

Women in geosciences: How senior scientists can help the younger generation?

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It is well known that women in research are under-represented (only 40% in the EU whole Higher Education sector, and much less in the fields of science and engineering, including geosciences), in spite of an almost gender balance at the PhD level. It is also well known that the evolution of women career in research remains characterized by strong vertical segregation. Causes have been the object of numerous studies and are clearly multifactorial. However, there are lots of examples of women at high positions in research, even in natural sciences. How can they help the younger generation of women in their career path? Although there are no well identified strategies, some concrete actions appear easy to implement. This can start by educating and supporting female PhD students and post-docs, at the research lab level, conveying basic messages such as work with passion, pursuit excellence and develop self-confidence. Encouragements and help to apply for research grants are also easy to perform. Other actions like nominating women colleagues for national and international prizes and awards should also be more systematically undertaken. Mentoring programmes at the national level as well scientific networking look very important for the younger generation, but these remain not enough developed. Finally, cultural barriers are the most difficult to overcome. And this starts at the level of childhood education, fighting against gender bias and stereotypes. In this presentation, I will share my personal views on these important issues.