

Over the last few months, a campaign inviting Italian academics to abstain from participating in the latest nationwide research assessment exercise (VQR 2011-2014) has been gaining momentum.

It all started with a petition signed by around 14,000 academics calling for the government to back off on its decision to write off the years 2011-2014 when calculating seniority in service and corresponding pay levels for academics. The austerity-driven four-year salary freeze affected almost all public sector workers in Italy (with the exception of judges and magistrates), but academics not only were the last category to see their rise in pay restored, but the only ones for whom 2011-2014 were basically written off altogether. This was perceived as an act of discrimination by academic staff who felt uniquely singled out among public sector workers as deserving of financial punishment. Being assessed for research activities carried out in years, which have not been counted financially also contributed to the sense of disrespect. It has been only recently, however, that the campaign has shifted towards using an instrument which had already been deployed by our French colleagues in 2009 and which led eventually to the suppression of the French Evaluation Agency (ANEER) in 2013: to abstain from participating in the second national research assessment exercise (VQR), either by refusing to submit one's publications for evaluation or to participate as an expert in the committee work, thereby scuppering the whole (expensive) exercise on grounds of statistical inaccuracy. (Fonte: T.

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