

# Science, gender and society. The experiences of the Italian Women and Science Association

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## Italian Women and Science Association

### Background

The increase of participation of women in science, at all levels is not only a matter of equal opportunities or waste of talents, but it becomes a crucial issue in terms of increased scientific citizenship and rethinking of dominant scientific culture at its roots. This requires to act on different planes: research institutions, science culture, science communications scientific education, gender and science stereotypes.

### Main activities of the Association

#### ANNUAL MEETING



#### PUBLICATIONS



#### RESEARCH PROJECTS

FP7-GENIS-LAB

Project STREGA (Science, Technology and Research: Gender and access) Ministry of labour

FP-6 WONBIT

#### SCIENCE COMMUNICATION

Scientific Magazine  
Donne e Scienza  
section



#### SCIENTIFIC EDUCATION

Scientific teachers courses  
Orientering activity  
Seminars

#### Web

[www.donnescienza.it](http://www.donnescienza.it)

<https://www.facebook.com/Donnescienza>

#### \* Board

Cristina Mangia (President), Silvana Badaloni, Laura Scarino, Franca Albertini, Alessandra Allegrini, Annamaria Aloisi, Sveva Avveduto, Letizia Gabaglio, Lucia Martinelli, Mariangela Ravaioli, Paola Urso, Patrizia Colella, Mariella Paciello, Simona Ronchi della Ronca, Flavia Zucco (Past- President)



Four years of activities for implementing structural changes in order to overcome the factors that limit the careers of women in research.

## GENDER IN SCIENCE AND TECHNOLOGY LAB

### THE PROJECT

GENIS LAB stands for GENDER IN SCIENCE AND TECHNOLOGY LAB. Our aim is to create new working conditions in six European scientific organizations.

Why do working conditions need to change?

Although many things have changed in society, as well as in science, research is still a "boys' affair". Men lead most of the projects, occupy the majority of the top positions and hold the management power both at a national and at European level. Meaning that they are the main actors when it comes to the definition of funding, research lines, working methodologies and conditions. Still, women represent a large part of the talent pool for research science, but many EU data sources indicate that they are more likely than men to "leak" out of the pipeline in the sciences before obtaining a tenured position in a research institute or university.

Four years of activities for implementing structural changes in order to overcome the factors that limit the participation of women in research.

What do we mean by structural change?

We mean a process that as a first thing involves every part of your organization (managers, researchers, administrative staff) into discussing, identifying obstacles that impede women's career and defining strategies to overcome them. In the end a women's friendly working environment is a better place for all.

The following step will be to implement these strategies through an action plan that will last almost three years: enough time to measure results, evaluate outcomes and adjust the plan to better meet emerging needs. Everybody's participation is important: change does not take place if the whole scientific community does not see the need for it. This is why we adopt a participative methodology.

What do we mean by participative methodology?

In order to achieve our goals we have decided to use specific tools already tested in organizations (from public institutions to companies) and combine them in order to reinforce every single action and strengthen the impact:

#### GENIS PARTICIPATORY AUDIT:

it enhances the collective capacity of the organization to examine its activities from a gender perspective and identifies strengths and weaknesses in promoting gender equality issues.

#### GENIS BUDGETING:

a budget analysis from a gendered point of view in which the gender question is taken into account at all levels of the budgetary process with the aim of promoting the equality of women and men.

#### VIRTUAL LABS:

a place in the project website where partners can exchange practices, their outcomes and findings along the way.

#### TRAINING FOR HUMAN RESOURCES MANAGERS:

without changing the mind of the top management structural changes are hard to put in place.

#### CHANGING EVALUATION CRITERIA:

scientific excellence was defined in a time where research and research policies were very different (for instance very few women were involved). Does it respond to contemporary science needs? Through an investigation on scientific production praxis and gendered stereotypes that involve the researchers we will propose new criteria for the definition of excellence.

### WHO IS INVOLVED?

The GENIS LAB project sees the participation of **three technical partners** providing the methodologies and tools:



FGB - Fondazione Giacomo Brodolini, Italy  
[www.fondazionebrodolini.it](http://www.fondazionebrodolini.it)



ITC/IO - International Training Centre of the International Labour Organization (Gender Unit), UN Agency, Italy  
<http://www.itcilo.org/gender>



ADS - Associazione Donne e Scienza (Women and Science National association), Italy  
<http://www.donnescienza.it/>



CSIC - (Spanish Superior Council for Scientific Research) - Institute for Polymer Science and Technology, Spain  
<http://www.ictp.csic.es/>



IPF - Leibniz-Institut für Polymerforschung Dresden e.V., Germany  
<http://www.ipfdd.de/>



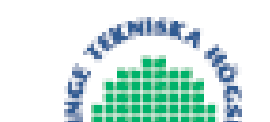
FTM UB - Faculty of Technology and Metallurgy, University of Belgrade, Serbia  
<http://www.tmf.bg.ac.rs/>



NIC - National Institute of Chemistry, Slovenia  
<http://www.ki.si/en/>



INFN - National Institute for Nuclear Physics, Italy  
<http://www.infn.it/>



BTH - Blekinge Institute of Technology, Sweden  
<http://www.bth.se/>



### THE SCENARIO

Interviews carried out in the six institutions: 138 persons (scientists, technicians, administrative staff), whose approximately 69 were women.

Respondents to on-line questionnaire: 625 (355 women) (scientists, technicians, administrative staff).

The following are some highlights from the responses to the on-line questionnaire:

- Age groups: 25 – 35: 46.1%; 36 – 45: 23.6%; 46 – 55: 20.7%; 56 – 65: 9.3%; >66: 0.3% of respondents
- 55.3% of male respondents say they earn more than their partners compared with 25.5% of female respondents.
- 9.6% of male respondents say they spend more time on domestic chores than their partner compared with 56.8% of female respondents
- 3.9% of male respondents say they spend more time on child-care than their partners compared with 46.7% of female respondents
- 44.6% of respondents hold fixed term contracts (38.3% of male and 48.9% of female respondents)
- 37.6% of respondents hold indeterminate contracts (43.5% of male and 33.7% of female respondents)
- Career development:
  - 29.3% of male and 27% of female respondents have had progressive increase of responsibilities
  - 9.6% of male and 5.5% of female respondents have been offered a higher post
  - 10.6% of male and 6.1% of female respondents have been appointed to lead complex research projects
- 49.2% of male and 40.6% of female respondents received financial support from their institution for professional development
- 75.7% of male and 59.1% of female researchers that responded to the questionnaire say they have opportunities to present their work in scientific conferences as often as they deem appropriate
- 33.1% of male and 26.5% of female respondents say they publish frequently in HIF publications.

### FIRST INPUTS ... emerging from the partners on the three GENIS LAB dimensions

#### ORGANIZATIONAL CULTURE

- In large institutions, encourage section leaders to enter into a structured discussion with Senior Management on the resources offered by Equal Opportunity action plans, and their relevance/feasibility at local level. (macro-meso-micro)
- Establish gender focal points at work unit level /improve communication with EO committees
- Target the young to educate them on role of social dialogue, and inform them of their rights and equality laws

#### HUMAN RESOURCES MANAGEMENT

- Introduce mechanisms to improve work-life balance, including addressing issue of culture of long working hours
- Review performance criteria/mechanisms to avoid gender bias (including qualitative criteria, soft skills, other...)
- Improve sex-disaggregated statistics on human resources

#### GENIS BUDGETING

- Monitor research fund allocations and success rates by gender
- Gender budgeting needs to be dealt with as part of the GENIS LAB project
- Assess whether pay gaps depend on gender-biased evaluation of jobs
- Implement gendered statistical data systems.



### CONTACTS

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For further information please check out our website:

[www.genislab-fp7.eu](http://www.genislab-fp7.eu)