

Mobility support and networking for women in STEM

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Mobility support for women in STEM (Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics) career is an increasingly important issue in today's world. Cutting edge research tends to be undertaken via international collaboration, often within networks built up by moving to a new country. In addition, many of today's funding opportunities are geared towards international cooperation.

There have been quite a few debates and several projects based on extended surveys to understand the role and impact of mobility on a scientific career. Although in general it is true that these issues are sensitive to the country and the scientific field for example, it is believed by the scientific community at least, that there is a connection between mobility and scientific excellence. Rewarding mobility is becoming a concern at the European level because mechanisms to measure in the best and objective way possible scientific excellence are not homogeneous. But still mobility is a key issue to strengthen a researcher's scientific curriculum and be recognised at the international level.

Women have been widely recognised as a source of untapped potential. Different steps have been taken so far for a deeper understanding of barriers and different obstacles faced by women in the Science field. Present calls in the Science in Society panel in HORIZON 2020 deal with the horizontal and vertical segregation experienced by women in their careers and best practices to manage these issues. The general aim is to foster women participation in all scientific fields with particular regard to male dominated disciplines as STEM and increase the number and the effective representation of women in decision-making positions, to help also speed up the whole process.

Mobility has demonstrated to be partly gender sensitive and this needs to be addressed in some way in order to ensure at least equal opportunities to male and female scientists regarding possibilities and benefits offered by mobility programmes.

We have undertaken a Women Networking and Mobility project to address the issues above. The project focus is specifically on the networking of women in STEM paying special interest to their mobility, and should provide mentoring support to those women who do or plan to do their research abroad. We are organizing annual workshops in collaboration with European Universities and different women in science associations, and propose special sessions, booths and town hall meetings at the major relevant conferences. We will develop electronic books (e-books) on Female Role Models and the role of mobility in their careers supporting mobility among young female scientists. Finally, we are designing a portal and a supporting database of Role Models from several Women in Science organisations in a similar way of AcademiaNet, which will facilitate the networking activities for mentoring support and the dissemination and exploitation of project results.

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