



Catania, 12-14 settembre 2018

ABSTRACT BOOK

a cura della Società Geologica Italiana

Congresso congiunto
SGI-SIMP



CATANIA-2018
12-14 SETTEMBRE



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«Geosciences for the environment,
natural hazards and cultural heritage»

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Sicily: a geological laboratory

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Keywords: school, job, museum.

“Geologists at risk of extinction”: this is the opening sentence of an article of March 29, 2016 of “Il Sole 24 ORE”, (1) that fits well the difficult situation that this professional category is experiencing in recent years. It has been witnessed, in fact, a strong reduction in the educational offer in both the school and university system, with the number of Departments in Earth Sciences dropped from 29 to 8, accompanied by a progressive reduction in enrollment and graduates, from 1140 in 2002 to 586 in 2008 (2). Numbers that make you think, especially if contextualized to the Italian territory, widely characterized by the hydrogeological, seismic and volcanological risk, in whose prevention the geologist plays a primary importance role. Sicily is one of the Italian regions in which we find three types of risk mentioned above and it is precisely in this context that we find the path of Alternation School-Work (ASL), “Sicily, a geological laboratory”, realized in within the MAGiS project (Open Museum for Young Scientists), in 2017, thanks to the contribution of the Naturalistic Association Geode ONLUS. The project took place at the “Museum of Mineralogy” of Palermo, Department of Earth and Sea Sciences of the University of Palermo, which houses one of the richest, over 10,000 samples and ancient collections of rocks, minerals, instruments and other historical artifacts.

The proposed path had two main purposes: 1) to enhance the wealth and historical, cultural, naturalistic and scientific heritage preserved not only at the Museum of Mineralogy, but also at the collections conserved in the schools involved; 2) bring students closer to the world of university and work, particularly in the field of Earth Sciences. 45 students, aged between 15 and 18, were involved in carrying out the activities, valuing the aptitudes and skills of each of them.

With the aim of enhancing and increasing the usability of the aforementioned collections, to date below potential, young students have been provided with the tools and skills necessary for planning and conducting museum visits. The students were also trained for the organization and realization of the international event “European Night of Museums” at the Museum of Mineralogy.

To this end, students were given lectures and experiential workshops on Geology and Mineralogy in general, and on the geology of Sicily in particular. The workshops allowed the students to touch rocks and minerals, contextualizing them to the Sicilian territory, characterized by all the main types of rocks, as well as by important successions of minerals, studied at international level, dating back to the period known as “Messinian” (7.246 - 5.332 Ma).

(1) http://www.scuola24.ilsole24ore.com/art/universita-e-ricerca/2016-03-24/contro-crisi-italia-geologo-guarda-all-europa-194146.php?refresh_ce=1&uuid=ACJ9LTuC.

(2) http://www.neogeo.unisi.it/galleriaimmagini/mercato_geologi_italia_ok2.pdf.