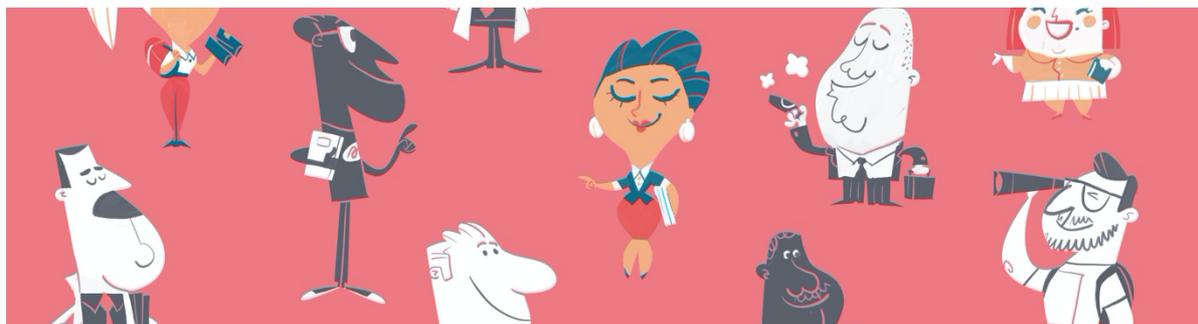


Webinar N°2 - The role of women in leading positions

within the SCNAT webinar series Achieving Gender Equality and Diversity in the Natural Sciences, 2021



Summary of inputs and conclusions

by Romaine Jean

«We have a problem. Women are still under-represented in leading positions in the academic and university world», says Anna Wahl, Professor in Gender, Organization and Management at the Royal Institute of Technology in Sweden.

How can we fix the so-called leaky pipeline? “Gender is socially and culturally constructed”, says Anna Wahl. “Universities are not gender neutral: discrimination against women, invisibility, lack of recognition of academic works, etc. are still very present”. According to a study led by the Northwestern University, USA (Hosseini & Sharifzad 2021) quoted during the discussion, only 29% of women see their work published online. An algorithm has analyzed 500'000 publications on the internet for this study. This has real consequences: Women's academic careers are slower; they are less invited to speak at conferences. This is a considerable loss of substance for science, says the study.

In this webinar, Anna Wahl presents the AGNES case which aims to increase the influence of women on ongoing gender mainstreaming efforts, focusing on organizational change and not individual career support. 18 participants have been selected to explore the potential to act as change agents in their everyday work. The methods chosen have been interactive and reflexive in order to increase collective learning and create a sense of community. “In Sweden, the situation has changed for the better”, says Anna Wahl.

What role can and should women play as drivers for change? Does having more women in leadership positions truly change the leadership styles? For Clara Kulich, associate professor at the Faculty of Psychology and Educational Sciences at the University of Geneva, there are still stereotypes: women are more likely to be appointed to leadership positions in times of crisis and instability, leading to an increased risk to fail. A recent study at the University of Geneva showed that the appointment of a woman to a precarious managerial position is mostly done by non-sexist people, a result that seems paradoxical. This means that the cultural bias is very deep, even among people who claim to be non-sexist. Moreover, in order to prove one's competences, women need to make their gender identity invisible, but at the same time they need to be visible as an individual.

The recommendations of Anna Wahl and Clara Kulich: both men and women have to work together for structural and organizational changes in the academic world.

Literature

Hosseini M, Sharifzad S. Gender disparity in publication records: a qualitative study of women researchers in computing and engineering. Res Integr Peer Rev. 2021 Dec 1;6(1):15. doi: 10.1186/s41073-021-00117-3. PMID: 34847943; PMCID: PMC8632200.

Watch the webinar on youtube

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=xd-RAZ5ShJU>

Website of webinar series

https://biol.scnat.ch/de/activities/uuid/i/d87a53d7-bac7-522f-957c-12f0d9ebc843-Achieving_Gender_Equality_and_Diversity_in_the_Natural_Sciences