

# Improving Career Opportunities for Women in Marine Research



In many areas of marine research, men and women are now working together as equals. However, women are still under-represented in leadership positions. Partners from eight scientific institutions in five countries around the Baltic Sea will be working together in the 'Baltic Gender' project in an attempt to reduce gender inequalities in marine sciences. The project is being coordinated by the GEOMAR Helmholtz Centre for Ocean Research Kiel and supported by EUR2.2 million of European Union funding. The first meeting was held on 6 and 7 October in Kiel, Germany, with the participation of 30 representatives from partner institutions.

Just like sea-going expeditions, marine research has been strongly dominated by men for a long time. This is slowly changing in recent years on research vessels and in laboratories of the respective institutions on land. According to Professor Katja Matthes, a meteorologist from GEOMAR Helmholtz Centre for Ocean Research Kiel and head of the GEOMAR Women's Executive Board (WEB), coordinating Baltic Gender, this positive development has not reached the leadership levels of marine research yet. Beyond the PhD and post-doc stage, she finds women to be under-represented. The inequality is even more striking at the level of full-professor or within the engineering staff.

Besides the GEOMAR in Kiel the partners at Baltic Gender include the Kiel University, the Kiel University of Applied Sciences, the Leibniz Institute for Baltic Sea Research Warnemünde, the Estonian Marine Institute (University of Tartu), the Klaipeda University (Lithuania), the Lund University (Sweden) and the Finnish Environment Institute.

## Interesting Region

Ms. Sarah Braun, the equal opportunity officer from the Kiel University of Applied Sciences, finds the Baltic-Sea region especially interesting for this project. Here, very different cultures and developments regarding gender equality exist close to each other. The Scandinavian countries are known as global leaders in the equality of men and women in research. Germany has developed active policies in recent years to address the issue, while the Baltic States have initiated only a few measures in this respect so far.

Project partners will collect and compare standardised gender-related data from all participating institutions. Based on the analysis of long-term data, scientists can identify trends towards equality or inequality and define specific targets to improve the situation. The goal is the introduction and implementation of Gender Equality Plans in each of the partner institution, according to Dr. Iris Werner, the equal opportunity officer at the Kiel University. She adds that these plans play an important role in committing institutions to long-term approaches, realistic targets and concrete measures, which eventually lead to the necessary structural changes.

## Integrating the Gender Dimension

Baltic Gender will establish practical schemes to promote gender equality in the partner institutions. These include establishment of grass-root networks, gender focused training and mentoring schemes, family-friendly policies and gender-sensitive teaching methods. The project will also explore new ways of integrating the gender dimension in each step of the research process. All involved in research are sensitised on gender equality themes and those themes are firmly anchored in university education as well. In order to achieve students, PhD's and established scientist need to be engaged, as Prof. Joanna Waniek, a physical oceanographer and equal opportunity officer at the Leibniz Institute for Baltic Sea Research Warnemünde, explains.

The recommendations and results of the project will be delivered in brochures, blogs and guidelines aiming at a broader public. Other research disciplines across the EU should be able to benefit from the work accomplished.