



United Nations
Educational, Scientific and
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Organisation
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pour l'éducation,
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Organización
de las Naciones Unidas
para la Educación,
la Ciencia y la Cultura

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Объединенных Наций по
вопросам образования,
науки и культуры

منظمة الأمم المتحدة
للتربية والعلم والثقافة

联合国教育、
科学及文化组织

Tenth Anniversary of the UNESCO-L'OREAL Fellowships

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In 1998, UNESCO and L'OREAL launched the awards 'For Women and Science' to recognise outstanding achievements. The following year they decided to support young women scientists in carrying out a research project through fellowships.

135 fellowships have been awarded since 1999. What has been the personal and professional impact of the fellowship for these young scientists? Every year a 40.000 dollar fellowship is attributed to 15 young women scientists, doctorate students or post-doctorates, from Africa, Asia and the Pacific, Arab States, Latin America and the Caribbean, Europe, and North America. The fellowship enables them to travel abroad to carry out a research project in a laboratory most suited to their objective.

Since its creation, the partnership has nominated 57 Laureates from 27 countries and granted 135 international fellowships in 71 countries, and more than 500 national fellowships in 43 countries.

Every year in March, celebrations are organized during the 'For women and science' week, which takes place at UNESCO Headquarters. This year one highlight of this special week of events will be the 10th anniversary of the international fellowships. The 15 international 2009 fellows, as well as former fellows from the years 2003 to 2007, will participate in this event.

Ten former laureates from Palestine, Indonesia, Romania, Zimbabwe, Croatia, Brazil, Senegal, Benin, the Netherlands, and Italy will discuss the impact of the UNESCO-L'OREAL award on their life.

Women in Science

Few women carry out scientific research. In Europe, one of the continents with the highest percentage of women doing science, only 30% of scientists are women. Almost no women have leading positions at the national level (less than 10% in Academies of Sciences) and at the international level (less than 3% of the Nobel Prizes). Although there has been some progress during the last twenty years, it is still mostly men who are in charge of science and its applications.



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This situation is unacceptable since it diminishes the involvement in and contribution to scientific and technological progress of half of humanity. On the economic level, it deprives countries of human resources that they increasingly need. On the intellectual level, it deprives research of new ideas and new methods, depriving it, in a word, of creativity.

Globalization has brought home to scientists, industrialists, politicians, and society at large, new debates about the science of the future. The economic, demographic and ecological situation is more than ever calling for a new contract between science and society, in order to reconcile scientific freedom, social responsibility and respect for ethics.

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Source: UNESCO Institute of Statistics (2006)

Students

At undergraduate level, gender parity in science and technology is reached by seven per cent of countries.

In more than 90% of the countries, fewer than 45% of graduates are female. At the PhD level, 17% of countries reach parity.

Researchers

Parity is reached by 22 countries (majority in America and Central and Eastern Europe)

In more than 80% of countries, women represent less than 45% of the researchers.

In more than 40% of countries, women represent less than 30%.

Estimation for the **entire world**: hardly more than 25% of researchers are women.

Nobel Prize 2008: 1 woman for medicine: Francoise Barred-Sinoussi.

Out of 530 scientific prizes awarded since 1901:

13 were given to women including 2 to Marie Curie

-2 for physics out of 184

-3 for chemistry out of 154

-8 for medicine out of 192

No Medal for women in the field of mathematics

What is needed is equitable access to research for everybody « without distinction of race, sex, language or religion » (Extract from UNESCO's Constitution).

The UNESCO-L'OREAL partnership 'For women and science' was created on this basis. In 1998 the UN agency and the industrial group decided to « change the image of science » by giving a wider access to women and access to all continents.

The L'OREAL-UNESCO Prize

The first L'OREAL-UNESCO Prize was launched with the objective of celebrating female researchers who have advanced scientific knowledge in their field. Each year, a Prize of 100.000 dollars is awarded to five women scientists coming from five continents.

The selection is made by two international juries (one for life sciences, and one for the physical sciences) chaired by Professor Christian de Duve, Nobel Prize winner for medicine in 1974, and founding president of the Prize, Professor Günter Blobel, Nobel Prize for medicine in 1999 and by Professor Ahmed Zewail, Nobel Prize for chemistry in 1999.

National Scholarships

At the beginning of this millennium, UNESCO and L'OREAL wanted to ensure the future and to encourage scientific vocations among young girls

most of whom confront obstacles of an economic and/or socio-cultural nature.

In 2001 the partnership was expanded to include the "L'OREAL National Scholarships with the support of UNESCO National Commissions" to help students or young women researchers, in their countries, to continue their scientific careers. These Scholarships are set up by the L'OREAL national subsidiary companies, the National Commissions and one or more research organizations such as the French Academy of Science.

Two pilot projects are currently ongoing with the National Commissions and the UNESCO Regional Offices in Cairo and Nairobi. In order to make up for the absence of L'OREAL subsidiary companies in certain countries, at the end of 2009, five Scholarships will be awarded to young girls from the Arab States and five Scholarships to young African girls. This initiative could continue after project evaluation.

The week "For Women in Science" will be the occasion to honor women scientists and more, to celebrate science from all the continents.

For more information:

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