



# Comitato per la promozione e protezione dei diritti umani

**Member of the EU Fundamental Rights Agency (FRA) Platform  
Member EU Civil Society Platform Against Trafficking in Human Beings  
Accredited Observer to WIPO Intergovernmental Committee on Intellectual Property &  
Folklore (IGC)**

## 1. What are the key challenges and issues of racial discrimination in your country/region today and how do you work to address them?

It is often said that Italy is not a racist country. This is not true. In the subculture that runs through many layers of the Italian society, not necessarily poor, there is a deep-rooted concept of superiority, including with regard to gender that fuels discrimination and stigma toward individuals and the most vulnerable and/or marginalized social groups.

It is often a multiple discrimination, which even if not exercised in a direct manner, it is tightly linked to racial discrimination, and therefore, much more underhand and sometimes difficult to detect for its real significance and danger.

Here are the main areas where it usually manifests itself.

### **Roma and Sinti**

Very strong is the discrimination against Roma, Sinti and other groups commonly defined by the people in general with the negative term “gypsies”. The national strategy for their integration is very late and, in fact, lacks real instruments of governance as well as adequate resources. Entire human groups are periodically evicted, closed into camps or otherwise removed from urban centers in the absence of alternative housing and real social integration interventions such as education, employment, access to health care and services. And yet we are talking about a group of people amounting to a few tens of thousands of units in the majority born in Italy and residing here since long time.

### **Media - hate speech**

Immigration has a very high visibility in Italy and often the message conveyed to public opinion is contradictory. The observatory of the Charter of Rome, noted that although there has not been an increase of fear and insecurity in respect of migrants and refugees – notwithstanding the fact that it is however high - the emergency tones that emphasize the amount of migration flows (landings), their reception in the towns, supposed eventual health risks (which were never clinically proven), fears for terrorist attacks, remain central to the misleading and incorrect information. Similarly, the use of violent language in politics (hate speech) feeds racist and xenophobic reactions as the one most recently occurred in the Municipality of Gorino where the local community has opposed the reception of 12 refugee women and 8 children.

### **Moonlighting**

Just a few days ago a specific law to contrast this form of clandestine employment in Italy was approved providing fines and criminal punishments for those who commit the crimes of brokerage and labour exploitation. We will evaluate the application. Various workers are involved but at present migrant workers (with a pending status and refugees not assisted by the SPRAR system) form the most important group together with the Italians living below the poverty line. Among them a further discrimination is reserved to women who receive lower wages, if not undergo sexual blackmailing.

### **People with disability**

People with disability continue to meet many obstacles. The widespread perception based exclusively on a medical approach tends to relegate them to the condition of patients to be permanently assisted if not to segregate and remove, denying them their human rights and equal opportunities. The elimination of these cultural barriers requires above all the removal of all those bureaucratic and physical obstacles that limit their access to a full citizenship.

### **Women**

Discrimination against women is still very strong in Italy and the dominant cultural patterns seem impervious to the changes in a society that sees women more and more with a leading role and active in society. Despite a level of education and skill much higher than that of men, they have access with much more difficulty to assignments and skilled jobs, often with lower wages. In addition, the high level of violence they often face within the family and the high number of femicides they suffer must be mentioned.

### **LGBT**

Discrimination against LGBT people remains very high with several cases of violence and bullying against them. From an institutional point of view, the recent debate around the recognition of the de facto unions reached with difficulty the approval of a law, which was the output of much political mediation. The cultural challenge remains very high.

*The Italian CSOs are particularly active on several fronts. Various organizations work actively, coherently with the expertise connected to their mission and often in collaboration with others NGOs engaged in the various domains connected with the promotion and protection of human rights. Hence, human rights promotion and protection, assistance and volunteering directed towards the most vulnerable and refugees, often surrogating the gaps of the State and legislation, information activities, legal activities, policy and advocacy initiatives, legislative initiatives, are among the manifold actions implemented by the Italian CSOs, generously and often also pro bono.*

## **2. What has been your experience, as civil society, of engaging with CERD to date?**

We consider it is very important and useful to participate in and have the opportunity of forwarding independent reports to CERD. We, as *Comitato per la promozione e protezione dei diritti umani*, an umbrella organization of 101 Italian NGOs and association, have undertaken as main engagement the establishment in Italy of a national human rights institution (NHRI) in line with the Paris Principles (which unfortunately in Italy is still lacking). Parallel, among our tasks is the coordination and preparation of alternative reports to those of the government, through a bottom up approach deriving from the activities implemented at grassroot level by the Italian CSOs and in particular our member organizations. Participating in CERD - this is our third participation to its session - has been a very important experience which has contributed also in stimulating networking and knowledge, clearing and strengthening our action with regard to discrimination, both racial and multiple discrimination. In addition we consider as one of our engagements to translate and disseminate the recommendations of UN Treaty Bodies

and UPR, especially in the absence of an Italian NHRI. We are absolutely sure that the role of CERD is fundamental in building up a democratic society; it offers CSOs the opportunity of growing in experience and knowledge, strengthening their advocacy capacities and also somehow facilitating the exchange with our national institutions, while implementing our actions for the respect of human rights for all.

### **3. How can the CERD improve and enhance its engagement with civil society, and its work on racial discrimination for greater impact on the ground?**

We think CERD recommendations should be sustained and made more binding at national level, especially in view of the present historical moment when crisis and the risk for human rights violations is very high. Racial discrimination is very much challenged under the impact of the migration flows and a policy at European level quite ineffective. It is sad to see how today still human rights are denied through facts even if apparently recognised in words.

CERD is one of the main instruments to counter act the closure and refusal for recognizing that people all around the world are equal and have to have access to the same rights, without any discrimination connected to race, religion, gender, etc. CERD engagement with civil society is vital and perhaps the possibility of exchanges and also interventions at national level for the dissemination of information connected with ICERD could contribute in strengthening the engagement of CERD against racial discrimination and making it more known and clear also at grassroot level.

*Member organizations:* Anfaa, Anolf, Antigone, Archivio Disarmo, Archivio Immigrazione, ARCI, Arcigay, Articolo 21, ASGI-Associazione Giuristi per l'Immigrazione, Associazione Ananke Onlus, Associazione Campanari d'Arrone, Associazione Eleonora Pimentel, Associazione Astro Nascente, Assopace, Associazione Senza Confine, ATD-Quarto Mondo, AUCI, AUSER, Banca Etica, Be Free, Casa dei Diritti Sociali, CGIL, Chiamalafrika, CIAI, CIPAX, CIPSI-Coordinamento di Iniziative Popolari di Solidarietà Internazionale, CIR-Consiglio Italiano Rifugiati, CISL Dipartimento Politiche Migratorie, CISMAI, CISP-Comitato Internazionale Sviluppo dei Popoli, Cittadinanzattiva, Comitato per i Diritti Umani, Comitato Singh Mohinder, Comitato UNRWA Italia, Donne in Nero, EMA, Federazione Chiese Evangeliche, Federazione Italiana per il Superamento dell'Handicap-FISH, Fondazione Centro Astalli, Fondazione Internazionale Don Luigi di Liegro, Fondazione Basso-Sezione Internazionale, Fondazione Labos, FVGS, Giovani per un Mondo Unito, Gruppo Martin Buber, Guardavanti – Onlus per il futuro dei bambini, INTERSOS, Intervita, IRMA, Istituto Cooperazione Economica Int., Istituto di Medicina del Soccorso, Laboratorio Diritti Umani, La Gabbianella, LAW-Legal Aid Worldwide, Legambiente, Lega Internazionale per i Diritti e la Liberazione dei Popoli, Libera, MED.eA, Medici contro la Tortura, Medici per i Diritti Umani, Movimondo, Oltre Babele, Ossigeno per l'Informazione, PaxChristi, Ponte della Memoria, PRO.DO.C.S., Progetto Continenti, Rete Educare ai Diritti Umani, Save the Children, Terre des Hommes, Ubi Minor, UDI-Unione Donne in Italia, UIL, UNICEF Italia, Unione Forense per la Tutela dei Diritti Umani, UniTs, Vides Internazionale, Vis-Volontariato Int. per lo Sviluppo, WILPF-Women's International League for Peace and Freedom *and with the collaboration of* Amnesty International, Focsiv, Mani Tese, Medici senza Frontiere.

