

## Aim

The primary objective of the conference is to discuss the role of the institutions as real game-changer to achieve gender equality and women academic leadership, in contrast to the conventional perspective that focuses on training women to “fit in” better.

## Did you know?

- Women are typically given smaller research grants than their male colleagues and, while they represent 33.3% of all researchers, only 12% of members of national science academies are women.
- In cutting edge fields such as artificial intelligence, only one in five professionals (22%) is a woman.
- Despite a shortage of skills in most of the technological fields driving the Fourth Industrial Revolution, women still account for only 28% of engineering graduates and 40% of graduates in computer science and informatics.
- Female researchers tend to have shorter, less well-paid careers. Their work is underrepresented in high-profile journals and they are often passed over for promotion.

-- *United Nations. Website of International Day of Women and Girls in Science, 11 February ([link](#))* --

## Background

A significant gender gap has persisted throughout the years at all levels of science, technology, engineering and mathematics (STEM) disciplines all over the world. Even though women have made tremendous progress towards increasing their participation in higher education, they are still under-represented in these fields.

Historically, efforts to address gender inequality often revolved around empowering women through education, mentorship, and leadership training. However, solely empowering women without addressing institutional biases is akin to placing a bandage on a deeper wound, neglects the systemic barriers deeply entrenched within institutions. Numerous studies (Husu, 2001; Eagly & Carli, 2007) have demonstrated that institutional structures, biased policies, and cultural norms contribute significantly to the underrepresentation of women in leadership roles.

While women empowerment programs might add skills and confidence, instituting policies promoting diversity, inclusivity, and flexible work arrangements is imperative to dismantle institutional barriers. Case studies (McKinsey & Company, 2020) examining organizations that successfully implemented inclusive policies reveal higher productivity, innovation, and employee satisfaction. Moreover, an exploration of the psychological effects of institutional biases on women's advancement is integral to understanding the multifaceted challenges they face. The phenomenon of imposter syndrome and stereotype threat significantly impacts women in male-dominated environments, hindering their progression despite qualifications and capabilities.

Intersectionality must be central to any discussion on gender equality. Factors such as race, ethnicity, class, sexuality, and ability intersect with gender, shaping diverse experiences of

discrimination and privilege. Any effective strategy must acknowledge and address these intersecting identities to ensure inclusivity and equal opportunities for all individuals.

The debate between "fixing the women" versus "fixing the institution" is a false dichotomy. True progress toward gender equality necessitates a holistic approach that combines empowering women with systemic changes within institutions. By addressing structural inequalities alongside empowering individuals, societies can create environments where talent and meritocracy flourish irrespective of gender, fostering inclusive and thriving institutions.

## **FFNT conference**

The Female Faculty Network Twente proposes a thematic conference on the topic "***Fix the Women or Fix the Institution?***", comprising three keynote talks by established experts and a panel discussion. The objective is to foster an open and inspiring dialogue among experts in the field, academics, and managers, aiming to generate innovative, practical, and impactful ideas.

**Keynote – Prof Tanya Bondarouk**, Full Professor and Dean, BMS, UTwente  
*"Doing Gender, Practising Politics: are we on the right track in academia?"*

**Keynote – Dr Stephanie McKendry**, Deputy Director of Student Experience, U. Strathclyde  
*"A UK Perspective: the impact of the Athena SWAN charter on gender equality at a university level"*

**Keynote – MSc Karin Sluis**, Managing Director, Witteveen+Bos  
*"How wearing socks can improve diversity in your organization"*

**Panel Discussion – moderator Dr Heather Handley**

**Prof Vinod Subramaniam**, President Executive Board, UTwente

**Prof Joost Kok**, Dean EEMCS, UTwente

**Drs Cathelijne de Carpentier Wolf - de Vin**, HR manager, UTwente

**Prof Tanya Bondarouk**, Dean BMS, UTwente

**Dr Stephanie McKendry**, Deputy Director of Student Experience, U. Strathclyde

**MSc Karin Sluis**, Managing Director, Witteveen+Bos

## **References**

Husu, L. (2001). Gendering the university: A partial account of how femininities and masculinities matter. *Gender and Education*, 13(3), 301-316.

Eagly, A. H., & Carli, L. L. (2007). Through the labyrinth: The truth about how women become leaders. *Harvard Business Review Press*.

McKinsey & Company. (2020). *Diversity wins: How inclusion matters*.

## **The keynote speakers**



**Tanya Bondarouk** is the dean of the Faculty of Behavioral, Management, and Social Sciences at the University of Twente. This faculty brings together High Tech and Human Touch, with over five hundred colleagues collaborating on research, education, and design solutions for various societal and technical challenges. Tanya is a professor of HRM and Technology and has authored over a hundred articles in international professional journals and books. Additionally, she has authored more than ten scientific books herself. Since 2020, Tanya has been actively involved in the national program Recognize & Appreciate, advocating for more diversity in careers and in recognizing individual and team contributions in the academic world. As a dean, her focus is on applying her knowledge of talent development in practice and contributing to fostering teamwork and a safe, trusted work environment within the Faculty of BMS and the University of Twente as a whole. Her goal is to ensure that all employees feel recognized and appreciated for their work. <https://people.utwente.nl/t.bondarouk>



**Stephanie McKendry** has over 20 years' experience in various teaching, learning and research roles in higher education. Since 2014, she has led widening access work at the University of Strathclyde and in 2019 brought together access and equality and diversity policy and activity. She is currently Deputy Director of Student Experience with a remit that covers access, equality, admissions and employability. She is one of the leads of the institution's work around gender equality and played a key role in Strathclyde's Athena SWAN Silver Charter Award. Stephanie supported the Scottish Commissioner for Fair Access as Researcher/Implementation Advisor from 2016 to 2020, has been a member of two National Expert Think Tanks on fair admissions, sits on the Universities Scotland Admissions Working Group and the Scottish Government's Access Delivery Group. Stephanie is an editor of the Journal for Widening Participation and Lifelong Learning and led the award winning TransEDU research project exploring the experiences of trans and gender diverse applicants, students and staff.

<https://www.strath.ac.uk/staff/mckendrystephaniedr/>



**Karin Sluis** (1965) has studied Civil Engineering at Delft Technical University in The Netherlands. In 1989 she started her career within Witteveen+Bos Consulting Engineers as adviser urban water management. After several other assignments within the company, in 2013 she was appointed as managing director. By the end of 2020 she resigned from the board and now her focus within Witteveen+Bos is on the development of sustainable investment opportunities. In addition to her work at Witteveen+Bos Karin is dedicated to sustainability, education and diversity. 'The beauty of engineering is that it has so much impact on the wellbeing of people: engineering brings safety, health and quality of life. For me engineering is the best work there is, and it is my dream that everyone may work on his or her own Golden Gate Bridge.' Karin is married and has 3 children.

<https://www.witteveenbos.com/nl/nieuws/karin-sluis-is-tu-delft-alumnus-van-het-jaar-2021/>