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Launch of the “Swiss L’Oréal – UNESCO For Women in Science” Program

Empowering the next generation of Swiss female scientists

Awards application now open

Geneva, February 3, 2025 – Today, the Swiss Commission for UNESCO (United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization), L’Oréal Switzerland, and SATW (Swiss Academy of Engineering Sciences) have launched the “Swiss L’Oréal – UNESCO For Women in Science” program. The three organizations will award four grants of CHF 25,000 each to four early-career female scientists, working in universities or research institutes within Switzerland in the fields of science and technology.

Gender disparity in Swiss academia

While women constitute over half of the student population in bachelor's and master's programs in Switzerland, they are significantly underrepresented in higher academic positions. As of recent data, only about 23% of professors in Swiss universities are female. This disparity reveals a trend of decreasing female representation at each career stage, resulting in fewer women reaching the top academic ranks. For instance, although approximately 50% of PhD students are women, this figure drops to around 20% at the full professor level. Despite some efforts, progress has been slow.^{1, 2}

A grant to support female academic career

The award aims to support excellent female profiles in the early stage of their careers. Young postdoctoral women working in the field of life and environmental sciences, physical sciences, mathematics, computer sciences, engineering, architecture, and medicine are eligible. Interdisciplinary research profiles are expressly welcome. The winners have full discretion on how to use their prize award compensation, based on the submitted project.

[Applications can be submitted online until March 31, 2025.](#)

Empowering role models for excellence and innovation

The launch of the “Swiss L’Oréal – UNESCO For Women in Science Program” marks a significant step towards a more inclusive and sustainable future for science. As **Thomas Zeltner, President of the Swiss Commission for UNESCO**, and **Gabriela Tejada, Vice-President of the Swiss Commission for UNESCO**, noted, the program celebrates “the outstanding scientific work and creativity of young postdoctoral women in scientific and technical disciplines in Switzerland. Their contribution to innovation is essential to advance solutions to the most pressing problems of our time. It is crucial to inspire and support outstanding female researchers early in their careers, recognizing them as trailblazers of technology and science and empowering them as role models, which will shape a more inclusive and sustainable future.”

Supporting women scientists at this crucial postdoctoral stage, as **Benoît Dubuis, President of the SATW**, highlighted, “is much more than a symbolic gesture: it's an investment in excellence and



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innovation. The 'For Women in Science' program plays a vital role in encouraging the next generation of female academics and strengthening diversity at the heart of MINT disciplines." Dubuis stressed that "diversity is not just an asset, but an absolute necessity if we are to meet the major societal challenges of tomorrow. Because the future of research must be inclusive if it is to meet the global challenges of the future."

Jean-Christophe Letellier, CEO L'Oréal Germany, Austria, and Switzerland, echoed this sentiment. "At L'Oréal, we believe the future of science hinges on diversity," he noted, acknowledging the growing recognition of women scientists. "While we're seeing progress in recognizing women's contributions to science," he added, "we must dramatically accelerate this change as the breakthroughs of tomorrow depend on it." Letellier emphasized the program's role in highlighting brilliant researchers, like the award winners, "empowering future generations to innovate and advance the frontiers of science."

Link for the application platform: <https://www.forwomeninscience.com/challenge/show/120>

1. [https://www.swissinfo.ch/ger/wissen-technik/gleichberechtigung_warum-frauen-in-der-wissenschaft-oft-vergessen-gehen/47336104#:~:text=In%20den%20MINT%2DF%C3%A4chern%20\(Mathematik,%25%20der%20Professor%3Ainnen%20weiblich.](https://www.swissinfo.ch/ger/wissen-technik/gleichberechtigung_warum-frauen-in-der-wissenschaft-oft-vergessen-gehen/47336104#:~:text=In%20den%20MINT%2DF%C3%A4chern%20(Mathematik,%25%20der%20Professor%3Ainnen%20weiblich.)
2. [https://www.swissinfo.ch/ger/wissen-technik/gleichberechtigung_warum-frauen-in-der-wissenschaft-oft-vergessen-gehen/47336104#:~:text=In%20den%20MINT%2DF%C3%A4chern%20\(Mathematik,%25%20der%20Professor%3Ainnen%20weiblich.](https://www.swissinfo.ch/ger/wissen-technik/gleichberechtigung_warum-frauen-in-der-wissenschaft-oft-vergessen-gehen/47336104#:~:text=In%20den%20MINT%2DF%C3%A4chern%20(Mathematik,%25%20der%20Professor%3Ainnen%20weiblich.)

About the Swiss Commission for UNESCO

The [Swiss Commission for UNESCO](#) is an extra-parliamentary federal commission with an advisory function, established by a decision of the Federal Council in 1949. Its mandate is to liaise with the authorities in Switzerland on all matters of interest to UNESCO. The Commission also works to promote intellectual cooperation at national and international level in UNESCO's fields of competence among interested partners and institutions and among the general public.

About SATW – Technology for Society

The [Swiss Academy of Engineering Sciences SATW](#) is the most important network of experts for engineering sciences in Switzerland and is in contact with the highest Swiss bodies for science, politics and industry. The network comprises elected individual members, member organisations and experts. SATW identifies industrially relevant technological developments on behalf of the Swiss Confederation and informs the government and public about their significance and consequences. As a unique expert organisation with high credibility, it conveys independent and objective information on technology as the basis for establishing informed opinions. SATW also promotes interest in and understanding of technology among the general population and particularly among young people. It is politically independent and non-commercial.



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About Fondation L'Oréal

Since 1998, the L'Oréal Group, and its [Foundation](#) since 2007, has partnered with UNESCO to propel the careers of women scientists and dismantle the barriers they face. Our goal is to empower them to fully contribute to solving the critical challenges of our time and to inspire future generations. We are committed to showcasing the talent, knowledge, and expertise of women to foster a more inclusive research landscape. Over 24 years, our *For Women in Science* program has supported and celebrated more than 3,900 researchers from over 110 countries, recognizing scientific excellence and inspiring young women to pursue scientific careers. Seven of the international "For Women in Science" laureates have already been honored with a Nobel Prize, most recently Katalin Karikó (Medicine) and Anne L'Huillier (Physics).

About L'Oréal

115 years, [L'Oréal](#), the world's leading beauty player, has devoted itself to one thing only: fulfilling the beauty aspirations of consumers around the world. Our purpose, to create the beauty that moves the world, defines our approach to beauty as essential, inclusive, ethical, generous and committed to social and environmental sustainability. With our broad portfolio of 37 international brands and ambitious sustainability commitments in our L'Oréal for the Future programme, we offer each and every person around the world the best in terms of quality, efficacy, safety, sincerity, and responsibility, while celebrating beauty in its infinite plurality.

With more than 90,000 committed employees, a balanced geographical footprint and sales across all distribution networks (e-commerce, mass market, department stores, pharmacies, perfumeries, hair salons, branded and travel retail), in 2023 the Group generated sales amounting to 41.18 billion euros. With 20 research centers across 11 countries around the world and a dedicated Research and Innovation team of over 4,000 scientists and 6,400 Digital talents, L'Oréal is focused on inventing the future of beauty and becoming a Beauty Tech powerhouse.

More information on <https://www.loreal.com/en/mediaroom>

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