labour agreements signed by the trade union and employer organizations that are comparatively more representative at the national sectoral level.
  - » UIL: Strengthening the overall collective bargaining system to ensure fairer wages, combat contractual dumping, and halt the proliferation of "pirate" contracts that erode workers' protections and pay.
- Enact a structural plan for female employment, implement binding measures against the gender pay gap, and parental leave; measure unpaid care work, combat occupational segregation; extend Golfo-Mosca Law to all public decision making bodies.
- Safeguard media independence.

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