



Newsletter May 2023

# 500 Women Scientists Bern-Fribourg

These are generally exciting times, but recently in Switzerland there has been a sexist backlash in the form of a "study" by two professors at the University of Zurich that aimed to investigate the Leaky Pipeline (read more below). We women were effectively denied the ability to think critically, and it was implied that we had no career ambitions anyway and would rather marry a rich man than pursue a career. This seems to us a very flimsy excuse for maintaining the status quo in terms of the painful lack of support in terms of effective means of defending ourselves against unequal treatment or lack of childcare. This shows us that our efforts are needed more than ever! This backlash does not just affect women scientists, but is a wider and truly frightening phenomenon: recently, a 'Gender Day' for secondary school students to discuss gender roles had to be canceled due to [threats of violence](#). And events where drag queens read to young children can only take place with [police protection](#).

And now to the inside: Ana and Claudia have decided to step down from coordinating the pod. **We are therefore looking for new members.** Please contact us if you are interested in joining our pod. Especially women\* with a taste for Swiss politics, social media enthusiasts and those who speak and understand German and/or French are definitely wanted! But everyone is welcome. You can find a button to join our pod below at the end of the newsletter.

Thank you Claudia and Ana for all the time and effort dedicated to the coordination of the pod!!!!

See more news below!

**500 Women Scientist Bern-Fribourg Pod Coordinators**

**Claudia Kasper, Andrea Fortier and Ana I. Benítez-Mateos**

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## TOP STORIES

# Leaky Pipeline

On 7th May, the SonntagsZeitung published an article by Rico Bandle titled "[Die meisten Studentinnen wollen lieber einen erfolgreichen Mann als selber Karriere machen](#)" (*Most female students would rather have a successful man than a career themselves*). The article was supposedly based on a "study" led by two well-known researchers (Dr. Margit Osterloh and Dr. Katja Rost, both professors at Universität Zürich). Several media outlets later repeated the "conclusions" reported in the newspaper, clearly without fact-checking.

As it turned out, this "study" was sent by one of the authors to the journalist Rico Bandle before even being submitted to a peer-reviewed journal. The article was, at the time, available upon request to the authors (now publicly available [here](#)). After carefully reading it and assuming that the methods and procedures to collect the data are correct (which we cannot judge from the paper), the interpretation of the data is, at least, questionable. The same data can be quite differently interpreted, as shown in

<https://www.maenner.ch/wie-tamedia-den-backlash-befeuert/>.

We want to express our frustration, disappointment and decisive rejection of the unprofessional and irresponsible behavior of the journalists (for publishing not validated "scientific" results and for echoing a newspaper article without fact-checking) and the unethical behavior of the researchers (for sending the "study" to a journalist before it has been accepted for publication in a peer-reviewed journal, in particular when the interpretation of the collected data is so sensitive).

We support several articles and newsletters that condemned the publication and political use of the article published in the SonntagsZeitung. Some of them are:

<https://www.500womenscientistsfribourgbern.ch/copy-of-letter-to-the-leadership-of-mpg-1>

<https://ethz.ch/staffnet/de/news-und-veranstaltungen/intern-aktuell/archiv/2023/05/forscherinnen-und-studentinnen-mit-grossem-engagement-und-grossen-ambitionen.html>

<https://eth-wpf.ch/open-letter-on-the-study-leaky-pipeline-in-der-wissenschaft>

<https://reatch.ch/publikationen/equal-but-different?lang=de>

<https://www.watson.ch/schweiz/medien/295612595-artikel-ueber-studentinnen-schlaegt-hohe-wellen-doch-es-gibt-einen-haken>

# Frauenstreik 2023

On June 14, 1991, thousands of Swiss women interrupted their work and took to the streets to demand fair treatment. They denounced the slow implementation of the constitutional article on equality and called for legislation to enforce it.

32 years later, the statistics on gender inequality in the Swiss labor market have not improved at the expected pace. Today, Swiss women earn 18% less than men for performing the same work, making Switzerland one of the countries in Europe with the highest gender wage gap.

As women scientists working in STEM, the leaky pipeline, the lack of female leaders to serve as role models, the difficulty of balancing work and family, and the male bias that exists in our fields are clear examples of the need to continue working to achieve a more inclusive and feminist Switzerland.

That's why this year, once again, **we will join the feminist demonstration on June 14th**. Because there is still much work to be done. Join us!

For more information about the Frauenstreik, visit: <https://www.frauen-streiken.ch/>

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## INTERNAS

Ana I. Benítez Mateos and Claudia Kasper are stepping down from the pod coordination, which shall be effective in May 2023. Here are a few words of farewell:

Claudia: When I look back on my time in the Bern Pod, I am filled with pride and joy. How much we have achieved! When I founded the Bern-Pod with Meike Ramon and Elise Fahy on 6 February 2019, it was my wish to share and network with other women in science on a regular basis. At the time, I had only a vague idea of the obstacles faced by women scientists. Over time, I developed a deeper understanding of structural sexism in this country (but of course in other countries as well). Thanks to many dedicated colleagues who have accompanied me along the way, our small group has tried many things to improve the situation of women in science. I am very proud of our events in the pub, at the women's strike and elsewhere! But it is frustrating that our concerns so often fall on deaf ears. It is clear that it is extremely difficult to break up ossified structures. If it were easy, we wouldn't be needed! I will remain a member of the Pod and look forward to passing on the co-ordination to committed colleagues.

Ana: As I am passionate about science communication, I wanted to organize an outreach event for the “*International Day Women and Girls in Science*” in 2020 (just after moving to

Switzerland). That is how I found out about the *500 Women Scientists pod in Bern-Fribourg* and I joined this wonderful network of female scientists. I am very grateful for all that I have learned and shared within the pod. Specially, I would like to say thanks to Claudia, who has always been a motivation to move forward. Yet, there is a lot to do for gender equality in science in Switzerland. Therefore, I encourage (young) women\* scientists to join our pod and join Andrea in the coordination team!

### RATE

The location of our pub events, ONO, is nominated for the Swiss Location Award 2023! You can rate it [here](#) to help it win!

### READ

The new blog post "[Timing is Everything: Dr. Georgina King, Geochronologist](#)" by Dr. Gabrielle Vance on our website!

### SAVE THE DATE

International Day against harassment and for inclusion in the world of work was [launched](#) on 24 May 2023

YOU CAN JOIN OUR POD [HERE](#)



[info@500womenscientistsfribourgbern.ch](mailto:info@500womenscientistsfribourgbern.ch)



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