



How fair are we? Italian students rate the ethics of geoscientists

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The social perception of scientific world is sometimes biased by false or inexact information, and dissemination might even be driven by an on-purpose discredit.

A few case studies that led the public believe that business or even conspiracy were motivating incomplete information from the scientists about recent catastrophes, will be discussed. In most cases a significant role was played by the limitations of knowledge on the matter, or an underestimated scientific uncertainty, the backwardness to design a future scenario in lack of complete scientific evidences or simply the misunderstanding and mistakes in the flow of information through the filter of the media and press.

Public awareness on how ethics affect geoscientists in conducting their activities is then a major issue.

In this study we analyze results from a questionnaire compiled by young Italian students (15-18 years) that rates their trust in scientists, the reliability of scientific communication and ethics in the world of Geoscience. Areas exposed to various level of geohazards are taken into account. Results are discussed in the light of geoscientist's role played in society, by providing information and support decision-making.