

## **ROOM FOR RIGHTS AND INCLUSION – Diversity & Inclusion Committee**

### **Department of Agricultural Sciences – University of Sassari (Italy)**

The idea of creating the “Room for Rights and Inclusion” stems from the need to provide all members of the community of the Department of Agricultural Sciences with a place for the recognition and protection of the human rights of uniqueness and freedom of expression and realisation of the Person (art. 3 of the Italian Constitution; art. 1 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights of the United Nations; title 1, art. 1 of the Charter of Fundamental Rights of the European Union).

The "Room for rights and inclusion" is a space (physical and virtual) to receive and listen to all members of the community of the Department of Agricultural Sciences who might need help. In this room, people can receive support from a counsellor and other members of the Diversity and Inclusion Committee (D&I Committee), who will do the following:

- 1) To gather information and provide support to facilitate integration into the Department's community.
- 2) To address cases of discrimination (gender, sexual orientation, nationality, religion, disability, learning difficulties, external appearance, age, etc.) and/or other critical issues and/or conflicts that generate suffering and discrimination.
- 3) To listen to and help identify possible solutions to situations of discomfort.

### **Discrimination**

In general, the term discrimination indicates all those behaviours that are aimed at distinguishing or making differences between several things, situations, or persons. In law, particularly in the field of labour law, discrimination takes on a more specific meaning and is of particular importance, because it touches on subjective guaranteed situations such as personal rights. In accordance with the general principles of our national legal system (arts. 2 and 3 of the Italian Constitution), such rights are considered inviolable.

Discrimination is manifested in all those behaviours explicitly aimed at, or having the effect of, treating unequally people that should be treated equally. Therefore, discriminatory treatment in the workplace occurs when two facts happen simultaneously. First, when the employer, or another person in the same context, adopts an attitude that leads to different treatment of one or several workers compared to how most workers are treated. Second, when such an attitude is not supported by a reason capable of justifying it, but only by factors (e.g. gender, race, religion, and age) that are completely irrelevant for the purposes of carrying out the work activity. This discriminatory model can also be used to describe relationships between colleagues, between professors and students, and between students.

Identifying which type of behaviour may constitute discriminatory treatment in the workplace is particularly relevant. This relevance is destined to further increase as a result of Italian Law 28 June 2012, 92. The most frequent cases of discrimination can be listed as follows:

- gender discrimination
- age discrimination
- discrimination based on sexual orientation
- discrimination based on disability
- religious discrimination
- discrimination based on ethnic origin
- discrimination based on race

- political discrimination
- trade union discrimination
- harassment or sexual harassment
- discrimination based on social and economic conditions
- discrimination based on language
- discrimination based on physical characteristics, somatic features, height, or weight
- discrimination based on health status
- discrimination based on personal beliefs

The development of legislation has shown that the list of discriminatory, and therefore prohibited, behaviour is destined to expand to include all those technical and organisational reasons that are not allowed explicitly in the law. This entails a change in the concept of discrimination, which today can be understood in absolute terms as well. Thus, discrimination can be not only deduced from the comparative judgement between the individual subject and the group in which he or she is included, but also from a judgement made with reference solely to the situation of the individual who has suffered the negative treatment.

### **Actions of the D&I Committee**

The actions taken by the D&I Committee in the “Room for Rights and Inclusion” can follow among these categories:

- 1) Listening service, sharing of useful tools to solve difficulties, and, if necessary, guidance and referral to professionals made available by the University and/or externally.
- 2) Reception of new students to the first year of Bachelor’s, Master’s or Doctorate degree, shared with the Orientation and Didactic Committees and the Ph.D. Programme.
- 3) Promotion of positive sociality and sociability activities, in order to encourage the various components of the department to meet each other.
- 4) Organisation of film festivals and book presentations, as well as courses and seminars, in order to provide training and encourage reflection on various topics of interest to the D&I Committee.
- 5) Creation of the "Library of Human Rights and Inclusion", where every person in the Department can consult books on the topics of interest and study them in depth.