



Newsletter February 2022

# 500 Women Scientists Bern-Fribourg

February is a special month for us, as the 11th of February is the [International Day of Women and Girls in Science](#)! This year, we have celebrated 11F with a [Twitter quiz](#) composed of 3 questions related to gender equality in Switzerland and female scientists in Bern.

Thanks to all the participants and congratulations to the three winners (Laurianne Pillet, Hugues Abriel, and Sara Fuochi)!

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

# Foundation of the *Association 500 Women Scientists Switzerland*

On the 8th of February, the first steering committee to found the [Association 500 Women Scientists Switzerland](#) was held on-line!

Our non-profit organization will act as an umbrella association, founded by members of the current *500 Women Scientists pods* in [Fribourg-Bern](#) and [Zurich](#); and the upcoming pods in Geneva and Basel.

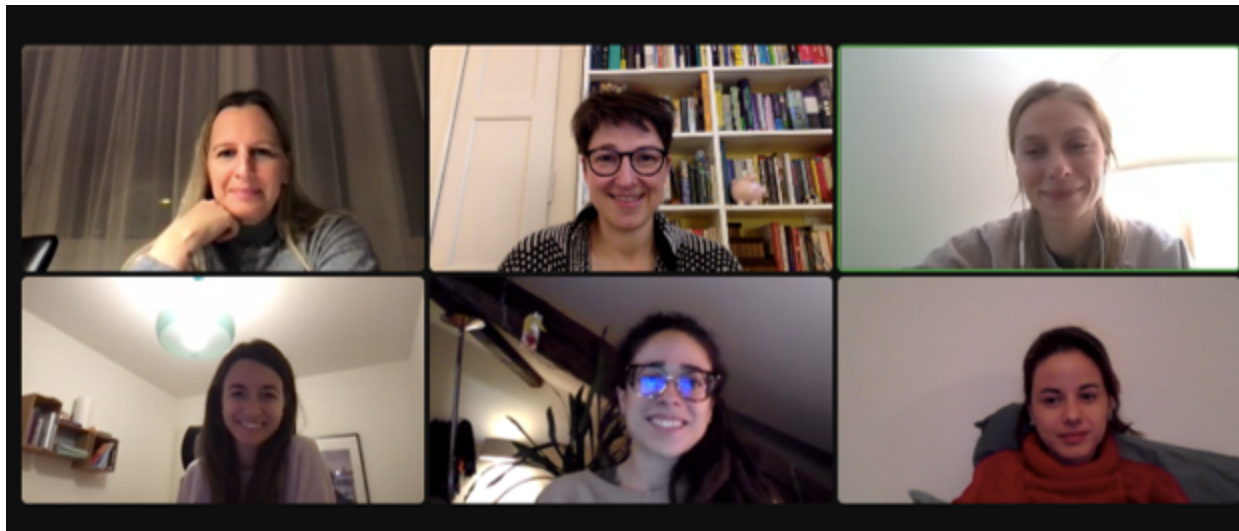
The association supports networking of female-identifying individuals and gender minorities in science and research, as well as science communicators and administrators of research funds in Switzerland. The main goal of 500WS-CH are:

- Organizing exchange and networking activities within women in STEMM

- Advocacy to improve the working conditions of women scientists
- Engagement in science communication.

The members of the association will be divided as follows:

- Full members
- Associated members
- Honorary members



First steering committee. From left to right, top to bottom, Andrea Fortier (Full Member), Claudia Kasper (The Chair), Oksana lamshanova (Networking Officer), Giovanna Brancati (The Vice-Chair), Serafina Calarco (The Treasurer), and Ana I. Benítez Mateos (The Secretary).

If you want to be part of the **Association 500 Women Scientists in Switzerland**, stay tuned for more news in our website:

[www.500womenscientistsfribourgbern.ch/500ws-switzerland](http://www.500womenscientistsfribourgbern.ch/500ws-switzerland)

Female researchers from underrepresented minorities and researchers identifying as gender minorities are particularly welcome.

## Women STEM network in Switzerland

We had the honor to host a virtual table at the webinar “The Power of Networking” organized by SVIN (Schweizerische Vereinigung der Ingenieurinnen) on February 17th. Claudia represented 500 Women Scientists Bern-Fribourg and also Zurich after some rounds of getting to know each other. After resolving some troubles with joining the virtual platform, she could host two discussion rounds in which participants asked questions about the pods and the organization in general. Claudia also had the opportunity to ask what people expect from the organization. There was some really valuable input, such as creating networks for mothers in academia (which exists already in the Zurich pod - [check it out!](#)). People would like to see groups like ours define standards for equality, and create campaigns to raise awareness for gender discrimination among professors.

## Good reads with Andrea



### *Unorthodox*

By Deborah Feldman (2012)

You may have watched (or heard of) the Netflix series *Unorthodox*. The series is based on the autobiographical book of the same name by Deborah Feldman. If you liked the series, I highly recommend the book. The true story might not be as dramatic and fantastic as the series, but it certainly feels more real.

Deborah Feldman (1986) grew up in the Hasidic Jewish community of Williamsburg, Brooklyn. There, survivors of the Holocaust from Hungary and Romania settled in the '40s, isolating themselves from the modern world. Although the strict rules of the community affect all its members, women are particularly vulnerable due to their dependence on men. Women get very basic, informal education, they can only access low qualified jobs (previous approval of the man in charge of them), they are meant to have as many children as possible and to marry the candidate chosen by the family.

It is then quite impressive to follow the author in her development, her determination and her desperate need for freedom. All by herself and against the odds, she is able to get out of the community. Of course, this came at a high price, but in the end she managed to reinvent herself. She is now a German writer living in Berlin, blended in the city as if she was born there.

While her life experiences might be difficult to relate with for citizens of western, secular societies, some of us can find inspiration in her bravery to go as far as it takes to change our lives.

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### READ

Our latest and inspiring blog post about [Prof. Margarita Salas, a pioneering woman scientist in Spain](#) by Ana I. Benítez-Mateos.

### DON'T MISS

The [individual coaching sessions](#) offered by the University of Bern to support postdocs and assistant professors when planning their academic career. Places are awarded on a “first-come, first-served” basis. Contact: [info@afg.unibe.ch](mailto:info@afg.unibe.ch)

YOU CAN JOIN OUR POD [HERE](#)



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