

# NO MORE EXCUSES!

Why we need  
to support  
excellent Women  
in Academia



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# Academia Net

# BREAKING THE MOLD

## How to take full advantage of the talent pool of excellent women researchers

**W**omen are seriously underrepresented in key positions within the scientific world. Throughout the EU only 21% of professorships with the highest endowments are held by women; in some EU countries this proportion is even lower. It is the aim of AcademiaNet to increase the number of women in leadership positions in science. Created by the Robert Bosch Foundation and Spektrum der Wissenschaft, the excellence database provides profiles of outstanding women academics. Reputable science and research organizations vouch for their outstanding qualifications. A careful selection process on the basis of strict qualification criteria ensures that only the best researchers are nominated for and represented on AcademiaNet. Over the last years, AcademiaNet has grown considerably. Today, the site features more than 2,500 profiles of women researchers across disciplines from all over Europe, with numbers set to increase. So, if you are a decision maker from academia or industry searching for suitable candidates when appointing leadership positions and committees, or if you are looking for an interview partner or speaker, you can quickly locate recognized women experts on Academia-Net.org.

[www.academia-net.org](http://www.academia-net.org)

**"Not supporting young women in science is simple mathematics: it's a waste of intelligence and talents."**

Short interview with Prof. Dr. Liselotte Højgaard, Chair of the Danish National Research Foundation

### **Why do we need to promote and support women in science in particular?**

If we speculate that women are as bright as men, then if all the scientists' jobs go to men and not to women as well, we will have less bright men doing the jobs. It's a waste of talent and intelligence. Not only for the sake of equality and being well treated but

much more for the sake of society and progress. If we don't use the best of our talents, we lose

### **How could one support young women or young people in general?**

Visibility is important. It strengthens the possibilities of both males and females and for society as a whole. It goes hand in hand. If society

sees females in science, it will eventually become a natural thing, and that will impact on the societal structure as a whole.

### **What contribution does Academia-Net make towards a better gender equality in science?**

It sheds light on the problem and indicates that there still is imbalan-



Sophie Kalcar

ce between females and males in science. It makes decision makers see the problem. But more importantly: it allows all these females to be visible and available. AcademiaNet has a high level of quality. It is not just a database with a lot of female scientists. All these women have been peer reviewed and that also saves everyone else the work to find someone who is highly qualified for peer reviews, evaluation committees, professorships and so

on. But most importantly, it makes them visible to the rest of the world, and that's something that is urgently needed.

**With your own experience in science in mind, what advice do you have for young people, especially women, wanting to aspire in science?**

Career planning is very important. I have never done any career planning. I was just invited to do things,

and I turned out very lucky. But you can obtain much more, acquire more in an easier way if you do deliberate career planning. Think about what you want to do and where you want to go. Then think about who could help you with that. If you can get a mentor or someone to help you, do that. Especially as a female scientist, be active and see the problems. And as a senior scientist, be there and mentor them when they ask. This can really make a difference, especially for women.

**"Universities and institutes need to do whatever they can to help women remain supported as active academics when they have children. The same goes for men that want to take a fuller role in their family life."**

Short interview with Dr. Philip Campbell,  
Editor-in-Chief of Nature

**What do you do in your environment to help reduce the gender imbalance?**

At *Nature* we have an imbalance in the authorship of our pages. I have specifically encouraged my staff to look outside the box when commissioning something to an author: who would be the best woman to do this? As soon as you find a woman, ask yourself, 'Are these women worse than the men you would have picked first? Usually, you find the answer to be no. We then have a better choice and a better chance of balancing our authorship between

the two sexes. But one problem we then still face is that there are fewer women out there, and they tend to say no more often. They are simply too busy and have less time to spare.

**Does science have a problem with gender imbalance and sexism?**

Various studies found evidence for discrimination in academia. Some time ago, there was a study where they did a test for employment practises using fictitious applications. They found that both male and female academics discriminated against people with female names, even though the test candidates had identical qualifications. I don't think it is essentially a bias against women in a conscious way. It's rather a subconscious thing.



**Your advice to scientists at the start of their career?**

Look for important problems, would be my advice. Even if you are very interested in science, I think you are still going to make more progress if you look for the important problems. It's the way scientific careers seem to progress these days. Find an important scientific challenge to solve. And ask an experienced scientist for a bit of advice on the significance of the problem before you agree to do research on it. That would be my advice.

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