

THE REAL BLACK HOLE ISN'T AT CERN!

The temporary personnel of the Istituto Nazionale di Fisica Nucleare (the Italian National Institute of Nuclear Physics, INFN) are trying to call attention to a state of crisis without precedent resulting from actions of the current and previous governments.

The INFN is a public research institute with about 1800 permanent employees. In addition, 600 highly qualified members of the temporary personnel make critical contributions to the INFN's research program. **Personnel expenditures are well under 60% of the INFN's budget.** A healthy institution has been paralyzed by legal limits on

- **workforce size** (1900 persons, as opposed to the 2100-person limit agreed to with the Ministry of Public Administration in April 2007);
- **expenditures for fixed-term contracts** (limited to 35% of the expenditures for the year 2003);
- **new hires** (limited to turnover on a per-head basis).

The INFN has not yet made permanent hires of qualified fixed-term staff permitted by law. This opportunity will expire on 30 June 2009, and no extension is likely.

INFN management is acting with disregard to the Institute's international commitments and the health of its research program in Italy: the contributions of the temporary workforce are crucial not only to the program in pure research, but also in applied fields such as biomedical research, materials science, and artistic preservation.

About 100 fixed-term positions will soon disappear, nor is there any positive outlook for the more than 350 research fellows. The substantial resource already dedicated to the professional development of this workforce (a researcher's education costs hundreds of thousands of euros) will soon be lost. An entire generation of highly specialized researchers, technicians, and administrators will be eliminated, or in the best case, gifted to research institutes in other countries.

How can this decline be avoided?

We are not asking for new resources! Even after the continuous decline in funding over the past 10 years, the INFN has the resources needed to handle the emergency resulting from the hiring freeze in effect since 2001.

As agreed to in November 2008 with the Minister of Education, Universities, and Research, we are asking for independence in the management of funds for personnel. We ask for the abolition of limits on permanent and fixed-term hires, up to a total personnel expenditure of 60% of the INFN's budget.

Coordinamento precari INFN, www.buconero.eu

