

Womath 2016 at SISSA



Mathematics? It's a Girls' "Play"

August 5th 2016

"Womath 2016 - Women and Research in Mathematics: the Contribution of SISSA", to be held at SISSA from September 7th to September 9th, is a conference organized with the collaboration of the University of Udine, the University of Turin and of ERC Advanced Grant of Susanna Terracini, under the patronage of the Region Friuli Venezia-Giulia, of the Regional Commission for Equal Opportunities and of the Association of Journalists of Friuli Venezia-Giulia. Female professors, researchers, current and former female students working and involved with Mathematics will attend the event. The conference will be an occasion to present an overview of the studies conducted by these female researchers, and also to give thought on women's role in mathematical research. The Conference will also host a round table open to the public (September 8th, 3.45 p.m. at SISSA) on the *glass ceiling* phenomenon that prevents female scientists from moving ahead with their academic career.

The cliché according to which women are not a good fit for the study of Mathematics is slowly



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vanishing. Statistics shows that, in Italy for example, the percentage of female graduates in this discipline amounts to 61% of all graduates (MIUR data, 2013). Is it positive? Not really, because during the same year 2013, the percentage of women within the teaching staff hardly amounted to 35%, (whereas only 16% of ordinary professors were women). This is a phenomenon specific to the entire university, but it is definitely more obvious in the technical-scientific fields. In order to describe this phenomenon, the *glass ceiling* effect has been used: an invisible ceiling that prevents women from reaching the highest levels of the academic career. However, at European level -and the Italian data reflect the average EU figures in this field- there are many initiatives thought to promote gender equality within the academic environment, regarding both the access of girls to technical-scientific university specializations, and the career path of female researchers. Womath 2016 - Women and Research in Mathematics: the Contribution of SISSA", to be held at the Trieste-based International School for Advanced Studies (SISSA), hall 128, from September 7th to September 9th comes in precisely within this landscape of initiatives. The conference has been organized with the contribution of the University of Udine.

The conference will bring together the experiences of some of most brilliant female researchers that have studied Mathematical disciplines at SISSA. The conference also seeks to confront researchers with the same academic background, but different professional experiences, thus favouring new scientific collaborations among the participants. The list of the speakers invited covers a wide range of the themes and research lines that have seen the contribution of the female researchers holding a Ph.D. from SISSA.

"The conference will also give the opportunity to address the *glass ceiling* phenomenon", adds Roberta Musina, Mathematics Professor at the University of Udine, and one of the organizers of the conference, "we definitely feel the need to understand the reasons why this phenomenon still exists, given that certain data suggest the trend is not moving towards a reinforcement of female presences in the field of research. In particular, we acknowledge a slight drop in the percentage of female Mathematics Ph.Ds. at SISSA. It is precisely to this aspect that we will dedicate one of the crucial moments of the whole conference, a round table open to the public, in order to give thought to a serious reflection and gather proposals". The event, moderated by Renata Kodilja, professor from the University of Udine, will be held on September 8th from 3.45p.m., hall 128 at SISSA, 265 Bonomea Street.

Besides Musina, the Organizing Committee of Womath comprises Barbara Fantechi (SISSA), Tamara Grava (SISSA), Rodica Toader (University of Udine) and Susanna Terracini (University of Turin), also member of the Standing Committee of the European Women in Mathematics Network.

"As the European Commission itself claims, women's participation in science and technology can contribute to increase the innovation, quality and competitiveness of the scientific and industrial research and needs to be encouraged." concludes Grava. "In order to make it happen, it is important to stamp out "traditional" gender clichés, according to which Mathematics and sciences in general are not fields for women, and encourage young women to explore non-



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traditional academic paths. We at SISSA do it through our personal testimony”.

USEFUL LINKS:

- Womath 2016 website: <https://womathsissa.wordpress.com/>

IMAGES:

- Credit: Bindaas Madhavi (Flickr: <https://goo.gl/rRtQDi>)

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