The “Istituto Nazionale di Fisica Nucleare” (National Institute for Nuclear Physics) in Italy is a Government funded public research institution. With an annual budget of about 300 Million euro, INFN funds fundamental research in nuclear, subnuclear and astroparticle physics, as well as university faculty for research in the same fields. INFN employs researchers, technologists, technicians and administrative staff.

Women are about 23% of all personnel. In the scientific and technical positions women are always less than 20%. This percentage is greatly reduced in the highest research positions. The presence of women in governing bodies, or in general in positions of power in physics, is even lower. At present only one woman is member of the Executive and Directive Boards of INFN, and no women are among the Directors of National Laboratories and Sections of the Institute. Among administrative staff, despite the fact that lower level positions are mostly occupied by women, the highest levels are only occupied by men.

A public debate on this situation has started only very recently, mostly thanks to the concurrent actions at European level and internationally, to the publication of official data, and to the creation of Equal Opportunity Committees (Comitati per le Pari Opportunità, CPOs). CPOs must exist by law at Universities and public Research Institutions.

In this contribution a picture of gender situation in high energy physics in Italy will be discussed and compared with similar institutions in Europe and USA. The presented data have been collected in the years 2000-2002 and analyzed in the framework of the activity of the INFN Equal Opportunity Committee.