

Gender Equality in Academia and Research

Italy

PROMOTING GENDER EQUALITY IN RESEARCH

Legal framework

The law 183/2010 established the creation Unique Guarantee Committee for Equal Opportunities in Public Administrations for workers' wellbeing and against discriminations (CUG - Comitati unici di garanzia per le pari opportunità, la valorizzazione del benessere di chi lavora e contro le discriminazioni). These committees replaced the previous Equal Opportunities Committees (CPOs). Although the law indicates general rules for the Committee's composition, it leaves to public administrations and universities the task of drafting internal regulations regarding their election and functioning. This law has also defined the requirement to identify a Confidential Advisor (Consigliera di fiducia) who is in charge of listening to the employees who feel "mobbed" or (sexually) harassed and find the solutions in order to overcome the situation.

The National Code of Equal Opportunities between Women and Men, established by Legislative Decree No. 198 in 2006, sets the obligation for Public Administrations (and therefore Universities) to adopt a Positive Action Plan (PAP). The plan lasts three years and must assure the removal of all obstacles hindering equal opportunities at work between men and women. The directive of the Presidency of the Council of Ministers of 23 May 2007 identifies the instruments and the areas of intervention: positive actions aiming at balancing female representation in sectors and professional levels where they are underrepresented; the organisation of work aiming at promoting work-life balance; and hiring and promotional mechanisms targeting women.

The Law 240/2010 on the General Reform of University Education sets two important aims in terms of equal opportunities. First, it calls for gender balance on the board of trustees of research institutions. However, the law does not specify targets and the respect of gender balance is limited to a generic “declaration of intent”. Second, it extends the maternity leave (5 months, paid 80% of the salary) to post-doc researchers. In order to support this legal measure, each year the Government provides a specific budget of 3,5 million Euro through the annual act setting the Ordinary Financial Funds (Fondo di finanziamento ordinario - FFO) for public Universities. Research institutions enjoy the right to autonomously provide additional benefits to women researchers.

Policy framework

In 2011, a [Memorandum of Understanding between the Ministry of Education, University and Research \(MIUR\) and the Department for Equal Opportunities of the Italian Presidency of Council of Ministers \(DPO\)](#) was established. The Memorandum was designed as an innovative tool to promote equal opportunities in science by devising for the first time in Italy a national strategy aimed at increasing the participation of women and girls in science and technology education, training, research and employment. Given the Government instability in the last years, the Memorandum remained unapplied.

In 2013, the 2014-2020 National Research Programme (Programma nazionale di ricerca - PNR) (so called Horizon 2020 Italia – HIT 2020) represents the main Government’s document for R&D planning and it is coordinated by MIUR. Both in its first draft (2013) and in its second draft (2014), it recommends to ensure a gender-balanced representation of the peer-review selection panels, and invites research institutions to promote equal opportunities and to include a gender dimension in research. Moreover, the programme foresees a specific budget of 1 million Euro to foster equal opportunities in scientific careers. Because of the changes in Governments, the PNR has not been approved yet and, therefore, the 1 million Euro budget for gender equality has never been allocated. A third update of the PNR is currently being drafted.

Other stimulatory initiatives

The award “L’Oréal Italy for Women and Science” is part of the L’Oréal UNESCO award for women in Science and takes place every year. In Italy, the award has come to its 13th edition and since the beginning has provided a scholarship of 15.000 Euro to 60 female researchers under 35 years old in order to fund their research.

Since 2011, the Lombardy Region has provided workshops on gender medicine to practicing physicians (who may be researchers themselves). Four editions have been carried out, the last two ones in cooperation with the EU-funded project STAGES at the University of Milan.

Key actors

The Ministry of Education, University and Research (MIUR) is the key research policy actor and funding agency in Italy at state level. It coordinates the preparation of the PNR (National Research Programme). MIUR's engagement in promoting gender equality in research has led a Memorandum of Understanding with the Department for Equal Opportunities (DPO). Moreover, in September 2015, the Rectors Conference of Italian Universities (Conferenza dei Rettori delle Università Italiane – CRUI) and Ministry of Education, University and Research MIUR launched a survey to all Italian Universities in order to identify, among others, how gender parity is being achieved and how gender is being integrated in research content. Through this inquiry, CRUI and MIUR aimed at identifying concrete actions to foster the number of women in research institutions and in decision-making boards of research organisations, to better integrate the gender dimension in policies, programmes and research projects, to periodically assess equal opportunities policies in research organisations, and to identify good practices.

The Department for Equal Opportunities of the Italian Presidency of the Council of Ministers is in charge of the guidance, proposal and coordination of regulatory and administrative initiatives in all the fields relating to the planning and implementation of equal opportunity policies. They are coordinating two EU-funded structural change projects (STAGES and TRIGGER).

The National Network of University Committees for Equal Opportunities (Rete Nazionale degli Organismi di Parità – CUGs) gathers Universities' Committees for the protection of gender equality for workers' wellbeing and against discriminations (CUGs) and other Equal Opportunities bodies (if the CUG have not been constituted yet) in Italian Universities.

INITIATIVES FOR GENDER EQUALITY BY RESEARCH PERFORMING ORGANISATIONS

By Law, Public Administrations – including all Public research organisations including Universities – must have a gender equality plan (also called Positive Action Plan and referred to hereafter as PAP). Therefore, all 96 Italian universities have a PAP. Normally, these plans are three-year long and are prepared and implemented by internal CUGs or other equality bodies (i.e. the CPO – Equal Opportunities Committee – if the CUG has not been constituted yet). A few measures of particular PAPs can be highlighted. The University of Ferrara has a renowned Gender Budget which it is currently considered by the Department for Equal Opportunities as an example to be transferred/adopted by all Public Administrations. The universities of Trento and Ferrara have introduced gender quotas in the Committee for the Careers Evaluation and for candidates for the elections of Rector and Department Directors. As a consequence, before introducing this measure in the University of Trento, the Committee was composed by one woman and four men, while in 2015 it is composed by three women and two men. In the University of Ferrara, during the last Rector elections the deadline of the electoral campaign had to be postponed because of the lack of women candidates. An increasing number of women candidates showed up for the last elections of the Directors of the Departments.

Besides the PAPs, five Italian universities are partners in consortia of EU-funded structural change projects: University of Milan (STAGES and WHIST), University of Padova (GENDERTIME), University di Napoli Federico II (GENOVATE), University of Pisa (TRIGGER) and University of Trento (GARCIA). Within these projects, gender equality plans are being set up and implemented. These gender equality plans focus on enhancing women's participation in research by promoting actions aimed at removing gender bias in the organisational culture and empowering young women researchers. More specifically, the objective of supporting women's participation in decision-making bodies is pursued via medium/long-term measures aimed at changing the organisational culture rather than through positive actions aimed at ensuring a balanced representation of both sexes in the composition of boards^[2]. Three of these plans also consider the integration of the gender dimension in research in their measures.

Other organisations in Italy are taking part of the EU-funded structural change projects: GENDERTIME, FESTA, GENOVATE, GENISLAB, TRIGGER, GARCIA, WHIST, DIVERSITY and LIBRA.

Besides the gender equality plans described above, the University of Padova is organising since 2013 a 32-hour Course of Gender Medicine within the degree in Medicine and Surgery. This measure is not institutionalised within the PAP.

[2] STAGES at University of Milan had a specific target on the composition of Boards and quotas were introduced: 3 out of 8 members of the Board of Directors must be women.

RELEVANT EXAMPLES OF PRACTICES

Gender Report

The Gender Report of the University of Ferrara is a document that the CUG (Unique Guarantee Committee for Equal Opportunities in Public Administrations for workers' wellbeing and against discriminations) and the CPO (Equal Opportunities Committees) have been implementing since 2011. The Gender Report is divided in four parts: 1) monitoring the presence participation of women in the organisation among students, professors, clerical workers and all decision-making bodies using the European Commission's She Figures indicators, 2) describing equal opportunities bodies in the organisation 3) describing the gender equality plan and its objectives, and 4) describing which actions of the plan have been completed. Considering the positive impact of this initiative at the University of Ferrara, the Department for Equal Opportunities funded the university to create a model of Gender Report – in the form of guidelines – to propose to all Italian Universities and Public Administrations.

Gender Medicine workshops

Within the EU-funded structural change project STAGES, at the University of Milan, a strong cooperation with the Health Department of the Lombardy Region has been pursued. The cooperation had firstly concerned workshops on the integration of the gender dimension in medicine. Two workshops – out of four included in the STAGES project – have been organised together with the Lombardy Region. This cooperation increased significantly the number of physicians (who can also be researchers themselves) participating to the workshops: during the first two workshops, organised by STAGES only, 110 physicians participated, while the second and third workshop, organised in cooperation with the Lombardy Region, accounted more than 600 physicians. In total, more than 1,200 physicians in total have been attending the courses. Many of them work in University hospitals or in hospitals having an agreement with Universities. They pursue a double-track career: as hospital physicians devoted to clinics and, at the same time, as academic physicians devoted to research. The possibility to reach an increasing number of participants was not the only positive outcome of this cooperation: STAGES could gain visibility in the territory and further projects with the Lombardy Region have been organised on the basis of the success of the workshops. The cooperation led to extend the research on gender inequalities in medical careers (which is one action of STAGES) to four further hospitals (it was designed at first as a single case study in the Hospital of the University of Milan), as well as the possibility to teach to all the CUGs (Unique Guarantee Committee for Equal Opportunities in Public Administrations for workers' wellbeing and against discriminations) of the health organisations in Lombardy how to do a gender equality plan (action to be continued after the end of STAGES).

School of project drafting and management of European projects for post-doctoral students and early career researchers

Finally, within the EU-funded STAGES project, the University of Milano designed this School with the aim of enhancing the number of women researchers accessing funds. Indeed, women seem to be excluded for the most part from local and national financing networks, and they participate less in European calls for proposals. This action was designed with the Network of Female Researchers on the basis of the obstacles met by women researchers in accessing research funds and managing research projects. The School will be continued after the end of STAGES.