

Nordic Network for Women in Physics

Cathrine Fox Maule,

PhD student, chairperson of Women in Physics in Denmark • Niels Bohr Institute, Juliane Maries vej 30 • 2100 Copenhagen Oe.

On August 10th more than 100 primarily female physicists from the Nordic countries founded a Nordic Network for Women in Physics (NorWiP). This occurred at the 1st Nordic Workshop for Women in Physics, which was sponsored by NordForsk. The purpose of NorWiP is to create contacts between female physicists for exchanging information and knowledge. The network will work to increase the visibility of female physicists, and to identify and remove gender barriers for women pursuing a career in physics.

NorWiP will act as an umbrella organization for the national networks of female physicists in the Nordic countries. Denmark and Sweden have very active networks, whereas the Norwegian network has been inactive in past years. However, after the 1st Nordic Workshop for Women in Physics held in Bergen August 8-10th, the Norwegian network is being re-established and a Finnish network is being started. NorWiP is going to act as a coordinating forum where the national networks can exchange ideas and strategies for obtaining their common goals.

The number of female physicists with permanent positions at the Nordic universities is so low that it is very difficult for

young women to find female role models within their own discipline in their own country. By increasing the local networks of female physicists to a Nordic network, the pool of potential role models will be increased. To facilitate contacts NorWiP is generating a data base of female physicists from or working in the Nordic countries. The data base contains brief biographical information about the scientists and can be used to find female physicists within specific disciplines of physics either for collaboration, for invited speakers, or to sit in advisory committees, etc. The web site will also contain additional information of relevance, as e.g. a notice board of available positions and stipends and links to conferences regarding women in science (gender-related conferences).

Besides the web site and the data base, the ambition for NorWiP is to hold a conference for all members every two or three years depending on funding. These meetings will, like the 1st Nordic Workshop for Women in Physics, have a scientific program, but also include talks on gender issues and workshops of relevance especially for the young scientists concerning, for example, proposal writing or how to give good talks.

The president of the European Physical Society (EPS), Ove Poulsen, is happy about the new network. “The European Physical Society (EPS) welcomes NorWiP. The ROSE investigation shows that student involvement in science education is weak. One of the more distinct findings is the weak interest of girls and young women in science-related issues. This is not an acceptable situation, neither from a democratic nor from a professional point of view. The formation of NorWiP is a most welcome initiative as it highlights these issues and supports the further development of physics. Physics is changing rapidly these years, not only professionally, but also sociologically due to the high average age of staff physicists. In the coming years it is important to focus on a diverse recruitment to physics. NorWiP supports this development by emphasising the importance of persuading talented women to enter physics, and equally importantly, to stay in physics,” says Ove Poulsen.

The first board of NorWiP consists of Dorte N. Madsen (Norway), Karin N. Andersen (Denmark), Elisabeth Rachlew (Sweden) and Katri Huitu (Finland). NorWiP is funded by the Danish Natural Research Council. For more information about NorWiP visit www.norwip.dk. ■