

Women in Natural Sciences (WiNS) at ETH Zurich Celebrates its 10th Anniversary – A Retrospective and Outlook

Valentina Gasser*, Amrita Singh-Morgan, Magdalena Lederbauer, Mercede Azizbaig Mohajer, and Elise Komarczuk



Abstract: For this *CHIMIA* special issue on the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) and the coincidental 10th anniversary of the association of Women in Natural Sciences (WiNS) at ETH Zurich, there is no better opportunity to share what we have achieved in the last decade. WiNS was originally founded by female PhD students and PostDocs at the Department of Chemistry and Applied Biosciences (D-CHAB) and has expanded to include three additional departments at ETH Zurich. Join us in celebrating our anniversary, reflecting on what we and other associations with the same mission have done to promote gender equality and reduced inequalities for all. We invite you to reflect on what yet has to be done to enact a systemic change towards achieving equal opportunities for all, rather than simply accommodating the female perspective to Switzerland's predominantly masculine working culture.

Keywords: Academia · Chemical community · Equal opportunities · Gender equality · WiNS



Author portrait: The authors of this article span three WiNS board generations. From left to right and top to bottom:

Valentina Gasser (vice-president 2022–2023) was the visionary behind initiating the association's re-branding efforts, strategic marketing initiatives, and fostering collaborations with industrial partners. Her dedication to inclusivity, coupled with innovative incentives to attract new members, laid the groundwork for the significant growth WiNS achieved in 2022. In 2023, she completed her PhD studies in D-CHAB in the group of Bill Morandi, working on homogeneous catalysis. For her work in promoting

inclusion and diversity within the ETH community, she received the ETH Zurich Diversity Award 2023.

Amrita Singh-Morgan (co-president 2023–2024) led the organization through challenges stemming from its exponential growth in 2023, establishing a new organizational structure for improved efficiency and longevity. She founded the WiNS mentoring program, which currently encompasses 30 pairs of mentors and mentees from BSc to Post-Doctoral level, hosting a number of educational and social events across the semester. She is currently undertaking her PhD in D-CHAB in the group of Victor Mougél, working on heterogeneous electrocatalysis.

Magdalena Lederbauer (student representative and IT responsibilities 2022–2024) was the driving force behind opening the doors of the association for undergraduate students enrolled in D-CHAB programs. With her IT prowess, she transformed our new website and maintained it during two WiNS tenures. She is currently finishing her MSc in Chemistry at ETH Zurich and interning in the group of Philippe Schwaller at the Laboratory of Artificial Chemical Intelligence at EPFL.

Mercede Azizbaig Mohajer (head of politics 2023–2025) is dedicated to fostering connections and collaborations with various associations at ETH as well as the executive board, with a primary focus on advancing discussions and initiatives related to equality, diversity, and inclusion. She is currently undertaking her PhD in D-CHAB in the group of Ruth Signorell, working on optical trapping of atmospherically relevant aerosol particles.

Elise Komarczuk (leader of the marketing team in 2023–2024 and co-president in 2024–2025) built a reliable marketing team, in order to always have high quality posts on WiNS social media, ensuring the advertisement of the WiNS events. In 2024, she handed over this leadership position to Olivera Stepanović and took over the co-president position. She is a PhD student at D-CHAB in the group of Gunnar Jeschke, in a project where chemistry meets both physics and biology.

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1. Celebrating 10 Years of WiNS!

Join us in celebrating the 10th anniversary of the founding of *Women in Natural Sciences* ('WiNS' for short). As you delve into this special issue of *CHIMIA* focusing on the topic of the *United Nations Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs)*, you might be wondering who we are and what connects us with *CHIMIA* and the *Swiss Chemical Society*.

We are a group of dedicated and ambitious female natural scientists committed to fostering an inclusive environment at D-CHAB^[1] at ETH Zurich and beyond. Our goal is to ensure that everyone feels empowered to take control of their personal growth and feel supported in achieving their scientific career ambitions – all in line with **SDG number 5: gender equality** and **SDG number 10: reducing inequalities**.

We hope that you have as much fun reading through these next few pages as we have had writing them and reflecting on 10 years of WiNS. We look back with immense pride at the decade-long achievements of our volunteer-run association in promoting equal opportunities for all at D-CHAB, ETH Zurich and the wider Swiss chemical community.^[2]

2. Who are Women in Natural Sciences (WiNS)?

Let us introduce ourselves: we are the association of *Women in Natural Sciences*, a female- and volunteer-run association for students and scientific staff at ETH Zurich (Fig. 1)). Now comprising four departments, our organization was originally founded within the department of chemistry and applied biosciences (D-CHAB). Initially centered on female PhD students, Post-Docs and scientific staff, WiNS has broadened in recent years to also encompass undergraduate students as well as male allies.



Fig. 1. WiNS board 2023 and current logo.



Fig. 2. Flyer of general assembly where WiNS was first inaugurated (2014).

It all started in 2014, when a group of chemists, Prof. Dr. Katherine Elvira, Dr. Daniela Paunescu-Bluhm, and Dr. Jessica Schulz^[3] decided to take the promotion of gender equality into their own hands (Fig. 2). With the financial support from D-CHAB, they founded our association aiming to create events for scientific staff based on three fundamental pillars: *career, awareness & fun*.

Inspired by women's societies from other universities around the world, our founders sought to illuminate female role models both in academia and industry, aiming to empower younger generations to make informed decisions regarding their career steps.^[4] By connecting female scientists, WiNS strives for change in academia, aiming to overcome the systemic barriers that have historically been placed on underrepresented minorities in the scientific disciplines. Our conviction that providing an inclusive work environment, free of gender- or other stereotypical barriers will benefit *everyone - on the scientific level*, as well as *our society as a whole*, is what drives our mission.

The beauty of our association lies in its inclusivity, inviting everyone to contribute in their own individual way. We are an association based on our members' vision and passion to bring their own ideas and initiatives to life. This mindset has been true to this day and is the main reason why WiNS has flourished and thrived in recent years: thanks to all the dedicated and driven individuals motivated to catalyze change to facilitate and accelerate equal opportunities for everyone with a passion for science at ETH Zurich.

3. WiNS' Formative Years (2014–2020)

To provide deeper insight into the inception of WiNS and its evolution over the years, we had the opportunity of sitting down with Dr. Jessica Schulz during the first alumnae event in April, commemorating the 10th anniversary of WiNS. Jessica graciously offered us a first-hand account of the challenges and triumphs faced during the organization's early stages, offering invaluable perspectives on the academic environment at the time of WiNS' founding year. Her recollections provide insight into the crucial moments that shaped WiNS into the vibrant community it is today, offering a compelling narrative of resilience, solidarity, and progress. Reflecting on the challenging beginnings of WiNS in 2014, Jessica recalls: "We created WiNS out of a pressing need for a safe environment in a male-dominated academic setting, where female scientists could share experiences of a sensitive nature and build friendships. While met with skepticism by many colleagues at all levels at D-CHAB, who initially did not take the need and initiative seriously, the unwavering support of a select few, particularly Prof. Wennemers and Prof. Morbidelli, propelled us forward".^[5]

Despite the uphill battle, the founders and early WiNS members were determined to thrive, fostering a resilient community of support amidst departmental resistance. In those formative years,



Fig. 3. Impressions of career events from 2017 and 2019.

the association's focus remained steadfast on sustainable growth across three pillars: *career*, *awareness*, and *fun*.

From annual summer barbecues to career development events such as 'Funding Research Equally' with SNSF and empowering discussions such as 'Breaking the Glass Ceiling' and 'The Magic of Saying No', each initiative contributed to WiNS' holistic mission (Fig. 3).

To explore the rich variety of events leading up to 2021, we invite you to browse through our yearly galleries on our website. These snapshots capture the essence of WiNS' journey, reflecting our commitment to empowering women in academia and beyond.^[6]

4. Three Pillars: Career, Awareness & Fun

Since its inception up to this day, the association has been structured around three strong pillars: *career*, *awareness* and *fun* – with a strong emphasis on 'career', mixing in fun with sponsored apéritifs for strengthening the WiNS network and attracting new board members.

4.1 Career Events

Based on our first pillar 'career', a recurring 'career series' was established in 2020 that has stood the test of time.

On a monthly basis, an expert from industry with a background in natural sciences provides a brief overview of their career experience, detailing their day-to-day job responsibilities and what working in their position involves. In its first series, WiNS had the honor to invite experts from a wide array of fields: Anna Dubrovsky-Gaupp (*venture capital*), Dr. Vincent Forster (*founding a start-up*), Inga-Maria Rückert (*quality assurance* in pharmaceutical industry), Dr. Sander van Bavel (*research* in industry), Dr. Gabriela Fettes (*patent law*) and Ewelina Gregolińska (*consulting*, Fig. 4).



Fig. 4. Flyers of previous career series in 2020 and 2021 featuring speakers with a background in natural sciences – their professions ranged from venture capital to industrial research to patent law.

Successfully sponsored career series from the last few years include inviting Dr. Janne Soetbeer (R&D Engineer at Sensirion), Dr. Venita Decker (Product Manager Compact NMR at Bruker Biospin), Araksya Topchyan (Global Segment Manager in Medi-



Fig. 5. Second edition of the WiNS career series (2022/2023).

cal Nutrition at dsm-firmenich), Dr. Kimberly Geoghegan (Research Scientist in process research at Givaudan) and Dr. Jasmin van den Heuvel (Bioanalytical Principal Investigator at Celerion, Fig. 5). These events were attended by an average of 60 people per event, and insightful conversations were held at the delicious apéritifs!^[7]

In addition to this series, we have hosted a number of workshops on topics such as CV-writing, interview techniques, transferable skills, salary negotiation and more. These topics are important in any setting, but by inviting speakers who understand and can articulate the specific nuances and challenges that women face, we open discussions on gender inequality and support each other.

4.2 Awareness Events

The pivotal event that marked a paradigm shift in the visibility of our association was our awareness event series around the topic of 'Implicit Bias' in early 2022 (Fig. 6). The series kicked off with an introductory talk about the topic held online by Anton Blank, which attracted over 100 attendees at our department. The two in-person workshops 'communication aikido for fearless women' and 'male ally training' led by Dr. Bettina Palazzo were also attended in high numbers.

By hosting such events, WiNS has taken its ambitions for equality to the wider ETH community. We encourage an open dialogue and believe that by engaging more and more people we can create change at our university.



Fig. 6. Flyer of implicit bias event, early 2022.

4.3 Social Events and Networking

At this point, you might ask yourself: why are fun events needed? As we all know, humans are inherently social beings, so it goes without saying that a voluntary association can only work with motivated individuals, who are inspired to contribute to an association that shares their values. Apéritifs have proven to be popular – scientists from different academic levels and backgrounds can connect and exchange over delicious food. Most of our members were inspired to join us because of connecting with us at a social event or career apéritif, so this part of an association is indispensable.

5. Exponential Growth and Restructure

As for many, the pandemic took a toll on our association and the attendance of our events, which is why the new board led by Seraphine Zhang and Valentina Gasser (Fig. 7), took on the challenge of rebuilding the dwindling visibility of WiNS at D-CHAB.



Fig. 7. WiNS board elected in February 2022.

The newly-elected 2022 board's mission was threefold: 1) *brand identity*: to bestow the association with a strong brand identity, including fresh logo, website, and coherent social media branding; 2) *external relations*: establish sponsorship opportunities with industrial partners; and 3) *outreach*: strengthen our community by always making sure to bring topics from a female scientist perspective, yet including a wide audience and reaching out to all young scientists wanting to learn and grow from experienced professionals with a science, technology, engineering, and mathematics (STEM) background.

Out of the conviction that women alone could and should not solve the difference in opportunities between genders on their own, we further opened our events to everyone interested in STEM events regardless of their gender or department/university affiliation in order to enable an open dialogue about diverse experience in STEM. This brought about not only everyone being able to profit from our excellent speakers and panelists, but also welcomed an open discussion around the topic of equal opportunities, while fostering a safe space to share any challenges faced based on any kind of discrimination.

These strategies enabled huge growth for WiNS, both in our event attendance, which went from 10–20 to 60–100 on average, and in the number of people wanting to become more actively involved.

5.1 Organizational Restructuring

The exponential growth of WiNS and addition of two new departments in 2023 prompted co-presidents Amrita Singh-Morgan and Roja Gandhimathi to restructure the organization. Their goal was to create a non-hierarchical and sustainable model, allowing for easier communication, transfer of information and operation (Fig. 8). They streamlined department representatives and introduced new roles as well as two new sub-teams: *marketing* and

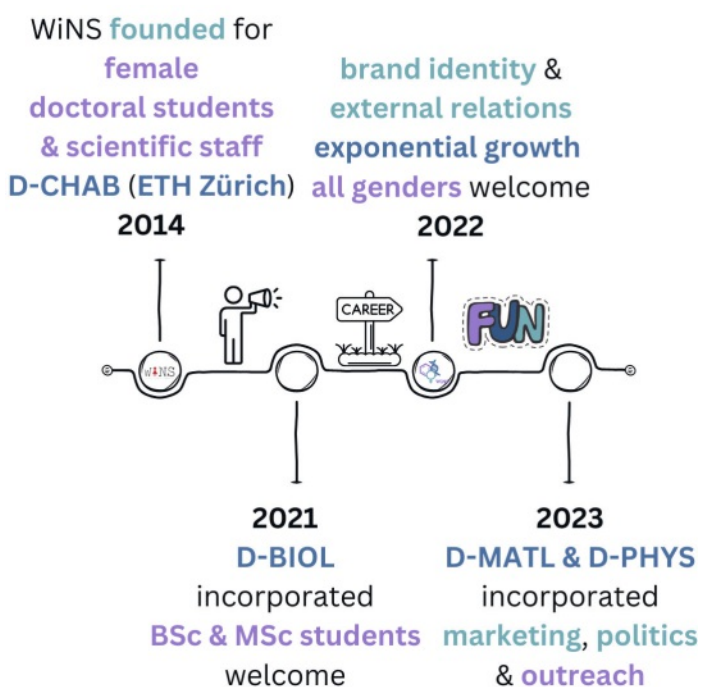


Fig. 8. Timeline of WiNS from 2014–2023, including foundation, incorporation of other departments and the restructuring into marketing, politics, and external relations team after exponential growth.

politics. They also created a ‘core-team’ from the board, enabling more efficient discussion and decision-making before taking topics to the wider board and active members, who total to over 50 people! After mapping out this new structure, the pair recruited talented and driven individuals in the WiNS community to take on these new roles.

Crucially, this structure defined responsibilities and workflow, making it easier for any WiNS member to organize an event – all they needed was an idea! This is a key ethos and strength of WiNS and is the reason why we are able to successfully organize multiple events every month, an incredibly impressive feat for a voluntary organization. Amrita and Roja’s work consolidated the growth of WiNS and ensured a strong foundation for future boards to build from.

5.2 Marketing

The new WiNS logo, featuring a vibrant color palette and symbolic elements representing femininity and natural sciences such as DNA and benzene rings, has significantly enhanced our brand recognition and visibility across various platforms. In addition to revamping our website, we updated our monthly newsletter to contain our latest event updates in a modern design and provide our readers with inspirational quotes from women scientists to give them a little motivation along their way.^[8]

It was our improved advertising strategies (through e-mails, newsletter, social media, flyer posting in buildings, advertising on screens and promoting *via* other associations) that overfilled the lecture halls with 130–200 attendees. The increased brand awareness and networking possibilities made our social media followership and board size as well as our available budget grow exponentially from 2022 and 2024 (Fig. 9).

5.3 External Relations and Collaborations

The updated newsletter format was also crucial for our relations with external companies, who were able to benefit from the advantageous advertising space. Gaining income from this, as well as undergoing partnerships with industry to sponsor apéritifs during our career series, enabled us to grow our board and have a larger budget to provide interesting workshops and other

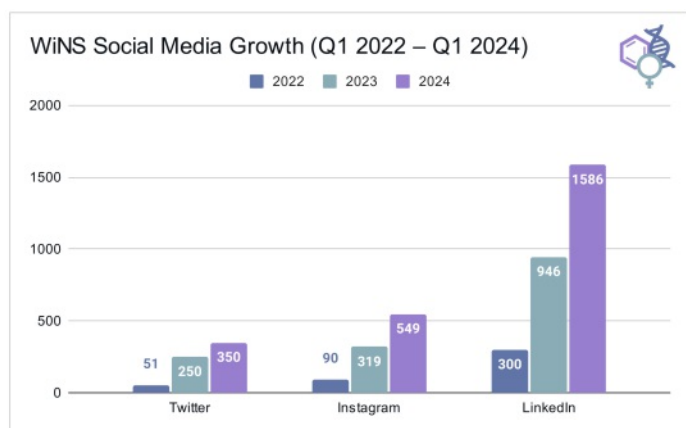


Fig. 9. Evolution of social media followership across X (formerly Twitter), Instagram, and LinkedIn from 2022 to 2024.

team-building events to the entire ETH Zurich community and beyond. In the year 2022, sponsorship from industry made up around 70% of our available budget, so without our generous sponsors, the exponential growth that we experienced in that and the following year would not have been possible. With that, we give a great thank you to our sponsors, who share our values, financially support us, and enable us to learn from their talented employees.

A large part of our growth has also stemmed from diversifying our audience by strengthened ties with other associations fighting for the same cause, achieving equal opportunities for all regardless of their gender or cultural background. This includes associations such as 500 Women Scientists Zurich Pod, the Association of Scientific Staff at ETH Zurich (AVETH) and their commission AVETH Diversity, the ETH Career Center, ETH Diversity as well as the African Students Association Zurich (ASAZ).

5.4 Collaboration with the Swiss Chemical Society

During the board year 2022/2023, WiNS actively engaged in collaboration with various social communities within the Swiss Chemical Society (SCS), namely Swiss Women in Chemistry (SWC) and the young Swiss Chemical Society (youngSCS) on two separate occasions.

In the fall of 2022, WiNS hosted a panel discussion on the ‘teacher’s diploma’, generously sponsored by Bruker Biospin and in collaboration with the youngSCS (Fig. 10). This event provided invaluable insights for those considering this path, showcasing the diverse career opportunities beyond traditional high school teaching. Panelists Helle Schwyzer (high school teacher and head of the biology Fachschaft at the Kantonsschule Uster),



Fig. 10. Panel discussion on the ‘teacher’s diploma’ organized by WiNS in collaboration with the young Swiss Chemical Society.

Dr. Barbara Czarniecki (NMR application scientist at Bruker Biospin) and Dr. Lukas Sigrist (head of the school for continuing education at ETH Zurich) shed light on the indirect benefits across various career trajectories. At this point we would like to extend our sincere appreciation to all high school educators for their invaluable role in guiding young adults towards their chosen paths of study!

In early 2023, Swiss Women in Chemistry and WiNS joined forces to host the annual IUPAC Global Women’s Breakfast, themed ‘Breaking Barriers in Science’. This event garnered overwhelming attendance, attracting leaders from both industry and academia. The event included a lively pub quiz centered on identifying celebrated historical female figures, as well as highlighting those who have been historically overlooked. The exchange between experienced professionals and young chemists proved to be a huge success (Fig. 11).

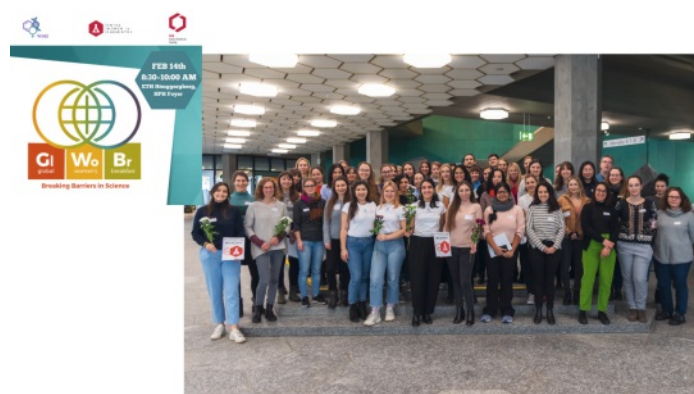


Fig. 11. The 2023 IUPAC Global Women’s Breakfast organized by WiNS in collaboration with Swiss Women in Chemistry, sponsored by the SCS.

6. WiNS: A Force to be Reckoned With

6.1 The Leaky Pipeline

In Switzerland, the discrepancy between the percentage of female professors (around 23%) and female undergraduate students (over 50%) highlights a systemic issue known as the ‘leaky pipeline’.^[9,10] This phenomenon, prevalent in chemistry and other STEM disciplines, sees female scientists and other under-represented groups exiting academia at early career stages due to various challenges, including gender discrimination – ranging from microaggressions, harassment, isolation and bullying to lack of childcare support – as well as opaque recruitment and promotion practices.^[11–14]

In an international context, data from the UNESCO Institute for Statistics (UIS) on the Sustainable Development Goals reveal that Swiss universities trail behind counterparts in the US (where women represent around 50% of academic staff), Sweden (45%), and the UK (45%), with only 35% female academic staff. These statistics highlight the urgent need for Switzerland to prioritize efforts towards achieving greater gender parity.^[15]

Despite these challenges, there is a growing recognition of the benefits of diversity in scientific teams. Studies have shown that groups prioritizing diversity tend to achieve greater success in terms of published papers and citations per paper, underscoring the competitive advantage of inclusivity in science.^[16] However, achieving true diversity remains an ongoing challenge, with equal opportunities, yet to be fully realized for all individuals.^[17] Therefore, WiNS prioritizes creating a supportive environment where women can speak up and receive help when in a difficult situation. Aside from hosting events where members can connect and confide in each other, we also consistently

highlight various help points and resources, including WiNS itself, through our monthly newsletter and on our website.^[18] As WiNS grows, we hope to extend these help points and ensure that all the departments that we represent have clear helpdesks.

6.2 Raising Awareness for Challenges Faced by Female Scientists in Academia

Motivated by this cause, a number of WiNS members gave testimonies in front of the ETH president Prof. Dr. Joël Mesot, the vice-president for leadership and personal development Dr. Julia Dannath, and the rector Prof. Dr. Günther Dissertori at an event organized by the 500 Women Scientists Zurich pod. There, they addressed a number of systematic changes that still have to happen at ETH in order to minimize discrimination based on gender or cultural background.^[19]

Other efforts for raising awareness and calling for systemic change in academia with regards to gender equality include an article about WiNS that Magdalena Lederbauer and Mercede Azizbaig Mohajer wrote for the student-run magazine 'VCS Exsikkator',^[20] an interview that Seraphine and Valentina gave during the 'Sexual Harassment Awareness Day' campaign, an initiative to raise awareness and achieve a harassment-free environment at all Swiss universities, led by the equal opportunities office of the University of Lucerne (Fig. 12).^[21] As part of an article in Swissinfo 'The younger generation fighting sexual harassment at Swiss universities', Valentina gave insights into the work of WiNS in tackling this highly sensitive topic.^[22] The pair were also interviewed by Julia Ecker, public relations officer at D-CHAB, where they spoke of their vision for WiNS and the ambition to change the system instead of changing the women.^[23]



Fig. 12. Seraphine and Valentina interviewed for the occasion of the Swiss-wide sexual harassment awareness day 2022.

6.3 Political Activism

Set against Switzerland's historically conservative cultural backdrop, it takes determined and fearless women to change the system, convincing the wider public that gender equality benefits everyone and that we are far from done – it is an ongoing process and there are always opportunities for improvement.

In order to address current challenges and opportunities to improve the system at ETH Zurich to provide equal opportunities for everyone, the WiNS board published an open letter to the ETH presidency in 2023 which was co-signed by six other organisations spanning seven departments at ETH in total.^[24] The new politics team is committed to uphold a yearly dialogue with the ETH leadership to reflect on what efforts are working and what further measures need to be implemented.^[25] WiNS is still advocating for improved reporting systems and tangible consequences in the case of power abuse.

Furthermore, it urges the ETH board to not only look at gender distribution of professors ETH-wide, but also narrow down the departments and institutes still suffering from a wide gender imbalance. At D-CHAB, for example, there is an institute – the institute for chemical and bioengineering (ICB) – which still does not have a single female professor in 2024.

The cultural shift needed to achieve gender parity will require many small changes and the support of key allies. However, one of the most important factors remains the representation of women in leadership positions.

6.4 ETH Zurich Menstruation Station

Menstruation is a natural experience for thousands of the university community. In 2020, the Women in Electrical and Mechanical Engineering at ETH Zurich (LIMES) spearheaded a project to introduce free menstrual product dispensers at ETH Zurich. Together with the support from other female associations, including ours, the project was implemented successfully by ETH Diversity and ETH Facility Management, with additional support from VSETH, AVETH, ETH Women Professors Forum, and various other university groups. The goal of the project is to promote the normalization of menstruation and challenge the societal taboo associated with it, both at ETH Zurich and within Swiss society as a whole.^[26]

6.5 Intersectional Feminism

It is incredibly important to our organization that our work is intersectional, and that we not only look at all different types of discrimination but also at how they can amplify and change the issues that women face. One of the key strategies that WiNS has implemented to achieve this is collaboration with a broad range of associations, enabling communities to share experiences and ideas and diversify our audience. Co-president Roja Gandhimathi and D-BIOL chairwoman Ankita Chavan felt an imbalance at career events at ETH, and that challenges faced by non-EU stu-



Fig. 13. Panel discussion on working in Switzerland as a non-EU citizen, organized by WiNS, ASAZ and ETH Career Center.

dents when entering the job market were not being addressed. They joined the African Students Association of Zurich and ETH Career Center to establish a series of events to give in depth advice on this topic (Fig. 13). New presidents Elise Komarczuk and Nerea Abando strive to continue to connect WiNS to other associations to broaden our events and make spaces and events for everyone.

6.6 Connecting Under- and Post-Graduates

In 2022, WiNS opened the association to BSc and MSc students, enabling a bridge between academic levels to form a more supportive network, a community where everyone has someone to learn from.

To continue this ethos, in 2023 co-president Amrita Singh-Morgan and D-MATL chairwoman Nerea Abando launched the WiNS mentoring program (Fig. 14). After a great kick-off event which included 'speed-networking', participants were able to meet and connect before the pairing took place. After rigorous analysis of their answers to our questionnaire, 30 pairs were matched one-by-one in order to find the best fit possible. We have had great fun at the events so far and look forward to seeing the program develop!



Fig. 14. Flyer of mentoring program 2023.

6.7 WiNS Alumnae Network

In celebration of our association's 10th anniversary, we recognize the importance of strengthening ties with our alumnae. Reaching out to reconnect with all former members, we successfully inaugurated the first 'alumnae networking event' in April (Fig. 15).^[27]

This event aimed to foster knowledge exchange and mutual support between our current board and former members. Together, we celebrated not just a journey of career advancement, but also one of camaraderie and awareness. It marked the beginning of a series of events dedicated to inspiring younger generations, as we continue our commitment to community engagement and empowerment.



Fig. 15. WiNS alumnae event in April 2024.

6.8 WiNS Awarded 3rd Place at 2023 Diversity Award of ETH Zurich

WiNS is proud to announce their recognition for fostering inclusivity at ETH Zurich, achieving 3rd place at the 2023 Diversity Award of ETH Zurich organized by AVETH and ETH Diversity (Fig. 16). Additionally, the night held special honors for two of our WiNS members: Valentina Gasser received the individual Diversity Award, while Katharina Kolatzki was named 2nd runner-up in the same category, both lauded for their outstanding contributions to make ETH Zurich an equitable and inclusive environment for all.



Fig. 16. WiNS members from left to right: Tatiana, Ana, Katharina, Roja, Amrita and Valentina celebrating the recognition by the 2023 Diversity Award of ETH Zurich.

7. Conclusion and Outlook

Although there are still wide opportunities for change and improvement, WiNS remains optimistic about the future. In March, the new WiNS board 2024 was inaugurated with Elise Komarczuk (D-CHAB) co-leading the association with Nerea Abando (D-MATL). All of us from WiNS – past and present – look back with pride at the last 10 years of WiNS and are excited for what is to come in the next decade.

We firmly believe in the potential of this association. We are a group of passionate scientists dedicating our efforts to be a source of positive change at ETH. We have brought forth a spirit of community that is almost unmet at ETH Zurich. WiNS remains steadfast in its commitment to strengthen and uplift the chemical community by providing a platform for open discussion, a support network for personal and professional development, and a drive for an inclusive space that allows every and any chemist to feel that they belong.

By further strengthening our ties with WiNS alumnae from previous generations, we are optimistic to learn from and support each other as well as others – regardless of gender or cultural background – in our future endeavours.

If you are an individual in the chemical industry inspired by our mission, we are always open for new collaboration opportunities. Do not hesitate to reach out *via* wins@ethz.ch.

As the adage goes, ‘well-behaved women seldom make history.’ In the face of social injustices, reformation and accountability, infused with positivity, becomes imperative. Sometimes it takes a few people to plant the seeds of change, not taking ‘no’ for an answer and trying to succeed another way if the obvious way is blocked by systemic barriers. Once we are on the side of success, let us not forget to remember our hardships and keep the door open for generations after to join us. Only by first acknowledging our own biases, can we then grow and provide a brighter future for the generations to come. Let us inform ourselves and be the change we want to see in the world!

Acknowledgements

Herein, we express our gratitude to the generations preceding us; without their tireless dedication and hard work, our own efforts would not have been feasible. We extend our heartfelt thanks to the past presidents, vice-presidents, and treasurers leading the association from the founding year of WiNS to the present day: Prof. Dr. Katherine Elvira, Dr. Jessica Schulz, Dr. Daniela Paunescu-Blum (2014), Dr. Jurate Fahrīg-Kamarauskaite (2015), Prof. Dr. Jovana Milić, Dr. Sara Da Ros, Dr. Irina Bolotova (2016), Dr. Jong Ah Kim, Dr. Antonia Hirt (2017), Prof. Dr. Renana Poranne, Dr. Alexandra Tsybizova (2018), Dr. Korinne Liosi, Dr. Selina Kaiser (2019), Dr. Stephanie Linker, Dr. Carmen Esposito (2020), Dr. Rhiannon Zarotiadis (2021), Dr. Seraphine Zhang, Dr. Valentina Gasser (2022), Amrita Singh-Morgan, Rojapriyadharshini Gandhimathi, Adeline Schmitt (2023), Elise Komarczuk, Nerea Abando, Linn Fischbach (2024) and all WiNS alumnae as well as current members, who have dedicated their time to foster an inclusive environment at ETH Zurich.

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- [1] Department of Chemistry and Applied Biosciences (D-CHAB). For the purpose of catering to the target readership of this journal, our review will primarily approach WiNS from a chemist’s perspective. However, it is noteworthy to acknowledge that WiNS has significantly broadened its scope in recent years, extending its reach to three additional departments out of ETH Zurich’s total of 16. These departments include the Department of Materials (D-MATL), the Department of Physics (D-PHYS), and the Department of Biology (D-BIOL).
- [2] It is worth noting that while we use the term ‘gender equality’, recent research suggests ‘gender equity’ may be more appropriate. ‘Equity’ acknowledges diverse needs and underscores systemic changes necessary for inclusivity. While we retain the term ‘equality’ for brevity, we recommend considering ‘equity’ for a more comprehensive understanding.
- [3] More specifically: Prof. Dr. Katherine Elvira, currently associate professor in the Department of Chemistry at the University of Victoria, Canada. When co-founding WiNS, she was a senior scientist at the Institute for Chemical and Bioengineering (ICB); Dr. Daniela Paunescu-Blum, currently Co-Lead QC New Product Introduction at The Janssen Pharmaceutical Companies of Johnson & Johnson. When co-founding WiNS, she was a doctoral student at ICB at ETH Zurich; Dr. Jessica Schulz, currently scientific policy manager at Interpharma. When co-founding WiNS, she was a doctoral student at the Institute of Pharmaceutical Sciences (IPW).
- [4] Who We Are – The Society for Women in Natural Sciences at ETH, <https://wins.ethz.ch/who-we-are.html>, accessed March 26, 2024.
- [5] Interview with the authors, WiNS alumnae event, April 2024.
- [6] Gallery 2014–2021 – The Society for Women in Natural Sciences at ETH, <https://wins.ethz.ch/gallery-earlier.html>, accessed April 25, 2024.
- [7] If you are curious to get an impression of what our events look like, you are most welcome to visit our event galleries organized by year at <https://wins.ethz.ch/>.
- [8] If you have not already subscribed to our monthly newsletter; we highly recommend doing so at <https://wins.ethz.ch/newsletter.html>. You will receive regular updates on upcoming events and career opportunities. Whether you’re affiliated with ETH Zurich or not, our newsletter features exciting job postings, and all events are free and open to everyone, subject to availability.
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