WORKING PAPER

Eurofound

Industrial relations and social dialogue

# Italy: Industrial relations developments in 2025

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# 1.0 Introduction

Industrial relations in Italy in 2025 were characterized mainly by major changes at company level and strong reactions to the government's 2026 Budget Law. A landmark Constitutional Court ruling transformed workplace representation by allowing unions with national comparative representativeness to establish workplace representatives (RSA), even without signing company-level agreements. This decision filled a long-standing regulatory gap and immediately affected workplace dynamics, with unions seeking to expand their presence and employers expressing concern about uncertainty and potential disputes. Tensions grew further when the government presented its budget: the Italian General Confederation of Labour (CGIL) called a national general strike, the Italian Confederation of Workers' Trade Unions (CISL) organised its own demonstration urging renewed social dialogue, and the Italian Labour Union (UIL) adopted a more cautious stance. On the employers' side, the General Confederation of Italian Industry (Confindustria) initially criticised the budget for lacking measures to support competitiveness, though its position softened after securing key amendments in parliament. Overall, it was the combination of shifting workplace-level rules and the contentious budget debate that most directly shaped industrial-relations developments in Italy in 2025.

The following working paper presents changes in social partner organisations, and development in bi-partite social dialogue and collective bargaining structures. Subsequently, government initiatives having an impact on social dialogue and collective bargaining structures, and tripartite social dialogue are presented. Followed by an overview of social dialogue initiatives and collective bargaining arrangements on specific topics. At the end of this working paper, a commentary provides concluding remarks on the industrial relations developments in Italy, and an outlook of expected industrial relations developments in the near future.

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# 2.0 Changes in social partner organisations

This section examines how social partner organisations evolved in 2025, focusing on changes in their internal structures, leadership, and strategic positioning within the industrial-relations system. It also highlights key organisational events, such as congresses or leadership transitions, in order to showcase what shaped the roles and influence of trade unions and employer organisations during the year.

## 2.1 Changes in the position of social partner organisations

In February 2025, the Italian Confederation of Trade Unions (CISL) underwent a leadership transition with Luigi Sbarra stepping down as Secretary General and Daniela Fumarola taking over the role. The succession reflects an element of continuity, as Fumarola had previously held senior leadership positions within the confederation under Sbarra's leadership (CISL, 2025a).

## 3.1 Trade union or employer organisations' congress

With reference to the main trade union confederations, the only national congress held in 2025 was that of CISL. On that occasion, the confederation appointed Daniela Fumarola as Secretary General, succeeding Luigi Sbarra through established internal democratic procedures.

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# 3.0 Development in bi-partite social dialogue and collective bargaining

This section reviews how bipartite social dialogue and collective bargaining developed across different levels in 2025, from company and regional negotiations to sectoral and cross-industry dynamics. It also highlights how external pressures, such as the war in Ukraine, and longer-term structural trends influenced bargaining practices and shaped the future direction of employer–union cooperation.

## 3.1 Company level

In 2025 the Italian Constitutional Court issued a significant ruling on workplace union representation, specifically concerning *Rappresentanze Sindacali Aziendali* RSA (in English Workplace Trade Union Representatives). Judgment no. 156/2025 marks a further intervention by the Italian Constitutional Court on trade union representativeness, highlighting once again the absence of a legislative framework in a core area of industrial relations. This regulatory vacuum has forced the Court into an unusual role of judicial substitution, repeatedly exercised since 1974 and accompanied by unheeded calls for legislative action. The Court reiterates the inadequacy of the traditional criteria under Article 19 of the Workers' Statute, both the presumption of representativeness of major confederations and the criterion based on signing a collective agreement, which is deemed structurally dependent on the employer's power of recognition. Emphasis is placed on the need for selection criteria that reflect the union's effective representative capacity and prevent distortions. Finding a constitutionally unlawful gap between employers' freedom to choose bargaining counterparts and representative unions' access to statutory rights, the Court introduces the criterion of *comparative representativeness*. It declares Article 19 unconstitutional insofar as it excludes unions that are comparatively most representative at national level from establishing workplace representations. While the decision strengthens the regulatory role of judicial intervention and may help counter contractual dumping, it revives unresolved issues concerning the definition of relevant bargaining sectors and the parameters for measuring representativeness. The judgment ultimately renews its call for an organic legislative reform capable of ensuring a coherent and effective system of trade union representation (Treu, 2025).

## 3.2 Regional level

In Italy regional-level social dialogue continues to play a role in 2025, although there have been no major reforms of the overall institutional framework.

Collective bargaining at regional level is a well-established practice. Regional collective agreements are usually negotiated between regional administrations, local public bodies, and trade unions Italian General Confederation of Labour (CGIL), CISL, Italian Labour Union (UIL), and sectoral unions, and often complement national-level agreements by addressing specific local conditions, employment structures, and sectoral needs.

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The main Italian trade union confederations — CGIL, CISL, and UIL — all maintain regional substructures that connect their national leadership with local and sectoral branches. CGIL is represented regionally through Regional Committees, which coordinate the activities of local Camere del Lavoro (Chambers of Labour) and serve as the confederation's interface with regional authorities and social partners. CISL operates via Regional Federations corresponding to each of Italy's 20 regions, managing regional-level initiatives, bargaining, and coordination with the national leadership. UIL relies on Regional Councils and Federations, which oversee regional collective bargaining, social dialogue, and sectoral representation. In 2025, these territorial substructures remained active in facilitating regional agreements and social dialogue initiatives, without major structural changes, ensuring continuity in the representation of workers at the regional level.

Among different initiatives and as a way of illustration, tripartite regional initiatives in Italy include the "Patto per il Lavoro"(Labour Pact) in Emilia-Romagna, a formal agreement between the regional government, trade unions (CGIL, CISL and UIL), employer organisations and local authorities aimed at promoting employment, skills development and innovation; the "Patto per lo Sviluppo" (Development Pact) in Lombardy, which establishes permanent social dialogue tables between the Region and social partners to coordinate economic growth, industrial policy and labour market measures. In Friuli-Venezia Giulia, trade unions are actively involved in shaping regional social policies, as exemplified by the protocol of understanding signed in 2025 between the regional government and the pensioners' unions SPI-CGIL, FNP-CISL, and UILP-UIL. The agreement aims to strengthen and integrate regional socio-health services for the elderly and non-self-sufficient citizens, establishing a framework for ongoing dialogue and collaboration between social partners and public authorities. In Veneto, trade unions are formally involved in the Regional Partnership Table for EU Cohesion Policy programming (2021–2027), where they contribute to the design and monitoring of employment, training and social inclusion measures. In Puglia, a notable example of trade union involvement in regional development is the "Social Gender Pacts" promoted by the Regional Government within its welfare, rights, and citizenship policies. CGIL, CISL, UIL, and UGL regional sections participate alongside businesses, cooperatives, and local institutions, contributing to the promotion of good practices in work-life balance, gender auditing, and social inclusion across the region. In Tuscany, a notable example of structured cooperation involving trade unions is the "Patto per il Welfare Toscano" (Tuscany Welfare Pact) signed in 2025 between the Region of Tuscany, CGIL, CISL and UIL, and regional employer associations, which formalised a joint commitment to strengthen the regional welfare system and promote shared governance of policy priorities related to social services and labour conditions.

A notable example at the regional level where social partners actively participate is the "Protocollo d'intesa sulla certificazione della parità di genere" (in English *Memorandum of Understanding on Gender Equality Certification*), promoted by Piemonte Region. This agreement, signed by the Piemonte Region, regional representatives of trade unions (CGIL, CISL, UIL) and employer organisations, and other stakeholders, establishes a framework for promoting gender equality in the workplace through a formal certification process. Social partners are directly involved in defining criteria, monitoring compliance, and supporting enterprises in implementing equal opportunity measures.

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## 3.3 War in Ukraine

Several associations and social partners have implemented comprehensive initiatives to support Ukrainian refugees and other beneficiaries of temporary protection in accessing the labour market. Key measures include agreements between Assolavoro (the National Association of Employment Agencies) and trade unions such as Nidil-CGIL, Felsa-CISL and UILTemp-UIL, providing orientation, skills assessment, Italian language courses, vocational training, career guidance, job placement support, and psychological and legal assistance. In partnership with UNHCR, these initiatives also offer recognition of prior skills, multilingual information platforms, and facilitation of employment in qualified positions.

## 3.4 Long-term impact of bi-partite development

Changes are expected regarding the establishment of workplace trade union representatives. It is important to understand how case law will interpret Article 19 of the Workers' Statute following the ruling of the Constitutional Court. The evolution of workplace-level representation will depend on this interpretation.

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# 4.0 Government initiatives impact on social dialogue and collective bargaining

This section outlines how government actions in 2025 shaped social dialogue and collective bargaining, focusing on changes in political leadership, consultation practices, and the rules governing bipartite and tripartite cooperation. It highlights key developments, from reforms affecting representativeness and dispute-resolution mechanisms to the longer-term implications of these initiatives, to understand the evolving role of the state in industrial relations.

## 4.1 Government initiatives on bi-partite social dialogue

The government did not introduce any major initiatives, rules, or regulations that directly reshaped bi-partite social dialogue. However, **Law No. 76/2025**, which establishes new provisions on employee participation and representation, could have a future impact on workplace-level dynamics, potentially influencing the way company-level trade union representatives operate and interact with management.

## 4.2 Government initiatives on collective bargaining

The Italian government did not introduce direct changes to collective bargaining structures through standalone regulations, but Law No. 144 of 26 September 2025, containing a delegation to the Government on workers' remuneration and collective bargaining, is expected to influence collective bargaining in the near future. This law, approved instead of a statutory minimum wage, mandates that the government adopt decrees to strengthen collective bargaining, ensure fair and proportionate wages based on the national collective agreements that are most widely applied, and combat contract dumping by enhancing transparency and enforcement of contractual terms, and by extending minimum remuneration standards for workers not currently covered by collective agreements. The impact is likely to be visible at the sectoral (national collective agreement) and workplace levels.

## 4.3 Changes on government consultation and tri-partite social dialogue

While the formal structures through which the Italian government consults social partners remained largely unchanged, the Meloni government took steps to involve minor, non-confederal trade unions in specific concertation tables. Notably, in May 2025, a government meeting on workplace health and safety convened by the Prime Minister included organisations such as Ugl, Usb, Cida, Cisal, Confedir, Confintesa, Confsal, Ciu, Cse alongside the major confederations, allowing them to present proposals and participate in policy discussions (IlSole24ore, 2025).

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## 4.4 Changes in representativeness

No changes, but during the 2025 Fall Confindustria, Confcommercio, Confesercenti with CGIL, CISL, UIL commenced a significant phase of negotiation to reshape their current representativeness measurement frame agreements.

## 4.5 Long-term impact of government initiatives

Recent legislative measures in Italy, including Law No. 144 of 26 September 2025 (the enabling law on workers' remuneration and collective bargaining) and Law No. 76 of 15 May 2025 on worker participation, are expected to generate significant developments in industrial relations. These reforms could influence both workplace-level and sectoral collective bargaining, as unions and employers adjust agreements to reflect new legal standards and minimum remuneration thresholds. In particular, it will be important to monitor how collective bargaining practices adapt to ensure compliance with the laws, enhance worker representation, and maintain effective social dialogue across different levels of the economy.

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# 5.0 Social dialogue outcomes and collective bargaining agreements on specific topics

This section provides an overview of the key outcomes of social dialogue and collective bargaining in 2025, focusing on how different labour-market actors responded to major policy debates and reforms. It summarises developments across a range of topics, from budget measures and competitiveness to pensions, gender equality, work–life balance, and industrial conflict, in order to show how these issues shaped labour-relations dynamics during the year.

## 5.1 Budget reforms/austerity measures and response from trade unions

The 2026 Budget Law (Law 199/2025, passed 30 December 2025) faced strong opposition from CGIL, which called a national general strike on 12 December 2025. The 24-hour strike covered all public and private sectors, with demonstrations across Italy (CGIL, 2025). CGIL condemned the budget as "wrong and unfair" for lacking measures on wages and pensions (SkyTG24, 2025).

CISL organised its own demonstration in Rome the following day (13 December) titled "Improve the budget, build a Pact", adopting a more dialogue-oriented approach. CISL Secretary General called on the government to "open a new season of concertation to find solutions and decide together" (CISL, 2025c). UIL took a middle position, neither participating in CGIL's strike nor mounting its own visible initiatives (SkyTG24, 2025).

## 5.2 Budget reforms/austerity measures and response from employer organisations

Confindustria initially criticised the 2026 Budget as lacking adequate scale to boost business competitiveness. Whilst acknowledging positive measures such as hyperamortisation and the ZES Unica (Single Special Economic Zone) tax credit extension, the organisation highlighted several shortcomings: no interventions on the SME (Small and Medium-sized Enterprises) Guarantee Fund, insufficient funding for development contracts (€550 million for 2027-2029 versus actual needs), and problematic fiscal measures including harsh taxation of intra-group dividends and restrictions on using tax credit incentives (Confindustria, 2025).

Following parliamentary amendments, Confindustria's assessment improved significantly: the organisation secured key modifications including: extension of hyperamortisation to 30 September 2028 with updated eligible assets; abolition of the prohibition on offsetting tax credits against social security contributions; softening of dividend taxation increases (5% shareholding threshold instead of 10%); and RENTRI (National Electronic Waste Traceability Register) reporting exemptions for SMEs and waste management consortia. Whilst welcoming these changes, Confindustria noted the budget remained non-expansionary and expressed concerns about certain measures, particularly those

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affecting pension fund portability and TFR (end-of-service severance payment) obligations for smaller firms (Confindustria, 2025).

## 5.3 Social dialogue on competitiveness

At sectoral level, the metalworkers' NCBA was renewed on 22 November 2025 after 17 months of negotiations between FIM-FIOM-UILM and Federmeccanica-Assistal. The agreement explicitly addressed competitiveness concerns, with employers emphasising that the contract responds to people's needs and supports business competitiveness through innovations in flexibility, working time arrangements, and productivity measures. The accord covered 1.5 million workers with a €205.32 monthly increase (9.64%) and introduced provisions on training rights, workplace representation, and health and safety (Il Diario del Lavoro, 2025).

At company level, IVECO Group signed an agreement on 6 June 2025 with FIM-CISL, UILM-UIL, FISMIC, UGLM and AQCFR renewing the economic component of its company-level contract for 2025-2026. The company explicitly stated the agreement formed part of building a participatory industrial relations system based on clear rules, considered an important competitiveness factor for its 14,000+ Italian employees (Arena Digitale, 2025).

## 5.4 Social dialogue on pension reforms

No structural pension reform was enacted in 2025. The government extended existing experimental measures, notably Quota 103 (flexible early retirement at 62 years of age with 41 years of contributions), which had been introduced for 2024 and continued into 2025.

CGIL specifically opposed the automatic increase of retirement age linked to life expectancy, making this one of the key demands in its 12 December 2025 general strike.

## 5.5 Social dialogue on lifelong learning

The interprofessional training funds (Fondi Paritetici Interprofessionali), jointly managed by social partners, continued their activities in 2025, also through the Fondo Nuove Competenze (New Skills Fund), which co-financed training programmes involving over 550,000 workers. The Ministry of Labour announced a further investment of €731 million to strengthen workers' digital and green skills, with plans to involve an additional one million workers. The 19 interprofessional funds collectively trained nearly 2 million workers in 2023, representing approximately 20% of private sector employees (INAPP, 2025).

At company level, EssilorLuxottica signed a programmatic agreement on 9 September 2025 with the Italian Federation of Chemical, Textile, Energy and Manufacturing Workers

(Filctem), CGIL, the Federation of Energy, Fashion, Chemistry and Related Workers (Femca) CISL and the Italian Union of Textile, Energy and Chemical Workers (Uiltec), UIL to coordinate actions and resources for the development and competitiveness of Italian factories. The agreement included launching pilot projects for wearable device component production in Italy and establishing pathways for permanent employment stabilization of workers potentially employed in this

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innovative sector, thereby creating new professional skills. The company com mitted to valuing extraordinary skills already present in Italian factories whilst favouring the development of new professional competencies (EssilorLuxottica, 2025).

## 5.6 Social dialogue on gender (in)equality

The Ministry of Labour convened social partners on 2 February 2026 to review the draft legislative decree implementing EU Directive 2023/970 on pay transparency.

The metalworkers' NCBA, signed on 22 November 2025 between FIM-FIOM-UILM and Federmeccanica-Assistal, strengthened provisions on combating violence against women in the workplace (Il Diario del Lavoro, 2025).

The Mining Activities NCBBA, signed on 11 July 2025 between Assorisorse and Filctem-CGIL, Femca-CISL and Uiltec-UIL, established an Observatory for Equal Opportunities to promote gender equality and professional equity within the sector (ADAPT, 2026).

## 5.7 Social dialogue on work–life balance

At sectoral level, in February 2025**,** the CCNL for the electricity sector (2025–2027) was renewed by the main social partners, including the trade unions Filctem CGIL, Flaei CISL, and Uiltec UIL, together with employer associations and major companies such as Enel, Terna, GSE, and Sogin. The agreement introduced key changes to working time and work/life balance, notably transforming three half-day afternoon permissions into three full paid rest days**,** increasing annual training hours for employees, and improving holiday accrual rules and consultation mechanisms on work organisation, thereby enhancing both rest periods and opportunities for reconciling work and personal life (CCNL settore elettrico, 2025).

At company level, on 9 September 2025, EssilorLuxottica signed an agreement with Filctem CGIL, Femca CISL and Uiltec UIL to extend its four-day working week model. From 1 January 2026, the company will pilot the model across an entire production site, with all personnel benefiting from 20 weeks of four working days (Fridays off) without salary reduction (EssilorLuxottica, 2025). In December 2025**,** Intesa Sanpaolo signed a company-level collective agreement with trade unions introducing measures to improve working time and work/life balance. Key provisions include flexible schedules for parents**,** additional paid leave for medical appointments, and the use of Time Banking to accumulate extra hours off. The agreement also supports hybrid and remote working options, allowing employees to balance professional and personal commitments more effectively. It was negotiated jointly with the bank’s trade union partners and applies from January 2026 to December 2029 (Intesa San Paolo, 2025). Finally, in July 2025, Capgemini Italy signed a company-level agreement with trade unions (Filcams CGIL, Fisascat CISL, UILTuCS, Fiom CGIL, Fim CISL, Uilm, Fismic) to implement an experimental smart working scheme. Effective from 1 September 2025 for 24 months, the agreement allows employees across the company to voluntarily work remotely, while keeping standard daily and weekly working hours unchanged. The initiative aims to enhance work/life balance and promote flexible work arrangements in line with modern labour practices (CISL, 2025b).

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## Industrial conflict

Ministry of Labour reports 27 agreements in 2025 protecting 14,260 workers, including successful reindustrialisations of La Perla, Diageo (Cinzano facility), Riello, Jabil, and Coin. The Ministry stated active crisis tables decreased from 55 in 2022 to 41 in 2025, with workers involved dropping from 80,000 to 34,802. Minister claimed this demonstrated structural improvement through responsible dialogue between institutions, businesses and unions (Il Diario del Lavoro, 2026).

On the other hand, according to CGIL, Industrial production fell 8.4% below 2021 levels, declining 26 consecutive months from February 2023. CGIL documented 96 companies in crisis affecting 121,489 workers, with major cases including ENEL closures (Brindisi, Civitavecchia), Beko Siena, Glencore Portovesme, and Trasnova. CGIL claimed many announced reindustrialisations failed to materialise, with facilities remaining closed despite ministerial promises (CGIL, 2025).

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# 6.0 Commentary and outlook

This section provides an overview of the key industrial-relations developments that shaped 2025, highlighting notable events, emerging trends, and shifts in the broader institutional landscape. It also outlines the main conclusions and forward-looking perspectives that help frame expectations for how social dialogue and collective bargaining may evolve in the coming years.

## 6.1 Conclusion

The year 2025 was marked by significant judicial and legislative developments that are expected to reshape Italy's industrial relations system in the coming years.

Constitutional Court Judgment No. 156/2025 fundamentally altered workplace representation by shifting from contract-based to comparative representativeness criteria for establishing RSA. This ruling addresses a long-standing regulatory vacuum and may strengthen union access to workplaces.

Two major laws will shape future industrial relations. Law 144/2025 (September) represents Italy's response to the EU minimum wage directive, rejecting statutory minimum wage in favour of strengthening collective bargaining through government-adopted decrees aimed at combating pirate contracts and extending minimum remuneration standards. Law 76/2025 (May) introduced worker participation provisions that may influence workplace-level dynamics between management and union representatives.

## 6.2 Outlook

Looking ahead to 2026, several key developments and events are expected to shape the Italian industrial relations landscape, influenced by both recent legislative shifts and scheduled organizational activities.

**Legislative and judicial developments**

- Implementation of Law No. 144/2025: A major focal point will be the implementation of Law No. 144 of 26 September 2025. This enabling law grants the government the power to adopt decrees aimed at strengthening collective bargaining and ensuring fair wages based on the most widely applied national collective agreements (CCNLs).
- Challenges of Law 144: Significant developments are expected as social partners and the government navigate the framework defined by this law, particularly regarding its aim to combat "CBAs dumping" and the extension of minimum remuneration standards to workers not currently covered by collective agreements.
- Judicial Action on Fair Working Conditions: The industrial relations climate will likely be influenced by the ongoing and significant actions of the Milan Public Prosecutor’s Office (Procura di Milano). These interventions in sectors such as textiles, logistics, and platform work (riders) involve applying criminal sanctions across the entire value chain to enforce fair working conditions and proper contractual applications.

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- Workplace Representation Dynamics: Following the Constitutional Court Judgment No. 156 of October 2025, which expanded the rights of "comparatively more representative" unions to establish workplace representatives (RSA) even without signing the applicable agreement, 2026 will be a critical year for observing how case law and workplace-level representation evolve.

**Organisational and political outlook**

- 2026 UIL National Congress: A major event on the 2026 calendar is the National Congress of the UIL (Italian Labour Union). This event will be central to defining the union's strategic orientation and leadership for the following years.

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