



## **AIFA and the Public Prosecutor's Office of Velletri sign a memorandum of understanding to combat gender-based violence**

*A training and awareness-raising conference for staff held at the Agency's headquarters*

Strengthening the prevention and combating of gender-based violence in all its forms is the objective of the inter-institutional memorandum of understanding between the Italian Medicines Agency and the Public Prosecutor's Office at the Court of Velletri, signed by President Robert Nisticò and Prosecutor Giuseppe Patrone. The signing ceremony took place at the AIFA headquarters during a training and awareness-raising conference in the workplace, aimed at all Agency staff. The initiative demonstrates AIFA's concrete commitment to promoting a culture of respect, legality and zero tolerance towards all forms of abuse. The foundations have been laid for a new inter-institutional collaboration based on synergistic actions, strengthening the network of listening, help and protection for potential victims of violence.

The memorandum provides for AIFA to launch projects and training courses in collaboration with the Public Prosecutor's Office of Velletri, distribute information material to employees, publish the toll-free number 1522 on its institutional website, and organise cultural initiatives and courses to raise awareness of respect for dignity and proper interpersonal relationships, also with a view to preventing behaviour and stereotypes that may encourage harassment or violence. The adoption of a memorandum of understanding between a public institution such as AIFA and a judicial body such as the Public Prosecutor's Office of Velletri acts as a preventive measure, which is fundamental: it strengthens and expands the protection network around potential victims and sends a message of zero tolerance towards all forms of abuse, contributing to the cultural change necessary to eradicate gender-based violence.

‘I am happy and proud that the Italian Medicines Agency is an integral part of this network and this project to combat gender-based violence in the workplace,’ emphasises Nisticò, ‘which often manifests itself in subtle forms, such as psychological abuse, and can escalate to mobbing or even physical violence. To tackle this phenomenon, a real cultural revolution is needed, starting with education in families and schools. I believe that in Italy, women are already quite emancipated compared to many other contexts around the world, but it is also essential to pay attention to the role of men, to prevent it from leading to attitudes of control, possession or violence. We must start with the education of young people, teaching them that equality and dignity for all are never in question.’

'I am impressed by the interest shown by AIFA in these issues. It is a new and important addition to our network, extending training and prevention to the workplace,' commented Prosecutor Patrone.

The event was also attended by Marco Mattei, Chief of Staff at the Ministry of Health, who sponsored the day and emphasised the importance of extending this virtuous cycle. 'Gender-based violence is, first and foremost, a cultural issue that we must combat with firmness and determination. In a civilised country like ours, such serious and unacceptable phenomena cannot be tolerated. A collective effort is needed: talking about it with family and friends and combating it in every environment. By embracing this project, AIFA is setting an example at national level: I hope to be able to involve all the supervised bodies, and the Ministry of Health itself, soon.'

Also present at the initiative was the Undersecretary for Health, Marcello Gemmato, who emphasised: 'Combating gender-based violence is not only an institutional duty, but a cultural and social commitment. Initiatives such as the one promoted by AIFA and the Public Prosecutor's Office of Velletri are an important sign of cohesion and show in concrete terms that we can protect and support those who suffer violence. This is an intolerable phenomenon that we must fight relentlessly. These actions raise awareness among staff and promote safe, inclusive and respectful work environments, where every citizen can count on institutions that are close by and ready to welcome those in need.'

The training session was enriched by contributions from expert consultants, such as former Prosecutor Giancarlo Amato and Magistrate Cristiana Macchiusi. Other speakers included Daniela Cervigni, Head of the Agency's Recruitment and Training Office, and Maria Cristina Piattella, President of the AIFA CUG (Guarantee Committee for Equal Opportunities), project representatives together with the coordinators of the anti-violence section of the Velletri Public Prosecutor's Office, Maria Luisa De Marco and Marcello Pezzi. The aim is to provide the tools to understand risky behaviour, recognise the early signs of violence and learn about intervention procedures, starting from the workplace and extending to the family and social environment, in order to raise awareness of the dramatic phenomenon of gender-based violence.

By signing the Protocol, the Agency joins the Velletri Interinstitutional Network. This is a solid network of institutions, local authorities, local health authorities and expert consultants who work together to prevent and combat this emergency. Since 2018, numerous results have been achieved, including the launch of the "Orientare per Orientarsi" help desk at the Court of Velletri, which offers free advice and support to victims of violence, guaranteeing maximum confidentiality, and the "Con te in rete" project for sharing information, training and updating through communication campaigns, conferences and travelling tours. Thanks to this joint effort and greater public awareness, there has been an increase in the number of reports, a sign that there is more attention and awareness and less fear of "coming out" and reporting the violence suffered.