
Railway accident in Brandizzo. Alesil: “Few inspections.” ACLI: “Safety hazards are underestimated”

At the moment there is shock and disbelief at the error (possibly a human error, or perhaps an organisational or communication error) that caused the death of five railway workers mowed down by a train while they were working on the tracks at Brandizzo station, on the Turin-Chivasso railway line. The circumstances are still unclear. The Public Prosecutor's Office in Ivrea, which is investigating the case for criminal negligence and multiple manslaughter, is in charge of establishing the facts. The testimony of the other two workers, who fortunately escaped injury and were also working on the tracks, will be important. Such tragedies certainly raise the alarm on occupational safety, an issue that has always been on the agenda but is too often underestimated. According to INAIL (National Institute for Insurance against Accidents at Work in Italy), there were 1,090 work-related deaths in 2022, 450 in the first six months of this year alone - which had raised hopes that the annual figure would remain below 1,000. This dismal picture stands in stark contrast to the efforts being made to promote safety awareness. "Our association promotes a culture of safety throughout Italy and we constantly reiterate the value of workplace safety," says **Antonio Malvestuto, president of the Italian Association of Occupational Safety Experts (ALESIL)**. "The appropriate safety training is in place," he affirms. "It is carried out with full rigour, but the same cannot be said for inspections. ALESIL association organises workplace safety training for companies, and it recently took part in a round table at the Ministry of Labour and Social Policies, where it put forward a number of proposals to improve safety, including the dissemination of training on compliance and safety awareness in schools. **Stefano Tassinari, vice-president of the Italian Christian Workers' Association (ACLI)**, suggests that workers should be more involved in reporting abuse or irregularities in all working environments. "It is important to consider the possibility of anonymous reporting by the workers," he said, "since little monitoring is done. It would be interesting to try it out. There are still too many deaths and it's impossible to imagine reducing the number to zero." Some progress has been made in terms of inspections. For example, the Ministry of Labour and Social Policy announced in June that it would hire 983 more inspectors following a public tender. It's a good thing to have more inspectors," said the ACLI vice-president, "but in my view it won't be enough." According to Tassinari, there is also a cultural problem that needs to be tackled once and for all in Italy: "There is still a widespread attitude of underestimating the risks. Unfortunately, there is a social consensus to turn a blind eye to safety, which comes after productivity. This is not just a problem for companies that are struggling or in economic difficulty. Even in companies in the north of Italy, which have an excellent turnover, safety at work is underestimated.

It is not enough to increase the number of inspections; it is necessary to allow those concerned to speak out without risking their jobs".

With regard to the tragedy in Piedmont, the ACLI representative is perplexed, although there are still too few details to draw conclusions. "If one person crosses a railway track while a train is passing, it's a mistake, but if five workers are working on a railway track, there can't be a miscommunication. It baffles me," he adds, "that the driver was not informed of the ongoing maintenance work. I suppose there were cameras on the railway line. I'm surprised. We will eventually find out that there were several levels that were not working, but to say today that there was a communication error is a serious matter. All the facts will be established, but

but it may be necessary to increase the technical support."

Elisabetta Gramolini