

TOWARDS A FAIR AND INCLUSIVE SOCIETÀ CHIMICA ITALIANA: A COMMITMENT TO EQUAL OPPORTUNITIES

The Società Chimica Italiana (SCI) recognizes inclusivity and equal opportunities as essential principles for scientific progress and organizational growth.

Inclusion is a fundamental principle that ensures all individuals, regardless of gender, ethnicity, orientation, ability, or socioeconomic background, have equal opportunities and access to resources. Creating inclusive environments means fostering recognition, respect, and the ability to fully express one's potential by eliminating barriers and discrimination.

Within the SCI, and in line with its Statement on Equal Opportunities, inclusion is essential for building a fair and diverse scientific community. Adopting an inclusive approach broadens participation and encourages collaboration among people with diverse experiences and skills, thereby enriching scientific and social progress.

Aware that a fair and inclusive environment is essential to unlocking the potential of every individual, the SCI is actively committed to promoting these principles through continuous actions, both within the association and in the contexts with which it institutionally interacts. To begin this journey, the SCI has established a dedicated working group.

Although the SCI's commitment extends to combating all forms of disparity, it is undeniable that, historically and globally, significant inequalities manifest particularly between men and women. Therefore, a specific focus will be placed on bridging these gaps, while maintaining an inclusive approach toward all forms of diversity. This requires not only the elimination of all forms of direct or indirect discrimination but also the adoption of concrete measures to compensate for any historical or structural disadvantages, with the aim of creating a fair and inclusive environment for all individuals.

This document defines a series of specific, short- and medium-term objectives to be achieved through targeted and regularly monitored actions. The ambition is to create an environment where every individual, regardless of gender, can achieve their potential without obstacles or prejudice, thus contributing to the progress of science and society as a whole.

In the current context, characterized by employment difficulties for the new generations, young women face additional and often more complex obstacles. In addition to the precariousness of temporary contracts, which often coincides with crucial stages of personal life, they must contend with ingrained gender stereotypes and greater

difficulties than their male colleagues in balancing private and professional life. These factors significantly influence their career opportunities and professional development. From this perspective, it is essential to outline the current situation within the SCI, which can serve as an initial reference for a clearer identification of the objectives and actions to be implemented.

Considering only the overall numerical data, the ratio of women to men among SCI members is close to one, with a slight majority of women. At first glance, this might appear to be a balanced situation; however, a more in-depth analysis reveals significant imbalances that are still present.

On the one hand, career progressions are often slower and more difficult for women, hindered by structural and cultural barriers, as already highlighted. On the other hand, there is a disparity related to the age group composition, particularly for young women entering the workforce who face greater difficulties due to the lack of necessary protections for their specific needs.

Regarding the career issue, a significant statistical analysis can be obtained by examining university representation among SCI members. Currently, 82.9% of members are from academia, with a gender distribution that reflects the overall balance of the association (50.3% women).

However, when looking at the highest career levels, such as full professor positions, the female percentage stands at 35.7%¹. Although this figure is higher than other scientific disciplines, it still highlights the long road ahead to achieve full gender equality.

The SCI looks with optimism at this evolution, especially considering that the female percentage among its young members currently reaches 54%. The significant presence of young women represents an opportunity to foster structural change, promoting greater equity in career progression and representation in leadership positions.

A scientific society, while it may initially limit itself to observing existing reality, also has the responsibility to actively contribute to change. For this reason, the SCI considers it essential to promote concrete initiatives aimed at ensuring a balanced participation of women and men in the events it organizes.

At conferences, round tables, working groups, and other activities, the SCI intends to adopt specific measures, including linguistic ones, to promote the dissemination of gender equality and inclusion principles in the various contexts with which it interacts.

From this perspective, a series of points considered strategic for achieving these objectives are outlined below, with the aim of making the path towards effective equality increasingly concrete and impactful.

¹ The data is taken from "I Focus Del Rapporto Anvur 2023. Analisi di Genere" and refers to 2022. It is worth noting that in 2012, the percentage of women as full professors in the Chemical Sciences area was 20.8%.

Some of the objectives and actions outlined in this document are in line with the principles of the "No women no panel" memorandum of understanding, promoted by RAI in collaboration with the CNR and supported by various institutions, including the CRUI and some Italian universities. Cooperation with other scientific organizations can represent an important opportunity to foster collective adherence to this memorandum, strengthening its impact and dissemination.

The list of proposed actions, while not exhaustive, constitutes a significant first step toward building a fair and inclusive environment. Constant commitment and monitoring of initiatives will be essential to ensure concrete and lasting progress.

OBJECTIVES AND ACTIONS

1. **Promote fair and inclusive participation that reflects gender diversity in all SCI bodies and in scientific and communication events organized or sponsored by the SCI.**
 - 1.1. Promote inclusion and gender equality in all leadership and representative positions within the SCI.
 - 1.2. Ensure equal opportunities for access to elections, appointments, and positions, promoting inclusion and valuing diversity.
 - 1.3. Promote gender equality in the composition of panels and scientific/organizing committees for scientific events, ensuring balanced representation.
 - 1.4. Promote gender equality in the composition of panels and scientific/organizing committees for scientific events, ensuring balanced representation.
 - 1.5. Plan and implement events and initiatives dedicated to actively promoting gender equality in the chemical sector, raising awareness, educating about diversity, and inspiring cultural change².
2. **Disseminate inclusive communication models and messages that value the diversity and multiplicity of roles held by women in chemistry and society.**
 - 2.1. SCI documents will adopt inclusive language free from gender stereotypes and discrimination.
 - 2.2. Promote a real and non-stereotypical representation of the multiple roles held by women, highlighting their contribution to chemistry and society.
 - 2.3. Organize communication campaigns on SCI channels that highlight the skills, abilities, and successes of women, presenting a realistic and inclusive picture, also with the aim of guiding female students toward STEM subjects.

² An example is the "Inclusion, Equity, Diversity and Ethics" thematic session. XXVIII Congress of the Società Chimica Italiana. Milan 26-30 August 2024.

3. Raise awareness among SCI members about the importance of gender equality and the benefits of an inclusive culture.

- 3.1. Promote initiatives dedicated to the themes of gender equality and discrimination in the scientific world, highlighting the impact of gender stereotypes on careers and the advantages of an inclusive culture for research and innovation.
- 3.2. Develop a database of experts that serves as a reference point for identifying, including among women, the most suitable professionals for specific consulting or collaboration needs.
- 3.3. Activate mentoring programs that connect young female scientists with senior researchers to offer support and professional guidance. Also, organize networking events to create spaces for dialogue, the exchange of experiences, and the development of a professional network among women in science.

4. Collaborate with other entities and scientific organizations to promote gender equality in science, creating a synergistic and mutually supportive network.

- 4.1. Actively participate in the definition and promotion of public policies that favor inclusivity in science.
- 4.2. Support legislative initiatives that provide funding and incentives for projects and programs that promote inclusivity in research and innovation.
- 4.3. Collaborate to identify systemic barriers that hinder the full participation and career progression of women in science and various professional sectors, such as gender stereotypes, unconscious biases, imbalances in workload, and difficulties in balancing professional and personal life, and propose innovative solutions to overcome them.
- 4.4. Share experiences, best practices, and implement synergistic actions through the creation of platforms and exchange networks, the development of joint projects and initiatives, and the organization of events to raise awareness and maximize the impact of actions in favor of inclusivity.

5. Monitor progress toward the achievement of the set objectives.

- 5.1. Conduct qualitative and, where possible, quantitative studies and analyses on gender inequalities in the chemical field with constant monitoring.
- 5.2. Collect and monitor data on the representation of women and minorities within the SCI, including: the number of women in leadership positions in research and various professional sectors, the number of women who participate as speakers or moderators at scientific or communication events, and the number of women who receive scholarships or awards.
- 5.3. Collect feedback from SCI members.

- 5.4. Analyze the collected data to evaluate the effectiveness of the actions taken, identify areas for improvement, and implement necessary changes to optimize results.

The objectives and actions to be undertaken, aimed at achieving true gender equality and inclusion, finally prompt a brief but important reflection. While gender equality can be addressed more immediately thanks to the availability of easily traceable and measurable numerical data, identifying the critical issues concerning the problem of "inclusion," understood specifically as awareness of "diversity," is more complex, both within the Society and in the scientific environments with which the SCI interacts. In this context, the members of the SCI dedicate constant and particular attention to the recognition and valorization of plurality, while actively committing to combating all forms of marginalization and discrimination. This commitment is reflected not only in the professional sphere but also in daily interpersonal relationships, in a decisive rejection of the "culture of waste," promoting an open, fair, and truly inclusive environment.