

Women and science: a look beyond stereotypes

September 14, 2017

FBK-Povo hosted researchers, experts, and journalists for a cultural debate on the presence of women in the world of work and language

(Unitn press release)

From the “Women & Science” project of the University of Trento emerges a limited presence of women in science careers in Italy, a gender imbalance that increases in some disciplines and in higher hierarchy levels. Analyses and proposals came out of the works that, in the National Convention of the Italian Society of Physics, saw scientists and people involved in school and university education, politics and journalism at the Povo premises of FBK this morning. In the afternoon, a media awareness initiative was held at the Fabio Ferrari Science and Technology Hub: the photo of the Solvay Convention in 1927, in which Marie Skłodowska Curie was the only woman among 28 men, will be proposed again but this time it will be only one man among 28 women

Trento, September 14, 2017 – There are still many obstacles that girls and women encounter in accessing education and careers in science. A gender imbalance that increases in some disciplines (such as physics and industrial engineering) and in higher hierarchy levels (only 21% of full professors are women). The “Women and Science” infographic presented at FBK-Povo in Sala Stringa Hall this morning, within the FisiCittà event and the National Convention of the Italian Society of Physics, confirmed expectations and perceptions but also prompted proposals to encourage positive actions to favor equal opportunities.

Data and analysis, presented by researcher **Rossella Bozzon** of the Center for Gender Studies, opened the debate “Research: What spaces for women?” which focused on the reasons that steer education choices and on imbalances in careers. The data collected and processed – which can be viewed at www.unitn.it/donne-scienza – was curated by the Center for Gender Studies as a project of the Press Office of the University of Trento; the design and implementation of the project was carried out by the editorial staff of Datatellers (www.datatellers.info). **Francesca Sartori**,

professor of the Department of Sociology and Social Research at the University of Trento then investigated the reasons for this marked disparity, which originates in the widespread cultural patterns in our society. In the family, in school, in the media, starting from the different games that are offered to boys and girls, to orientation in life choices: stereotypes still prevent women from perceiving all their possibilities of realization. “To this end, school guidance and pre-school and school interventions can play a key role. An important step may be the investment in training on gender issues for teachers so they can steer students’ choices in a more balanced and effective manner. ”

The discussion, moderated by **Chiara La Tessa**, a researcher at the Department of Physics and Tifpa INFN, then focused on the barriers that society places for women who try and pursue scientific careers. The morning’s comments were introduced by President **Paolo Collini** who, in greeting the audience, talked about the efforts of the University of Trento to launch initiatives aimed at gender re-balancing. “Modifying policies for long-term changes and the way. Starting from an unbalanced condition, a discontinuity element is needed and the active policies, such as the recruitment incentives set up in our university may precisely be this. ”

Paolo Dalvit, a former principal currently working for the Department of Knowledge of the Autonomous Province of Trento in the area of training policies talked about the “demographic winter”. An era in which a low level of qualification is recorded and prospects do not improve in a country characterized by a significant discontinuity between technical and theoretical training. Acting on gender stereotypes with collective discussions

“Heterogeneous groups can better face the challenges of the future because they are, due to their structure, potentially more innovative,” said **Manuela Ghizzoni**, a member of the Parliament. And about the issue of women’s careers: “Politics must act on the main problem represented by temporary jobs that reveals itself, especially for women, in an environment that is competitive and not sensible to them. Support of maternity and work-life balance with targeted resources and interventions is another lever on which the difference can be made.”

Sara Ferrari, Province Council member for University and Research, Youth Policies and Equal Opportunities, focused her talk on the importance of words to give women visibility. “We need to highlight the presence and value of women, their competitive advantage, to counteract the trend not to admit the issue by undermining the prejudices rooted in the cultural context in which we live. To do this, let’s begin with the new generations because identity is formed early and action needs to be taken quickly so that it does not become hostage to prejudice, even if unconscious. All of us are responsible and called to act. ”

Barbara Poggio, University of Trento’s Vice-President for equal opportunities and diversity policies pointed out the complexity of the problem. She then recounted some projects initiated by the University of Trento to reduce gender imbalance. Socialization and gender education programs with schools and families, training projects (such as the Trentino Young Science Challenge) where non-traditional role models help overcome prejudices. “We are currently engaged in the Family Audit Certification, in the dissemination of parenting help desks, and some specific services (such as corporate daycare), language and awareness. And, on the front of research, with the Garcia project (www.garciaproject.eu), we focused on the subject of work-life balance, mentoring and rights awareness. ”

Fabio Turone, a scientific journalist at the Center for Ethics in Science and Journalism (CESJ), spoke about the representation of scientists in the media. He cited various studies and also the “Finkbeiner Test” (https://it.wikipedia.org/wiki/Test_di_Finkbeiner) – a tool for verifying the correctness and balance of an article or interview with a prominent woman – as an example of sexism analysis in the media.

The debate prepared the “Fisica, femminile singolare” (the noun Physics, in Italian is feminine, editor’s note) round table, which was held shortly thereafter, a special session of the National Convention of the Italian Society of Physics, in which the personal experiences of the guests contributed to giving an articulated picture of the female condition in physics-related disciplines.

Other talks were held by the chairwoman of the Italian Society of Physics, **Luisa Cifarelli**, **Antigone Marino** (of the Institute of Applied Sciences and Intelligent Systems of the National Research Council), **Angela Bracco** (President NuPECC), **Monica Colpi** (Advisory Board eLISA Consortium), **Speranza Falciano** (INFN Executive Board), **Antigone Marino** (Past Chair EPS Young Minds) and **Elisa Molinari** (Director of CRN Institute NANO-S3, Modena). **Lorenzo Pavesi**, Director of the Department of Physics, University of Trento, chaired the round-table discussion. Prior to the start of the second round-table discussion, a call for nominations for the award of a master’s degree thesis in Physics for female students at the University of Trento was announced. The prize, advertised by Lions Club Trento del Consiglio, provides for a contribution of 1600 euros for three years.

The session dedicated to women ended with the opening of the “Women’s Science” exhibition devoted to the life, work and relationship with society of 14 great scientists of the twentieth century. The exhibit will be open to the public **until tomorrow**, Friday, September 15, from 9am to 6pm at the “Fabio Ferrari” Scientific Hub (Povo – Via Sommarive 5).

A media awareness action will take place at the same venue: the photo of the **Solvay Convention** in 1927, in which Marie Skłodowska Curie was the only woman among 28 men, will be re-proposed but with reversed parts between women and men. In this case, the picture will capture 28 women scientists and only one man, Guido Tonelli.

Video images (by GFD) and photographs (by Giovanni Cavulli for UniTrento) available at the Press Office Google Drive folder [cartella GoogleDrive dell’Ufficio stampa](#)





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- #Marie Skłodowska Curie
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