



# Nichi D'Amico: the right INAF President at the right political time

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**Abstract.** This is a short, not exhaustive, overview of INAF President Nichi D'Amico legacy to the current/next generation of INAF researchers/technologists. He started the stabilization procedure, which involved most of INAF temporary staff with various contracts. Nichi was the right INAF president, who fully exploited the new opportunity offered by the Decree Law 25/05/2017, n. 75, the so called “Madia’s law”. The hiring plan did account for all kinds of research temporary contracts.

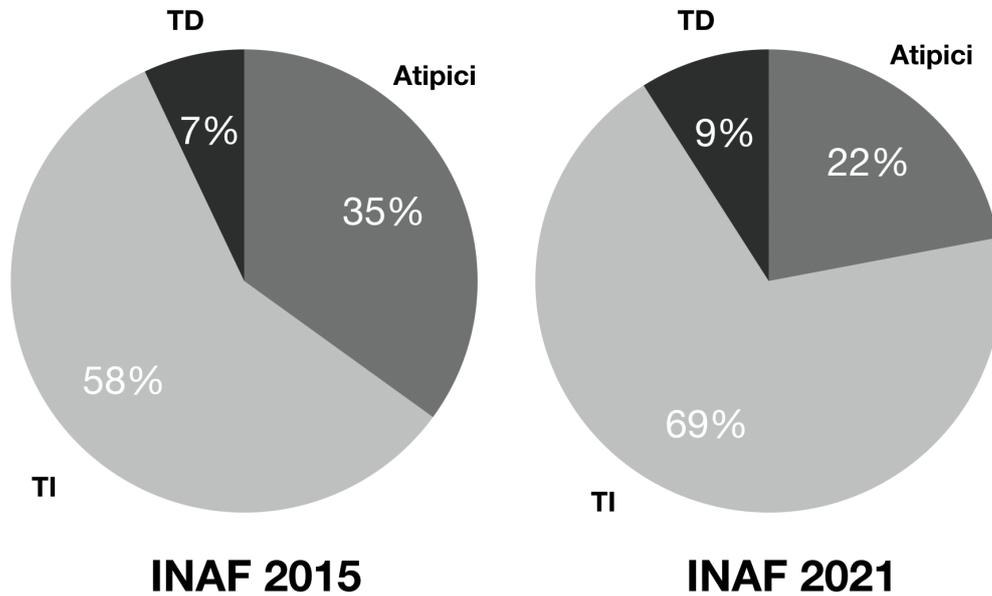
## 1. Introduction

When I proposed to Andrea Possenti, Luciano Burderi and Grazia Maria Umana (Editors of the Volume) to publish a special issue of the Memorie della SAIIt dedicated to Nichi D'Amico, I received a melancholic, and yet lively enthusiasm. As a result, the contributions for this Volume have been exceptionally easy to collect and print. I did not plan to give my personal contribution, since I did not know President Nichi D'Amico personally, nor have I ever worked in his research field. Nevertheless, I met him several times, since I have been working in and around INAF in the last 20 years. This contribution has been written with the help of some colleagues from the *Rete Nazionale Precari INAF*. Most of us have been hired with a permanent position during Nichi's Presidency. Here I will summarize the context and the important choices Nichi made to account for the two different souls of INAF fixed-time researchers.

## 2. INAF precarious employment in 2015

In 2015, the situation of temporary researchers/technologists within INAF was critical. There had been no significant hiring procedures in the previous ten years, so that hundreds of experienced Researchers/Technologists who played key-roles in the main International projects with Italian participation (e.g. CTA, ELT, SKA, ALMA, SRT) were about to quit Astronomy.

There was only one stabilization procedure which involved research institutes (and INAF) during 2008. At that moment, 37 Researcher/Technologists were hired as staff members. A detailed discussion of the intricate INAF history is out of the aim of this contribution: however, most readers know that INAF was a melting pot of several research institutes, each one with its own identity. We can divide them in two large groups: “former-Astronomical Observatories” and “former-CNR”. The stabilization process involved



**Fig. 1.** A chart-overview of the percentage of INAF temporary (grouped in Atipici and TD, respectively yellow and green colours) and staff (blue colour) Researcher/Technologists in 2015 (left panel) and 2021 (right panel).

mostly temporary Researchers/Technologists with a CCNL contract, i.e. mainly belonging to “former-CNR” institutes (95%). This issue generated a negative reaction in the remaining INAF community, who felt disadvantaged by this missed chance.

The INAF picture of temporary and staff (TI, light-grey area) positions in 2015 is summarized in Figure 1 (left panel). A large variety of contracts are available in the Public Administration. These contracts differ not only for the salaries but also for the rights guaranteed to young Researchers/Technologists. We can group them in two main categories: Atipici (Research grants, Scholarships, collaborations, grey area in Figure) and more properly defined temporary positions (Tempi Determinati (Fixed Term), TD, dark area in figure). More rights are granted to TD. The net consequence of the 2008 stabilization process was that INAF significantly reduced the number of TD positions for young researchers and led to the sit-

uation illustrated in Figure 1 (left panel). The INAF personnel was widely spread among the three categories in comparison with other research institutes, such as CNR and INFN, for which temporary researchers were 27% and 25% respectively and equally divided among atipici and TD.

### 3. The Madia’s reform

Dr. Marianna Madia was Minister of the Public Administration from 2014 to 2018: she carried out a complete transformation of public administration in order to simplify the slow processes of access and use of public utilities. Research Institutes were already included in the first decrees (G. U. , 2015). In 2017, inspired by the European Framework for Research Careers, some decrees were focused on solving the long-standing problem of Researcher/Technologist precariousness at the National Researcher Centers. In particular,

the so called comma 1 and comma 2 (G. U. , 2017), listed below:

- **1.** *Le amministrazioni, al fine di superare il precariato, ridurre il ricorso ai contratti a termine e valorizzare la professionalità acquisita dal personale con rapporto di lavoro a tempo determinato, possono, fino al (31 dicembre 2021), in coerenza con il piano triennale dei fabbisogni di cui all'articolo 6, comma 2, e con l'indicazione della relativa copertura finanziaria, assumere a tempo indeterminato personale non dirigenziale che possiede tutti i seguenti requisiti:  
...risulti in servizio ... con contratti a tempo determinato...;*
- **2.** *Fino al (31 dicembre 2021), le amministrazioni possono bandire, in coerenza con il piano triennale dei fabbisogni di cui all'articolo 6, comma 2, e ferma restando la garanzia dell'adeguato accesso dall'esterno, previa indicazione della relativa copertura finanziaria, procedure concorsuali riservate, in misura non superiore al cinquanta per cento dei posti disponibili, al personale non dirigenziale che possiede tutti i seguenti requisiti:  
... risultati titolare ... di un contratto di lavoro flessibile ...*

#### 4. INAF precariousness in 2021: Nichi's legacy

Nichi D'Amico was appointed President of INAF in 2015, during the period of Madia's reform. In my opinion, he was the right President at the right political time. He was personally interested in attracting young scientists to INAF (see also Andrea Possenti's contribution, This Volume), and used all the available tools in order to realize this. From a technical point of view, the two commas of the Madia's law, leave totally the responsibility to the leadership of Research Institutes to hire accordingly to their needs. Thus they were free to decide how to identify the Researcher/Technologist pro-

files to be hired. It is in fact specified they could ("possono" highlighted in bold face in the text above) hire by following the requirements of comma 1 and comma 2. Nichi D'Amico had the courage to make a detailed hiring plan to account for the huge number of Atipici contracts signed. In particular, the plan included: 50 TD, 71 comma 2 positions and 71 open positions for Researchers/Technologists. The full stabilization process has been extended up to 2022 and it is still ongoing. The current picture of INAF temporary staff is given in Figure 1 (right panel) and shows how INAF benefits from the action of Nichi D'Amico. The number of TD contracts increased when compared to 2015, and the total number of temporary staff (TD + Atipici) has been significantly reduced. Today, we have a suitable manpower to provide a new solid basis for an independent and free Italian Research in Astronomy and Astrophysics. *Thank you, Nichi.*

*Acknowledgements.* My sincere acknowledgement to all the colleagues who were hired during this exceptional, hard time. We have fought together against the INAF leadership, we entered into competition, but we are still good friends and valuable Researchers/Technologists.

A special thanks to Stefano Bernabei, for his constant help to temporary staff in getting a chance for a career path within INAF.

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