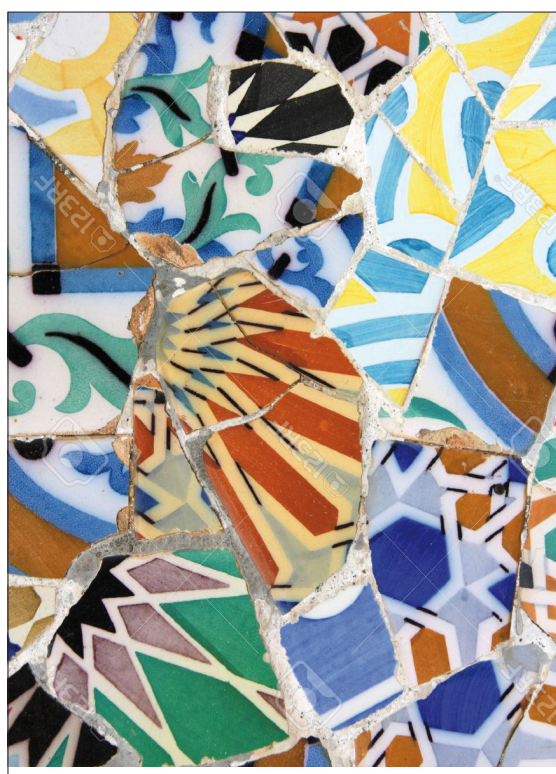


The AE-BKH Women's Week, 2013–2016

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Trencadís ("broken tiles") by Antoni Gaudí

Summary. The article describes the activities of the Barcelona Knowledge Hub of the Academia Europaea (AE-BKH) on the occasion of the BKH-AE Women's Week, from 2013 to 2016. This Week will be continued in the coming years. Two major changes have revolutionised society and specifically higher education in only one century. Firstly, higher education and scientific research have rapidly expanded throughout the world. Secondly, this exceptional opportunity to promote and strengthen the values of science in the service of humanism, development and peace is partially the consequence of the achievements of women in science. Women have been able to apply their knowledge and skills to many fields of science and humanities, and their contributions to progress in all of them have been highly significant. [Contrib Sci 12(2):93-98 (2016)]

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Introduction

From 2006 to 2012, the Institute for Catalan Studies commemorated the International Women's Day with a Distinguished Lecture. Since 2013, that celebration has been the responsibility of the Barcelona Knowledge Hub of the Aca-

demia Europaea (AE-BKH) [7,9]. To the Distinguished Lecture, other activities have been added, including a concert, a workshop and a visit to a center of special cultural or scientific relevance in Barcelona. Therefore, the activity has been renamed the AE-BKH Women's Week. The International Women's Day (IWD) first emerged from the activities of female

As Scientific Secretary of the Institute for Catalan Studies, one of the authors, R. Guerrero, commemorated the International Women's Day from 2006 to 2012. And from 2013 to the present, as Academic Director of the AE-BKH, organised the AE-BKH Women's Week. This article is based on a previously published article in the journal *Contrib Sci* 11(1):21-26 (2015).



Fig. 1. Celebration of the International Women's Day at the Barcelona Knowledge Hub of the Academia Europaea. Lectures by Nadia El-Awady, Egypt, on March 5, 2014 (left), and by Lynn Kamerlin, Sweden, presented by Anna Albèrni, Barcelona, on March 4, 2015 (right). Held at the premises of the Institute for Catalan Studies.

workers at the start of the 20th century in North America and across Europe. On February 28, 1909, the first Woman's Day was observed in the United States. The Socialist Party of America proposed this day in honour of the 1908 strike of garment workers in New York, where women protested against working conditions. In 1910, the Socialist International Meeting in Copenhagen established a Women's Day to honour the movement for women's rights and to build support for achieving universal suffrage for women. The proposal was greeted with unanimous approval by the conference of over 100 women from 17 countries, which included the first three women elected to the Finnish Parliament. No fixed date was selected for the observance. As a result of the Copenhagen initiative, IWD was marked for the first time (19 March) in Austria, Denmark, Germany and Switzerland, and more than one million women and men attended rallies. In addition to the right to vote and to hold public office, they demanded women's rights to work, to vocational training and to an end to discrimination on the job [9]. In 1915, during the first winter and spring of World War I women started to take action by reclaiming their rights as wives, mothers and housekeepers, and the IWD provided the framework for their protests. As part of the peace movement, Russian women first observed IWD the last Sunday in February in 1913. In 1917, against the backdrop of the war, women in Russia held a mass demonstration for "bread and peace" on February 23 (8 March on the Gregorian calendar). Four days later, the Czar was forced to abdicate, and the provisional Government granted women the right to vote. Since those early years, the growing international women's movement has been strengthened by four global UN women's conferences and has helped to make the commemoration a rallying point

to build support for women's rights and participation in the political and economic arenas [6,9].

Many countries around the world followed the observation of the IWD, in commemoration of the women's struggles to vindicate their rights, recognizing their social achievements in those struggles and looking ahead to obtain a full and equal participation in society. After World War II, however, the IWD remained a communist celebration until the late 1960s. A group of women at the University of Illinois, Chicago Circle commemorated it in 1967. The United Nations (UN) started celebrating the IWD on March 8, 1975, on the occasion of the International Women's Year. In December 1977, a resolution of the UN General Assembly proclaimed a UN Day for Women's Rights and International Peace, which would be observed on any day of the year by Member States, according to their traditions. Nowadays, the IWD is commemorated in more than 100 countries and in some of them, including Russia, it is even an official public holiday [6,9].

Increasingly, IWD is a time to reflect on progress made, to call for change and to celebrate acts of courage and determination by ordinary women who have played an extraordinary role in the history of their countries and communities. Accordingly, the Institute for Catalan Studies (IEC), always eager to follow international trends and multinational cooperation, celebrated the IWD from 2006 to 2012 by holding a Distinguished Lecture during the week of March 8 (Fig. 1). Female researchers and scholars talked on a great variety of topics, as shown in Table 1. Several lectures related to the IWD given at the IEC have been published in *Contributions to Science* [2,4,5,8]. From 2013 on, other events have been added to the main lecture (Fig. 2). Therefore, the whole activity has been renamed the AE-BKH Women's Week.



INTERNATIONAL WOMEN'S DAY at the AE-BKH

Table 1. Events related to the International Women's Day held at the AE-BKH since 2013 to present.

International Women's Day at the AE-BKH, 2013–2016

2013

March 6th "Two cultures, three cultures, or one only culture?"

Dacha Atienza, Museum of Natural Sciences of Barcelona; Mercè Berlanga, University of Barcelona; and Genoveva Martí, Catalan Institution for Research and Advanced Studies (ICREA).

2014

March 5th

Distinguished lecture: "Arab Spring, or long desolate Arab Winter?"

Nadia El-Awadi, Egypt; former president of the World Federation of Science Journalists.

March 6th

"The Earth is our body. Lynn Margulis and Gaia"

Convenor: Carmen Chica, editor of the book *Once Upon a Time*. With the participation of: Isabel Esteve, Marta Estrada, Ricard Guerrero, Juli Peretó, Mercè Piqueras, Anna Omedes, Carme Puche, Joandomènec Ros and Nicole Skinner.

2015

March 4th

InterSection Workshop: "Women and the academic ladder"

Convenor: Lynn Kamerlin. With the participations of: Clara Corbella, Margaret Luppino, Maryam Ghafouri, M. Dolors Garcia-Ramon and Lourdes Beneria.

March 5th

Convenor: Anna Alberni, Catalan Institution for Research and Advanced Studies (ICREA). Short film, "In the search of truth. In memory of Lynn Margulis", comments by director Carme Puche, Barcelona.

Distinguished Lecture: "Empowerment of women in the academic world", by Lynn Kamerlin, University of Uppsala, chair of the Young Academy of Europe (YAE).

Concert: "Women's Sephardic Songs". By Olga Miracle, soprano, accompanied by Noemí M. Agell and Pere Olivé, string and percussion instruments.

March 6th

Activities in support of the YAE:

Visit to the Museu Blau, the new Natural Sciences Museum of Barcelona. Visit guided by Marta Punseti.

Visit to the Cercle del Liceu pinacothèque. Visit guided by María Jiménez de Parga.

2016

March 3

Distinguished Lecture: "Women and cultural transmission. The essential role of translation" By Mary Ann Newman.

Greater than Life. In remembrance of Lynn Margulis (1938-2011) By Ricard Guerrero.

"Lin in Spain. How she stood our Spanish-Catalan accent." (Documentaries selected by Rubén Duro) and "Symbiotic Earth" by John Feldman, Filmmaker, Hummingbird Films, New York.

Concert: Music from Syria and Kurdistan, a Nation without a State. By the Gani Mirzo Band. Neila BenBey (singer), Francesc Puig (clarinet), Juan Jose Barreda (flamenco guitar), and Gani Mirzo (ud, buzuk, composer)

March 4

InterSection Workshop: "Women, migrations and war"

Convenor: Mitsi Ito. With the participations of: Mitsi Ito, Maryam Ghafouri, Pere Castaño, Carmen Chica, Salvador Giner.

Commemoration of the International Year of Global Understanding by Silvia Pellicer.

Art exhibit: Digital art: Photomontage by Teresa Gironès: "The Book of Beasts. Palmira 2015." Reflections of the dangers of power and the horrors of war. Paintings by Trini Sotos: "Women/Dones/Mujeres." Reflections and aesthetics of female emotions.



Fig. 2. Celebration of the Women's Week at the Barcelona Knowledge Hub of the Academia Europaea, on March 5, 2015. Women's Sephardic Songs concert by soprano Olga C. Miracle, Barcelona and Sacramento, California. Held at the premises of the Royal Academy of Medicine of Catalonia.

The role of the AE in promoting women at the upper academic levels

On 2 Nov. 2000, UNESCO's Director General, Dr. Koichiro Matsuura, received Prof. Stig Strömholm, President of the Academia Europaea, and Prof. Enric Banda, Secretary General of the European Science Foundation (ESF). Both visitors expressed their interest in joining UNESCO's efforts in South East European countries to contribute to the development of the intellectual activities in this region. Director General Matsuura supported this initiative of building upon the region's unique and diverse cultural identities and its historical close cultural links.

The following day, 3 Nov. 2000, another meeting took place between the Permanent Delegates to UNESCO of the following member states: Albania, Bosnia-Herzegovina, Bulgaria, Croatia, Greece, Italy, Romania and Slovenia. The Permanent Delegate of Italy to UNESCO and other delegates agreed on a two-step exercise, with proposals emerging from a scientific expert conference which would need to be examined at a governmental level. As a result of these preliminary discussions, a joint UNESCO-ROSTE/AE/ESF Organizing Committee was set up in order to prepare the expert conference as a first step of the process. The International Conference of Experts on the Reconstruction of Scientific Cooperation in South East Europe took place in Venice, Italy from 24–27 March 2001. It focused on country presentations and reviews of existing collaborations and furthermore on the potential South Eastern European countries to develop cooperation in some strategic fields of research.

Two major changes have revolutionised society and specifically higher education in only one century. Firstly, higher education and scientific research have rapidly expanded throughout the world. Access to higher education has become a common aspiration, and is no longer perceived as the privilege of social elites. Moreover, higher education is increasingly recognised as a social, economic and political driving force for progress. Nowadays, a larger proportion of humanity aspires to education, and higher education is increasingly regarded as tomorrow's general education. Secondly, this exceptional opportunity to promote and strengthen the values of science in the service of humanism, development and peace is partially the cause and the consequence of the achievements of women in science. By breaking down earlier social, cultural barriers, women can now apply their knowledge and skills to many fields of science, and their contributions to progress in all of them have been significant. Despite these important gains, women in higher education must still overcome difficult hurdles before being granted the same opportunities as their male peers. There is no real evidence that gender has ceased to stratify opportunities. Many obstacles to women's equity remain: advancement to the upper rungs of the career ladder is slow, the glass ceiling—a metaphor used to represent an invisible barrier that prevents from reaching upper levels in a hierarchy—still hangs low, and equal work does not yet mean equal salary. Within the top rungs of higher education, women in many countries are greatly underrepresented even though they receive the majority of undergraduate degrees.

Inequality in STEM higher education

Shortages in the supply of trained professionals in disciplines related to science, technology, engineering, and mathematics (STEM) may weaken the innovation potential of a society [1]. Countries with higher proportions of engineering graduates tend to grow faster than countries with higher proportions of graduates in other disciplines. Moreover, future technical changes will probably be linked to abilities and tasks related to STEM disciplines. Over the years a wide gender gap has persisted at all levels of STEM disciplines throughout the world. Women have made important advances in their participation in higher education, yet they are still underrepresented in these fields. This is even a more acute concern in some regions of the world and at the senior-most levels of academic and professional hierarchies [1].

According to the UNESCO Institute of Statistics (UIS), women still account for a minority of the world's researchers: 28.4% of the total number of persons employed in R&D. The highest percentages are found in Central Asia (47.1%) and Latin America and the Caribbean (44.3%). Other regional averages for the share of female researchers for 2013 were: Central and Eastern Europe, 39.9%; Arab States, 36.8%; North America and Western Europe, 32.0%; Sub-Saharan Africa, 30.0%; East Asia and the Pacific, 22.6%; and South and West Asia, 18.9% [Women in Science, UIS Fact Sheet, no. 34, November 2015]. Even though Latin America has a high percentage of female researchers, they are rarely present in the upper strata of research. For example, while in Brazil 49 percent of researchers are female, only 27 percent of women lead research groups [Brazilian National Council for Scientific and Technological Development, CNPq, database, 2012].


Ceci and Williams reported in 2011 [3] that, while in Europe women accounted for 45 percent of Ph.D. graduates, they represented only 36 percent of associate professors and a mere 18 percent of full professors. Similarly, in the United States, excluding the humanities, 40 percent of new Ph.D. were women, but they were only 34 percent associate professors and only 19 percent of full professors. In terms of decision making, on average, in 2010 only 15.5% of institutions in the higher education sector were headed by women throughout the European Union, and just 10% of universities had a female rector [Gender in Research and Innovation. Statistics and Indicators. European Commission, Brussels].

Gender equality to promote scientific and technological excellence

A more inclusive workforce is assumed to be more innovative and productive than one which is less so [3]. Having scientists and engineers with diverse backgrounds, interests, and cultures—and male and female—assures better scientific and technological results and the best use of those results. Gender equality is a means to promote scientific and technological excellence rather than just improving opportunities for women. Women who might be interested in STEM but decide not to follow studies in these fields or who decide to change careers because of obstacles, real or perceived, represent a major lost opportunity not only for their own careers but also for society as a whole. Hindering women's scientific careers deprive societies of human resources, which is detrimental to competitiveness and development [1]. The root causes of gender disparities in STEM must be established through research, which would allow to develop appropriate policy responses. In developing countries, the importance of this issue is being more and more recognized. However, most of the literature related to gender inequalities in STEM and the policies designed to amend them refer to the United States and Europe. [1]

The role of the Academia Europaea

While women academic roles in the 21st century have much advanced, persistent inequities beg for new solutions. And it is in this context that institutions such as the Academia Europaea can provide representative, authoritative and independent perspectives to take on these and other social challenges. One of the main objectives of the Academia Europaea, an international, non-governmental and not-for-profit association of scientists and scholars from all disciplines, is to propose appropriate action to ensure that topics of trans-European importance to science and scholarship are adequately addressed. Thus, the Academia Europaea endeavours to encourage achievement of the highest possible standards in scholarship, research and education. But to do so, it must promote gender equality and facilitate connectivity and networking among all Members of the Academia. One of the activities in 2014 was the invitation to the coauthor of this article, in his quality of the Academic Director of the AE-BKH, to give the inaugural lecture in the International Seminar "Education and Empowerment of Women", held at

the Autonomous University of Madrid (UAM), at Cantoblanco, Madrid, on September 17-19. The Seminar was organized by the UAM, with the collaboration of the Iranian Embassy in Madrid and the Barcelona Knowledge Hub of the Academia Europaea. Social improvements in women's rights have still to alter the nature and structure of institutions at the highest academic level. This, however, should not prevent the Academia Europaea from seeking the full participation of the women's college-age population, who embody an as yet untapped source of talent for meeting the needs of society, today and in the coming years. To this end, the Academia Europaea must work with governmental institutions and with professional and learned societies to support higher education of women, by fearlessly embracing radical shifts in organizational paradigms. Gender equality must be pursued at all levels of education, including the highest, where the challenges are often the most daunting. The systematic incorporation of gender awareness into the fabric of institutional, departmental, and programmatic efforts is crucial. It is a great challenge for the Academia Europaea and for other high-level educational stakeholders in the continent. 

Competing interests. None declared.

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About the images on the first page of the articles in this issue. Articles of this thematic issue of CONTRIBUTIONS TO SCIENCE, devoted to the activities of the Barcelona Knowledge Hub of the Academia Europaea (AE-BKH), show in their first page a reproduction of a *trencadis*, a type of mosaic used in Catalan Modernism, made from broken pieces of ceramics, like tiles and dinnerware. Those nine “broken tiles,” designed by the architect from Reus Antoni Gaudí, show multiple angles and views, reflecting the ever-changing reality around us. The AE-BKH believes that those images, created more than a century ago, represent appropriately the multiple aspects of the present academic world, both in science and humanities, which constitute one of the main objectives of the activities of the Barcelona hub. See also the article “Antoni Gaudí (1852–1926): The Manuscript of Reus,” by R. Gomis and K. Katte, on pages 145-149 of this issue. This issue can be downloaded in ISSUU format and individual articles can be found at the journals' repository of the Institute for Catalan Studies [www.cat-science.cat; <http://revistes.iec.cat/contribuitons>].