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Role Models for Mobile Women Scientists

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The need of Role Models is one of the basic needs in our lives, and should be ensured and followed especially when one is thinking of undertaking a challenge. At different stages of our life and career we face different challenges and each of them needs a separate Role Model. The main message which comes from these Role Models is “You are not alone. I have done it as well. It’s doable.” Therefore, when talking about Role Models for Women in Science, it is important to cover the whole spectrum of different challenges women face during different stage of their career. The need for Role Models has been understood by the society and reflected in the recent literature (see, Howes and Herzenberg, 2015; McCullough, 2016; Calvin, 2017) and in datasets, such as AcademiaNet <https://www.academia-net.org/>, which is a European database listing outstanding women researchers in Germany. However, they are mostly focused on outstanding women academics, which are at the peak of their career, while young women need Role Models throughout the whole career and especially in its beginning. Role Models for early-career, middle-career and senior scientists may be different. Therefore, we think it is important to talk about Role Models at different stages of their career, and to show the whole wide range of challenges women face and to respond them by their stories.

In our project we focus on one such challenge, which is mobility of women scientists. 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. This topic is a bit overlooked by the society, while it is clear that mobility is gender sensitive especially for families with small kids. We have undertaken a Women Networking and Mobility project which is funded under the Alexander von Humboldt Foundation Alumni award, 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. In order to support women and especially early career scientists who do or plan their research abroad, we published three books and created a database of corresponding Role Models. Our Role Models are at different stages of their career from PhD studies to professorship and they represent “real life” Role Models, which satisfies the need especially of young women. The latter means that they do not need to be outstanding in terms of

winning Nobel Prize or ERC Synergy or Advanced Grant, but rather be successful in their research and achieve healthy work-life balance. We hope their stories and experience will support and inspire the young female scientists in their academic career.