



Newsletter January 2022

500 Women Scientists Bern-Fribourg

After a holiday break ending 2021, we hope you start the new year full of energy and motivation to fulfill your 2022 goals!

In addition, we also want to thank all the new subscribers to our Newsletter in 2021.

We have begun January holding the [first networking lunch of the year](#) with [Prof. Christine Peinelt](#), co-director of teaching at the Institute of Biochemistry and Molecular Medicine (University of Bern).

See more news below!

500 Women Scientist Bern-Fribourg Pod Coordinators
Claudia Kasper, Andrea Fortier and Ana I. Benítez-Mateos

TOP STORIES

Review of the year 2021

We look back on the last year with mixed feelings. The pandemic has deprived us from so many personal conversations and direct contacts, through which one can gain so much strength. But we tried to make the best of it and threw ourselves into activities aimed at **improving working conditions for women researchers in Switzerland**. Our [letter to swissuniversities](#) denouncing that the job security of female researchers at universities is still not guaranteed due to the lack of independent and trustworthy structures to report sexual harassment, abuse of power and other evils was supported so far by 430 people. We met with the Equal Opportunities and Diversity Department of swissuniversities to discuss this issue. But we also had enriching discussions with individual representatives of the professorships of the universities of Bern, ETH, Fribourg and HES-SO, as well as with student and mid-level

representatives from various universities, such as MVUB, VSETH and KANG. This kept us quite busy throughout the year. The final highlight, however, was the presentation of the letter to the Commission for Science during the preparations for the [Frauensession](#) of the Parliament. During the Frauensession on October 29 and 30, our demand for a nation-wide office for complaints about sexual harassment and violence (and other issues raised in the letter) has been accepted into the petition '[Equality policy standards for university funding and the allocation of third-party funding](#)', which will be brought to the chambers of the Swiss parliament!

Yet, it is important to mention that we were also very active in other areas, as far as the situation allowed. Unfortunately, we were not able to hold our popular pub **events** this year so we switched to a virtual format, the [Online Extravaganza](#)! We also took up our [lunch networking meetings](#) again in October. Another highlight was our participation at the ever powerful Frauenstreik in Bern in June, where we staged [women science flash mobs](#) at three locations. We will never forget the cheering crowd at Waisenhausplatz! In August, Lucia Rotheray produced a #ListenUp [video for The Science Talk](#) where we, the coordination team, got the opportunity to present 500 WS Bern-Fribourg to the public.

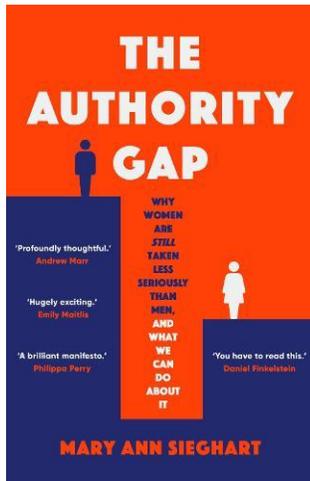
And, last but not least, we were able to hold a **retreat** for the first time, where twelve of us spent a weekend in November in Kandersteg. We received funding from the MVUB [Promotion Fund](#), for which we are grateful. This has really strengthened us as a team, given us motivation and inspiration and allows us to start 2022 with full energy!

New sections on our website

We have recently updated our [website](#) including a new section of [Interesting links](#) where you can find two different categories. On one hand, [Good reads](#) is a compilation of book reviews and synopsis related to gender and minority issues and how to tackle them. On the other hand, [Resources](#) aims to provide information about several organizations and associations which may be helpful for (women) scientists working in Bern and Fribourg.

If you have more helpful suggestions to include in those categories, do not hesitate to contact us: 500wsbern@gmail.com

Good reads with Andrea



The Authority Gap

By Mary Ann Sieghart (2021)

Have you ever felt that it is on you to initiate a conversation with a male colleague that ends up being only about him? Have you ever been interrupted when expressing your ideas? Have you been ignored in a meeting? In this book you will learn that this happens very often to women.

Women's professional competence is usually underestimated by society, colleagues, bosses and competitors. This is mostly due to unconscious (or even worse, conscious) gender biases, which start to develop very early in children's lives. Boys are given more attention at school, are encouraged to express their opinions, to ask questions and to pursue STEM careers. In general, the result of this is that men are more confident and assertive, qualities that are rewarded with promotions at work. Women, on the other side, are not expected to be like that. And if they are, they are usually characterized as bossy, ambitious or cold.

In this book, the author compiles testimonies of female leaders and results from scientific studies. Women that are recognised as an authority are usually much better in their job than their male peers. To be heard and respected means that women have to be outstanding in their positions, which implies they have to work much harder than their male colleagues. But not only working harder is required to progress at work. How women behave, talk and dress play a big role in how they are judged, not to mention race, age and sexual orientation.

It is important that men, in particular, and women read this book to be able to identify situations or behaviors that have a negative impact in women's careers. We can revert this situation if we acknowledge it and we work against our biases.

READ

The letter to the Editor [News stories must account for gender bias](#) in *Science* by Janet G. Hering, Roberta Croce, Beate I. Escher, Anne E. Magurran, and Beatriz Noheda.

DON'T MISS

The [COMET career programme](#) of the University of Bern for female (post)docs researchers. Coaching, mentoring and training to pursue your academic career. An informative session will take place on 21 Feb 2022.

Deadline for applications: 15 March 2022

SAVE THE DATE

12-16 September 2022. BRIDGES Conference, [Bridging the gap between disciplines: Gender in STEM and Social Sciences](#).

Registration deadline: 1st March 2022.

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