



## EESC, COUNCILLOR ULGIATI AT THE BRUSSELS PLENARY

On the 16th and 17th of July, the European Economic and Social Committee (EESC) held its Plenary Session in Brussels, with the participation of Councillor Luigi Ulgiati. Various and numerous draft Opinions were adopted, including the very interesting one, ECO/666, on “The role of trade unions in improving productivity”. Trade unions play an important role in labour productivity through collective bargaining and sectoral agreements, as well as by facilitating innovation in the workplace, which in turn could increase labour productivity. In this context, the EESC believes that collective bargaining and social dialogue can extend to the design of new working models that stimulate innovation, such as col-



laborative team structures, flexible working time and shared leadership initiatives. In addition, besides supporting productivity by enabling workers to contribute to decision-making in the workplace, providing them with the necessary information and involving them in effective consultation

processes, trade unions could also improve business performance by helping companies retain experienced workers who could be more productive. Councillor Ulgiati, who spoke on the subject, said: «The role of trade unions and all workers in improving productivity is crucial. It is therefore necessary to strengthen the social dialogue between employers and trade unions, because this is beneficial not only for improving productivity and the objectives of companies, but also for making workers more involved. To this end, I stress that it is useful to have regulations that facilitate the involvement of workers, developing full participation in the objectives of enterprises. This is certainly beneficial for both Parties».

## EU: INCREASING SUMMER POVERTY

According to a recent Eurostat survey, long holidays for European citizens are increasingly a distant memory, because they are not economically sustainable, with 27% of the EU population (equal to about 121 million men and women) claiming that they cannot afford even one week away from home. In this panorama, data from the European Institute of Statistics see Italy leading the ranking of the new poor. The Italian figure stands out above all others: at the end of 2024, 31.4% of Italians said they could not leave home for seven days, which translates into more than 18.5 million people in difficulty. The overall figure, while significant, nonetheless shows a slow but steady improvement over past years, with disparities between member States being profound, testifying to how economic inequalities within the European Union continue to have a direct impact on the quality of life and access to fundamental social rights, such as rest and leisure. Luxembourg, Sweden and the Netherlands

lead the ranking of EU States where the opportunity for extended leisure time is possible for the majority of the population. It is important, however, not to confuse the Eurostat figure, which relates to working and non-working EU citizens, with the in-work poverty figure, which relates to those who, although working, do not earn enough to be able to take extended leave. In this respect, the postcard of summer 2025 has the tired and weary face of more than 41.5 million European workers who, despite being employed, cannot afford even a week's holiday. This was revealed by an analysis of the European Trade Union Institute (ETUI) on the so called “holiday poverty”, which is on the rise in the Old Continent. While the business elite spends the summer period in luxury resorts (with CEOs earning more than 100 times more than an average worker) millions of people are forced to give up their holidays because of the high cost of transport, housing, and food, while real wages remain stagnant, or fall

due to inflation. To combat this serious phenomenon, we need a revival of collective bargaining that guarantees not only higher salaries, but also more paid holidays, in order to ensure decent working and living conditions for millions of Europeans.

