

Country Report Italy

PRESENTATION AT THE 3rd INTERNATIONAL AUTOMOTIVE WORKERS CONFERENCE November 20-24, 2025 in Pune, India

TIZIANO LORETI,

coordinator of the **S.I. COBAS** trade union
and member of **TIR**

Dear comrades and colleagues,

My name is Tiziano Loreti and I am the local coordinator of the SI Cobas trade union, a workers' union founded in 2013 to combat capitalism and new forms of exploitation, particularly against migrant workers in the logistics sector.

I am also a member and organiser of T.I.R. (Tendenza Internazionale Rivoluzionaria), a new political organisation with an internationalist perspective, committed to opposing war and the rearmament of EU states, and strongly supporting the Palestinian cause.



Across Europe, the automotive industry has been in deep crisis since the start of the pandemic, with a 19% drop in production and no real recovery in sight. The consequences go beyond job losses: they threaten the stability and security of our communities. Germany is a clear example of this: parts of its automotive sector are being converted to military industry, demonstrating how economic crises can fuel militarisation.

Although our union operates mainly in the food and logistics sector, the automotive sector is also crucial for us. Italy is home to some of the world's most famous luxury brands – Ferrari, Maserati, Lamborghini – all rooted in the region I represent: Modena and Bologna, areas equally known for products such as ham and balsamic vinegar, ceramics and other highly prestigious products.

But behind this image of excellence lies a structure based on the systematic exploitation of labour. The same mechanism is repeated in all sectors: large companies outsource part of their production to smaller companies that apply worse contracts, lower wages and less stringent safety standards. These companies often go bankrupt within a few years, leaving behind unpaid wages and social security contributions. This is not due to financial instability: these companies are profitable and secure. It happens solely for profit, exploiting the labour, skills and health of workers.

Take Ferrari, for example: the entire painting division, part of the assembly work and industrial cleaning are outsourced. Workers performing the same tasks, in the same spaces, with the same tools, end up with different employers and unequal pay and rights. This system divides the workforce and weakens solidarity. Our union's mission is to collectivise workers' struggles and build a more assertive and inclusive strategy than traditional trade unions.

Our main tool is picketing. For us, striking is not simply stopping work, but is an active disruptive action that puts pressure on companies and involves more workers in the struggle. This approach has led to concrete results: higher wages, greater safety and better contracts. But it has also led to criminalisation. In the automotive sector in particular, companies such as Ferrari exert enormous influence over local administrations. They bring wealth and in return they gain soft political power, influencing local policies and receiving protection.

When our members strike or take legal action, institutions often intervene, not to defend workers, but to “mediate” and defuse the conflict in the interests of the company. Across Italy, we are involved in hundreds of criminal proceedings. Workers are charged with “private violence”, “obstruction” or “resisting a public official”, even though most of them are later acquitted. The aim is clear: to intimidate and isolate the movement. Local authorities add further pressure with sanctions and prohibition notices, which have immediate effect and are costly to challenge in court.

Furthermore, 95% of the workers in this production chain are migrants, the very people our union represents. This exploitation has a racial dimension: it targets the most vulnerable groups. Discrimination is worse when it comes to migrant women workers.

For this reason, we reject the moderate methods of traditional trade unions. Negotiating ‘middle ground’ compromises does not meet workers’ needs. On the contrary, collective and active resistance – pickets, solidarity and direct action – has proven to be the only way to restore fairness and dignity in the workplace, including in the automotive sector.

In conclusion, the challenges we face are international. They concern not only our jobs, but also our right to peace, dignity and self-determination. The only way forward is to build a shared global strategy, in which workers from every country and every sector – from car factories to logistics warehouses – unite to defend our common rights and our common future.

We therefore thank you for your invitation and look forward to participating in the 3rd International Automobile Conference

Best wishes for our collective struggle,

Tiziano