

EGU2020-20409

<https://doi.org/10.5194/egusphere-egu2020-20409>

EGU General Assembly 2020

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A 20-years dataset of the presence of Women in Geosciences within the Italian University

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Here we present data of the presence of women in the Italian university system in the field of geosciences in the last two decades. The official open sources we used to depict this scenario are those provided by MIUR (Italian Ministry of School, University and Research) and Alma Laurea. In the investigated interval some positive trends have been observed as for instance the increase in the number of female full professors from 9.9% to 18.5% and in female associate professors from 23.6% to 30.8%. However, these changes are still too slow, especially for full professors. A peculiarity of the Italian system is the recent creation of a new professional figure introduced by the new Italian Law no. 240/2010 that essentially is a tenure-track associate professor position (hereafter called RTD-b). Among RTD-bs the gender imbalance is an obvious concern seen that only 26% of these positions are occupied by female researchers and even more alarming if we considered the virtual no gender gap at Ph.D. level.

Looking in detail at the different fields of the geosciences, there are more positive situations as the case of Paleontology and Paleoecology where there is no the gap and Mineralogy where the gender imbalance in associate professors is irrelevant but a gender gap is still present at full professor level. A geographical analysis of our dataset has unraveled that, unexpectedly, the universities localized in the Northern richest industrial areas of Italy show a worse gender imbalance compared to Central and South Italy, though the situation has improved in the 20 years.

This study has thus highlighted that significant and positive changes has occurred in the last 20 years, but an important effort is still needed to further improve the situation in the Italian Universities. Possible actions to promote in order to achieve these results are related to the improvement of the welfare Italian system that could better reconcile family and work, stimulating a reorganization of the work system still currently set on the male model. A final positive thought is connected to the fact that in the Italian university system, there is no pay gap between males and females, something really relevant if compared with the salary gap (between 15% and 30%) present in other richer countries.