

Countering discrimination: the role of the confidential counsellor in supporting organizational well-being

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Interview with Francesca Pidone, Confidential Counsellor at Fondazione Bruno Kessler and Fondazione Hub Innovazione Trentino

November 25 marks the [International Day for the Elimination of Violence Against Women](#): a celebration established by the United Nations General Assembly in 1999 that annually draws attention to gender-based violence and the measures needed to protect women from all forms of abuse, be it physical, psychological, sexual or economic.

This date represents not only an opportunity to promote concrete actions in the legal, social and cultural spheres but also gives us an opportunity to reflect once again on crucial issues related to organizational well-being, gender equality and support for people in work and social contexts.

Institutions, schools and businesses are in fact called upon to play an active role in preventing violence and ensuring a safe and equal living, working and studying environment for the communities that inhabit it, with particular regard to women.

Precisely with the intention of enhancing initiatives geared toward supporting individuals, Fondazione Bruno Kessler and Fondazione Hub Innovazione Trentino recently introduced the figure of the **Confidential Counsellor**: an actual point of reference for anyone experiencing situations of bullying, discrimination or harassment in the workplace.

This figure, also provided for in the European Union's equal opportunity guidelines, plays a key role in active listening and mediation, helping to **prevent conflict and promoting an organizational culture based on mutual respect and well-being**. The Confidential Counsellor, through her reserved and neutral action, represents a first and fundamental tool for identifying and preventing problems that may occur in the professional context in terms of bullying, discrimination, and physical, psychological and sexual harassment.

The professional identified for the two Foundations through a public selection call for the position of Confidential Counsellor is lawyer **Francesca Pidone**: Honorary Justice of the Peace at the Court of Florence, coordinator of the Women's Hotline in Pisa, gender expert and trainer in women's

rights, interpersonal violence, prison law and psychology as well as collaborator with various bodies and nongovernmental organizations, nationally and internationally.

“My goal is to be a neutral and trusted figure for those who feel they are struggling. I listen to issues and support people defining steps toward understanding and solution, trying to ensure serenity and fairness,” Pidone explains.

The Foundations’ choice to take advantage of such a figure deliberately fell on a person from outside the organizations for the purpose of ensuring **neutrality, confidentiality and independence** with respect to the cases handled. In addition, given the international vocation of the two institutions, the Confidential Counsellor makes herself available for in person and virtual consultations not only in Italian but also in English.

The position’s tasks include the **design of training and information initiatives** for the communities of reference to the end of **preventing** forms of **bullying, discrimination and harassment** as well as the updating and development of internal policies that promote occupational well-being and gender equality. .

The Confidential Counsellor also assumes strategic importance in the implementation of the [Gender Equality Plan](#) by helping to identify any issues or gender asymmetries that may emerge within the organization. Indeed, her listening and advisory function is crucial in gathering feedback and situation reports that can contribute to the process of continuous improvement of the company’s equal opportunity policies.

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- Videointervista a Francesca Pidone: <https://youtu.be/5Da9Nww9h1Y>
- Link al Gender Equality Plan della Fondazione Bruno Kessler: https://www.fbk.eu/wp-content/uploads/2022/02/220227_GEP_FBK-1.pdf

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