

Special Issue:  
8 March 2016

## EURAXESS Japan Newsletter Special Issue

International Women's Day, 8 March 2016

Dear members of the EURAXESS Japan community, dear colleagues, researchers and students of all nationalities and genders,

Gender equality is a fundamental value of the European Union. We EURAXESS Japan would like to take the opportunity of the International Women's Day on this 8 March 2016 to publish a special issue, specifically addressing the question of gender equality, or rather neutrality, in researchers's careers and in research policy.

We prepared for you a short presentation of the gender equality initiatives within the European Research Area initiative, as well as within the EU's flagship funding programme, Horizon 2020.

We also went and interviewed three mobile female researchers who have experience in Europe and Japan and provide us with their very personal opinion and views on the matter of gender equality in international researchers' careers.

Finally, we present two events, one in Europe and one in Japan, which may be of interest to all of you.

Enjoy the reading!



Wishing you all a nice month ahead,

Matthieu PY | EURAXESS Links Japan Country Representative | [japan@euraxess.net](mailto:japan@euraxess.net)

## Table of contents

|     |  |    |
|-----|--|----|
| 1   | EU Insight – Creating Gender Equality in Science & Research .....                        | 3  |
| 1.1 | Gender equality in the European Research Area (ERA).....                                 | 3  |
| 1.2 | Gender Equality in Horizon 2020.....   | 4  |
| 1.3 | Facts and figures: <i>She Figures</i> .....  | 5  |
| 2   | Insights from Female, Mobile Researchers .....   | 6  |
| 2.1 | Maria VASSILEVA, Nagoya University, Japan.....   | 6  |
| 2.2 | Mai IWASAKI, French National Center for Scientific Research, France<br>12                |    |
| 2.3 | Kiyoko UEMATSU-ERVASTI, University of Oulu, Finland (currently<br>living in Japan) ..... | 16 |
| 3   | Event in Japan: Working Women in an Ageing Society<br>Conference .....                   | 19 |
| 4   | Event in Europe: Women Innovate, Europe Gains! .....                                     | 20 |



# 1 EU Insight – Creating Gender Equality in Science & Research

*On 8 March 2016, International Women's Day is being celebrated around the world. Gender equality is a cornerstone of the European Union and applies to all European policies including research and innovation. The [Strategic engagement for gender equality 2016-2019](#) was published in December 2015, and is a follow-up and prolongation of the Commission Strategy for equality between women and men 2010-2015. It sets the framework for the Commission's future work towards improving gender equality. The Strategic engagement sets out objectives in five priority areas and identifies more than 30 concrete actions while reaffirming the Commission's commitment to integrating a gender equality perspective into all EU policies as well as into EU funding programmes.*

## 1.1 Gender equality in the European Research Area (ERA)

To create the very best conditions for researchers and scientists, the 28 member states of the European Union (EU) are working towards the creation of a single [European Research Area \(ERA\)](#). Their common goal is to establish a unified research area which is open to the world, and in which researchers and knowledge circulate freely. Gender equality has been one of the priorities of a "[Reinforced European Research Area Partnership for Excellence and Growth](#)" (ERA) since 2012. To this end, Member States are invited to remove barriers to the recruitment, retention and career progression of female researchers, address gender balance in decision making and strengthen the gender dimension in research programmes. Member States are encouraged to create the appropriate legal and policy environment to incentivise institutional changes in research organisations and correct the remaining gender biases.

In 2013 and 2014, the Commission published an [ERA Progress Report](#), which highlighted the progress made towards the completion of the ERA. The new report will be published towards the end of 2016.

[Gender-NET](#) is the first European Research Area Network (ERA-NET) to be dedicated to the promotion of gender equality through structural change in research institutions, as well as to the integration of sex and gender analysis in research. GENDER-NET brings together a balanced partnership of 14 national programme owners from across Europe and North America – i.e. ministries, national research funding agencies and national organisations – which share a commitment to gender equality and expertise in gender and science issues.

Scientists can contribute to change practices themselves. Networking amongst practitioners and professional associations, platforms of women scientists and other networks play a key role in this context. The European Commission funds two important initiatives which aim to support networking.

The COST Action, [GenderSTE](#), which organises awareness-raising events across Europe.

[GenPORT](#), an online community of practitioners, which is served by an internet portal in which organisations and individuals can participate and exchange knowledge and experience from around the world on gender equality and excellence in science, technology or innovation.

## 1.2 Gender Equality in Horizon 2020

In Horizon 2020, gender is a cross-cutting issue and is mainstreamed in each of the different parts of the Work Programme, ensuring a more integrated approach to research and innovation.

Three objectives underpin the strategy on gender equality in Horizon 2020:

- Fostering gender balance in research teams, in order to close the gaps in the participation of women;
- Ensuring gender balance in decision-making, in order to reach the target of 40% of the under-represented sex in panels and groups and of 50% in advisory groups;
- Integrating the gender dimension in research and innovation (R&I) content helps improve the scientific quality and societal relevance of the produced knowledge, technology and/or innovation.

In many topics across the work programme, it is explicitly requested that applicants take into account the needs and behaviours of women men. In addition, grant beneficiaries commit to promoting equal opportunities and a balanced participation of women and men at all levels in research and innovation teams and in management structures.

The 'Science with and for Society' [Work Programme](#) funds specific initiatives in support of the gender equality strategy. Support is given to Research Performing Organisations (RPO) and Research Funding Organisations (RFO) in order to:

- Remove barriers that generate discrimination against women in scientific careers and decision-making (supporting research organisations to implement gender equality plans), and
- Integrate a gender dimension in research content

Funding is also provided to the development of a common framework to evaluate national initiatives promoting gender equality in research policy. A dedicated campaign aims to encourage girls to study science and female students to further embrace a career in research. Research will be funded to analyse the impact of gender diversity in research teams and on research and innovation performance.

These activities target researchers and innovators, research organisations, primary, secondary and higher education establishments, science museums,



citizens and their associations or groupings, media, policy makers at national, regional and local levels, etc.

### 1.3 Facts and figures: *She Figures*

The She Figures Report is the main source of pan-European, comparable statistics on the state of gender equality in research and innovation. It covers a wide range of themes, including the proportions of women and men amongst top-level graduates, academic staff and research/advisory boards, the working conditions for female and male researchers, the integration of the gender dimension in the content of peer-reviewed scientific articles, and various indicators measuring gender gaps in scientific and innovation outputs. Released every three years since 2003, the report provides a key evidence base for policies in this area.

The She Figures 2015 report shows that despite progress, gender inequalities in science tend to persist. The publication provides an overview of the scientific fields where women are better or less represented, and compares the research workforce in different economic sectors (e.g., higher education, government, and business sectors).

#### **Sources and further information:**

[European Research Area - homepage](#)

[Horizon 2020 - Promoting Gender Equality in Research and Innovation](#)

European Commission's [Strategy for equality between women and men \(2010-2015\)](#)

[She Figures 2015](#)

[European Parliament Research Service Blog](#)



## 2 Insights from Female, Mobile Researchers

In honor of International Women's Day, EURAXESS spoke to female researchers to learn their stories. What made them choose a career in science? What obstacles are they facing in their profession? What solutions do they see? What ignited their passion for their subject and how are they passing on their knowledge to the next generation of female scientists?

EURAXESS Japan interviewed inspiring mobile women researchers currently based in Europe or Japan. Their answers offer a small glimpse into the great contribution female scientists make to research, science, and innovation. Furthermore, their answers also allude to the fact that much still needs to be done for great science to become truly gender neutral.

### 2.1 Maria VASSILEVA, Nagoya University, Japan



Maria received her university degree in veterinary medicine in her home country of Bulgaria, and after working as a small animal surgeon, followed by a position at a national regulatory institute, she has pursued a PhD in Japan, working on molecular epidemiology of food pathogens. Following a research position at Kobe University, she is currently teaching in Nagoya University's international programme. Her current research interests are in the field of public health and nutrition.

*Maria, please tell us a bit about your current roles and responsibilities, and your international mobility experience?*

In my current position, as a Designated Associate Professor in Nagoya University Global 30 International Program, I teach several lecture courses in Biology to undergraduate students, provide academic support as an academic advisor to Biology majors, participate in the admission process in my department, and am heavily involved in various administrative projects and initiatives focusing on further developing the G30 Biology curriculum and the international programme as a whole.

During my university years, I had the chance to participate in a student exchange programme and did a research project in France. Apart from my home country of Bulgaria and Japan, I have experience living in France and in the UK.

*What sparked your interest in science?*

I have always been fascinated by biology. My parents are geophysicists and they nurtured my interests in sciences in general, providing plenty of relevant books and experiences. Despite my much greater exposure to geology as a child, biology has always been my favorite subject.

*Did you have any role models when you were growing up?*

I grew up in a country where women were everywhere in the work place and gender equality wasn't a discussion topic – it was a natural state of affairs. Thus, my role models were plentiful. This was partially because of my specific family environment (educated middle class living in urban area), but also because of



long-term government policies started a couple of generations before mine. Both of my parents had degrees in science and held similar level positions in R&D sector. Most of my science teachers - and all my biology teachers - were women. A significant portion of my university professors and about half of my fellow students were women, too, despite studying a historically male-dominated profession like veterinary medicine. For me, the idea that my choice of career options is limited by anything else than my aspirations - especially something like gender - was never a topic of concern. And this freedom has given me strength to make my own decisions and to work for my goals. In retrospect, all of my choices were my own and I have achieved every big goal I have set for myself.

*What made you decide to become a researcher?*

As a child, I was surrounded by books about researchers and I have always been fascinated by the how and why of biological concepts. Especially after working a few years in the field of veterinary medicine, I realised that the day-to-day medical practice doesn't satisfy my desire to dig deeper. I think that was the time when I made the decisions to move to research. It took me a few years to make it happen, but I'm still happy with my choice.

*What were the greatest challenges that you have faced in your career? Do you think those challenges differ from those of your male colleagues?*

Moving from clinical practice to basic research was one of the biggest early challenges I had. All of a sudden, all my clinical knowledge became irrelevant. It was a very steep learning curve, not made easier by being in an unfamiliar country (Japan) and different language environment. But I've come out of it stronger, completing my PhD research project and publishing it an year earlier than required.

My biggest career challenge in fact was having children. There are no intellectual, linguistic or administrative challenges compared to it. What allowed me to continue my career was the support I've received and continue to receive from my partner and our families, as well as being blessed with a flexible and supportive environment at my current job. I can't overstate how much of a difference this support has made for me.

Before having children, just like any other childless young professional devoted to his/her career, I would base my expectations and decisions on the vague approximation of children with dolls. Most of my university friends had their children a decade earlier than me and honestly speaking, at that time, I never understood their obsession with such a boring and far-from-the-important-things-in-life topic. Until I had kids myself.

While my children's appearance in my life was a conscious choice, the practicalities of having another human being for whom I'm suddenly responsible was an overwhelming and eye-opening experience.



There are two aspects to this – one is the sheer volume of care required, and the other is the realisation that this is not simply “care” – it is raising the next generation of humans. It didn’t take me long to realise the intensity of a child’s needs (both physical and emotional) and the unique, immense connection a baby has with its primary caregivers.

Being a mother is the hardest job one can have, more than a full-time job on its own. And I don’t say this lightly. I have worked in both industry and academia, on jobs with high levels of responsibility and intensity. I’m no stranger to 12-hour working shifts followed by emergency operations through the night or 12-hours experiments and data analysis on a tight deadline. None of this compares to the “regular job description” of a mother – 24/7 full swing with no breaks, no privacy and no sleep – 365 days a year. The worst part of it is knowing that it cannot be “outsourced”, as too much is at stake. Many women come to this realisation after becoming mothers and change their life priorities. This is a painful process, especially if there is little support for their choices.

From my personal observations, nothing of this intensity is happening in the life and career of my male colleagues.

*How would you describe the gender balance in your field? If you have professional experience in several countries, how would these compare?*

In my home country, Bulgaria, women are well represented in my field of science. There are many women in full professor positions and at any other level. The same is true for my professional field of veterinary medicine. My other academic experience is from France, where I’ve met many women in academia.

In Japan, women are well represented at the student, graduate student and postdoc levels. Yet their numbers decrease significantly once we look at faculty positions – from assistant professor and further – with hardly anyone left at the top. My department at Nagoya University is one of the rare exceptions, with two full professors and a few more female associate and assistant professors.

*What could be done to encourage women to choose a scientific career and to help them progress in this career?*

Women make up about 50% of students in most science fields, which shows that they don’t lack interest or the ability to do science. I teach in an international programme and our students are from all over the world, including countries where women traditionally are not given many educational options. But those who do get the education and fulfill our admission requirements are just as bright and capable as any male student, often better. There is nothing that separates women from men when it comes to intellectual capabilities, intellectual interests, desire to develop life-long careers and the ability to produce creative research.



The focus on “encouraging women” in social policies will not lead far unless the core issue is addressed. And that is the issue of a “mother”. Let me try to explain my point from a biologist’s perspective.

Raising children is biologically our first priority. Heavy investment of time and effort in extended offspring care in stable family structures is the norm in most mammalian species.

Whether we like it or not, there are fundamental biological differences between the genders when it comes to reproduction. Women as a gender take the heavier biological role in this aspect – both the physical burden of pregnancy and the equally critical early period of the child’s development– from nursing to establishing a mother-child bond through extensive interaction. The “game” is biologically uneven.

Another important biological factor is that the window of opportunity for female reproduction comes at a moment of one’s career initiation or critical early stages of its development.

However the “game” is made even more uneven by social systems that practically exclude the participation of the father and the extended family from the child raising responsibilities. How much energy, enthusiasm and creativity one would have if working on two full-time jobs? Is it then hard to imagine why so many mothers prefer to quit the only job they can actually quit? Is it then hard to imagine why more and more women simply opt out of this child-raising game all together and decide not to have children?

This is literally a running competition between a group of people with two legs and a group of people without legs, with everyone being surprised why the two-legged people can run faster and how to encourage the legless people to run. How about giving them their legs back? How about redistributing the child-raising responsibility more evenly?

Obviously this picture is an oversimplification and overgeneralisation. I personally know many men who are devoted to their family responsibilities and supportive of their partner’s career choices. But they are still a minority and their choices are rarely supported by social structures – sometimes such choices are harmful to their own career prospects.

The current policies of “encouraging women” relating to mothers can be summed up with the following: outsourcing childcare so that mothers can join the workforce. This is not a redistribution of responsibilities. Children’s needs for individual parental attention and active intimate relationships with their primary caregivers are not taken into consideration here. Somehow everyone agrees that it’s almost impossible to keep a long-distance intimate relationship between two adults because reduction in the quantity time brings a reduction of quality time, but no one seems to worry about the parent-child relationship when the quantity of time they have is reduced to the bare minimum of brushing teeth together. My university prides itself for having childcare facilities that are open from 8am until 9pm and which accept babies from 2-months old. As someone with background in veterinary medicine, I can’t help but see this as child farming rather than child raising. No doubt, this is a cost-effective strategy. But is cost



reduction our ultimate goal? Time and time again research has shown that the family environment is the single most important factor in predicting the outcome of a child's intellectual, emotional and even physical development. In other words, such a policy approach gives a “win” for women's participation in the workforce at present (good for women, good for the workforce), while at the same time creating a “lose” for achieving the full potential of children who are the work force of the future. This doesn't make sense to me from a national long-term strategy point of view. In fact, it doesn't look like a long-term strategy at all.

What needs to be done is a fundamental paradigm shift. A shift from “encouraging women” to “supporting families”. A shift from acknowledging women's right to work to acknowledging every member of the society's right to be supported to develop to its full potential – especially children. A shift from short-term goals like “How to increase the number of women in science now?” to long-term goals like “How to assure that those – men and women - who carry the burden of bringing up the next generation are supported in their dual role of participating in the workforce and raising well-developed children?”. A shift from a society focused on the young, the strong and the talented to a society focused on social and family structures that create the young, strong and talented.

What we need are social structures where parenting is made gender-neutral (within biological limits of course!), where both parents are expected to be heavily involved in child raising. Then and only then we can have gender-neutral workplaces. And then we won't have to talk about how to encourage more women in science or any other career field.

*How can women play a specific role in filling the gap between science (research) and society in Japan?*

Women are naturally involved in education, thus they play a key role in increasing the educational level of the next generation, including science awareness. Educate women in one generation and you'll increase the education level of the nation for generations. Moreover, women are naturally excellent communicators and they often resonate well with projects involving science communication and community outreach. I believe this is a perfect area for women in science to shine and I'll be happy to see more effort being made in involving more female researchers in such initiatives.

*Is there any good initiative to promote gender equity from Japan, or another country you've visited as a researcher, that you would like to highlight?*

Not at this moment. Though I'm open to have another conversation on practical steps that can be taken to implement the concepts I outlined above.



*In your experience, how important is mobility for researchers' careers and how feasible is this for female researchers?*

Living and working abroad, from undergrad to postdoc and even now, has been very influential on my appreciation of differences between cultures; thus, each time it has been a very enriching experience. On the other hand, in the early years of having children, even attending local conferences that required more than a day of travel was difficult for me, let alone extensive travels abroad.

Mobility for researcher's career is a valuable experience, but expecting extensive or frequent mobility from people with families and children is unrealistic. Frequent travel can be a logistic nightmare for working people with children. Frequent relocation for a new position is putting the career of the partner at risk or is creating single parents. Emphasising mobility for scientific career development is important, but making it a must for people above the PhD level (who due to their age are expected to have young children) is unjustified in my opinion.

*Are there any specific measures that you believe can encourage international mobility of female researchers and scientists?*

Short travels, for conferences etc., are much easier when young children and one supporting family member are allowed to travel - and be reimbursed - together with the researcher. How about special grant category for parents with young children? Mobility for new positions is easier if there is a strong support for families in the host institution - from moving, general information support, childcare, to real support in finding a job for the other partner in the family. This type of support services has been an increasing trend in European institutions, including EURAXESS, and is something to be congratulated. I want to see more of it in the future.

*What are your hopes for the next generation of female researchers?*

My hopes are that more women will decide to stay in academia and challenge the status quo rather than accept it, making their workplace a more humane environment for everyone irrespective of gender.

*How can you (we) pass on your (our) passion for research to the next generation of women?*

I do exactly this in my my current position- sharing my passion for research and showing my students how much more there is that is unexplored and unanswered. Textbooks often present science as a list of facts, omitting not only the history of the discoveries or the people behind them, but also the open questions and the challenges ahead. Instead, I try to develop my courses through the human explorer perspective.



Along the same line of thought, one very practical thing that can be done is adding more names and faces to science textbooks, so that young students can find out how many amazing women have contributed to any field of science.

And, as it has become clear already, I don't believe girls need more encouragement than boys to be interested in science. What women do need though is to see that science is a viable long-term career option; one that can be continued even after one has children.

## 2.2 Mai IWASAKI, French National Center for Scientific Research, France



Mai is a postdoctoral fellow in Neuroscience, at the French National Center for Scientific Research, in the research group on Molecular Determinants of Pain. She started her fellowship in November in 2015.

*Mai, please tell us a bit about your current roles and responsibilities, and your international mobility experience?*

My current project focuses on the role of oxytocinergic release in the mid-brain and its potential contribution to emotional and autonomic regulation.

This is my first time moving to a foreign country. Before that, I lived in my birth place, Japan, all my life. However, I have spoken French since I was 4 years old because my school was founded by a French Canadian. Furthermore, I worked under an American boss during my PhD as a research assistant for seven years at the RIKEN brain science institute, Japan.

*What sparked your interest in science?*

Since my childhood, I have been very interested in why group conflicts occur around the world, even if people do not hate each other at the personal level. I had hoped to reduce such group conflicts. To do that, initially I wanted to study the dynamics of peer pressure in a group, and how each group comes to oppose others. After I read a number of scientific papers on the topic, I realised that "fear against the enemy" can accelerate hostile attitudes toward people outside of one's own group, while it strengthens internal ties within their own group, which segregates the two groups from one another. Therefore, my interest expanded to how "fear in the brain or in the body—such as stress felt in the stomach—" results in "taking spatial distance from the enemy group". Now, I am trying to elucidate if bodily expressed fear and fear expression in the brain reinforce each other via neural connection. If I find some positive feedback between them, breaking the link may soften the runaway feeling of fear towards the enemy, and finally a peaceful world may come true. The most trustworthy method to reach this goal was, to me, science.

*Did you have any role models when you were growing up?*

I attended girls school from elementary to high school. Therefore, all the people with whom I interacted were girls, except for the teachers. In the girls school, everything was done by only girls! When I started talking with guys in daily life, I was already 20 years old, and at university. In that sense, I do not have a role



model who showed me how to survive in a society where the majority is guys. The only thing I can do is behave as I always have in front of ladies; that is, be natural.

*What were the greatest challenges that you have faced in your career? Do you think those challenges differ from those of your male colleagues?*

The greatest challenge so far has been surviving a very tough period of unemployment due to the fact that my laboratory was shut down while I was right in the middle of my PhD course, because it was judged to be not productive enough in terms of publications. During this difficult period, I had to continue working on my PhD project on private time, while working as a part-time research assistant

Irrespective of which gender you belong to, you may encounter this type of difficulty. Fortunately, I have never felt as if I were treated disrespectfully due to my gender.

*How would you describe the gender balance in your field? If you have professional experience in several countries, how would these compare?*

My current institute in France is composed of master students, doctoral students, postdoctoral fellows, and principal investigators. The gender balance from masters, doctors, to postdocs is almost equal, however, female PIs are very rare, probably less than 10%. When I was working in Japan, the tendency was similar. I think it is because the age of giving birth amongst female researchers overlaps with the postdoc period, and the achievement during this period is crucial to be promoted as a PI.

*What could be done to encourage women to choose a scientific career and to help them progress in this career?*

I don't think we need to encourage women to choose a scientific career, because I chose science without any encouragement, and I was not special or unique at all amongst today's girls. But I also realised that guys and girls have different way of thinking sometimes. Possibly it may be nice to raise both male and female teachers for high school science classes so that young students can interact with science from two different aspects.

However, it is true that women may face slightly more difficulties in career development. I think, that female researchers tend to pretend that they are "not a smart person" and praise other people more, instead of advertising their own achievements. This unconscious strategy works very well, because people tend to help a person who looks weaker than themselves. Thanks to that, women can get more supports which would be great benefit for her current project. Some women do not care even if the people do not realise that she is just acting an idiot, and do not care even if people misunderstand that she is really NOT smart, because she is just interested in the advancement of her project



itself, not in the reputation on her ability. Yes, this is the problematic part. As far as academia continues to evaluate researchers based on their self-advertisement, the chance of promotion will appear more to men.

*How could women play a specific role in filling the gap between science (research) and society in Japan?*

That is a difficult question. Because researchers sometimes do not understand the motivation of another's researcher's study even if the study is in a field which is close to their own studies. So, gaps already exist inside academia before we think about the gaps between science and society. Furthermore, we tend to present only the "showy" and "catchy" parts at a science expo, and that can accelerate the rival spirit amongst researchers--because we are often exposed to never-ending competition to get research grants! Internal disunity which is caused by a competitive atmosphere in academia is always looking for problems. Considering that, maybe women can play this role...to advertise "the weakness and problem in your study" to the rest of researchers. If we can show weakness amongst each other, the rivals may become friends, and it can foster a more cooperative atmosphere where we can conduct bigger projects, and we will be able to arrive at the scientific truth much more quickly. Such "open or out" attitude will eventually encourage the unity between science and society. But to allow this situation to occur, researchers need to be evaluated not solely based on the vainglorious "ground breaking" achievements of today, but also equally based on a honest "hackneyed" achievement which formed the basis for the research of tomorrow.

*Is there any good initiative to promote gender equity from Japan, or another country you've visited as a researcher, that you would like to highlight?*

I have heard that most of universities or public research institutes in Japan chose female researcher for a professor position in case the past achievement level are the same compared to another best candidate who is male. But it is still not enough. Because many female researchers postpone plans to become pregnancy to produce the same amount of publications as what males produce before she gets a permanent position, typically that is, a principal investigator. A postdoc's employment contract often relies on annually winning fellowships, so every year we need some achievement. Otherwise, we will drop out from an "ordinary" career track. A researcher's ability should be measured by his/her productivity per a working hour unit to promote gender equity.

In addition, research achievements should be evaluated not only by their impact or novelty, but more on their honesty and accuracy; which is what women are good at expressing.

The reality is, almost none of the data we get from doing daily experiments are novel, for do they provide us high impact results, but we need to exaggerate the importance of the data so that the data sounds like they have a really high



impact. This is the only way to publish, and to get grants, and to feed ourselves. This exaggeration process has wasted a lot of time and resources in academia, I guess. Why can't we just be honest in describing the scientific nature we found? Any fact which is revealed by decent science tells valuable information about nature, no matter how boring it sounds. I think, that recruiting committees should ask candidates to explain how their research has gone bad, and how the candidates' ability was low enough to leave many problems during the past research. This anti-advertising style presentation will also clarify how honest and clever the candidates are, and typically, women candidate would be more comfortable to describe herself in this style, I personally believe.

*In your experience, how important is mobility for researchers' careers and how feasible is this for female researchers?*

In daily life, we researchers are exposed to tons of scientific reports from all over the world, thanks to the internet. We are already cosmopolitan in virtual space. Because of that, when I was searching for a laboratory to join for the next career step, the fact that I chose a laboratory in geographically distant place did not mean anything special. Typically, researchers are more specialists than generalists, and the choice of laboratories where the researcher can work is limited. Therefore, if a woman researcher has a family, a compromise about the working place between husband and wife will come up. I have not encountered this problem yet, but I still do not have a good solution for it.

*Are there any specific measures that you believe can encourage international mobility of female researchers and scientists?*

I don't know, because as for international mobility, in my opinion, gender bias seems non-existent?

*What are your hopes for the next generation of female researchers?*

Once half of the overall population of researcher becomes females in the future, scientific work will be evaluated by 50% of women. Probably because the scientific topic which males consider important are sometimes different from what females are interested in, so as more females join science, more budget will be distributed to "female tastes" research; women will, then, have more freedom in science. Therefore, I hope girls come to research only if they have a big question to answer, using the scientific method. Even if such sort of research does not exist in current science, they can launch a new field by themselves. I hope they will a risk and will not care about self-reputation too much. Then, I hope they will make many good research friends in scientifically distant fields, and do their best to see some achievement before they die, then finally, pass it to the next to the next generation.



*How can you (we) pass on your (our) passion for research to the next generation of women?*

Maybe I am already standing on the side of the next generation. And maybe I don't need to pass my passion to the next generation on purpose. I believe their innate passion will be inspired by scientific works of our generation.

## 2.3 Kiyoko UEMATSU-ERVASTI, University of Oulu, Finland (currently living in Japan)



Kiyoko is a doctoral student at University of Oulu in Finland. Kiyoko's research examines the process of globalisation of education. She particularly focuses on surveying opinions amongst students in teacher education in Finland and Japan.

She moved back to Japan in November 2015 and is currently finalising her dissertation. She is looking for further employment opportunities where she can share her expertise coordinating research planning with partners in Europe, so don't hesitate to contact her or us if you are interested!

*Kiyoko, please tell us a bit about your current roles and responsibilities, and your international mobility experience?*

I am a member of a research group called EDGE (Education, Diversity, Globalization and Ethics) and teach online courses occasionally (e.g. Global citizenship education).

After my husband changed his employer, I moved my research to Norway and Japan. Being away from Oulu, I had established (well at least tried to establish) some network with researchers at local universities. I also made many trips back to Finland. Currently, most of the research supervision is provided online and I am currently finalizing the doctoral research in Japan.

*What sparked your interest in science?*

There are many factors that have inspired me to pursue a career in research. One of them is my experience working with research-oriented research educators during my MA programme in Finland. That research experience shed light on the innovative part of research work and how it can be a tool to seek, construct and engage with various kinds of 'possibilities' that I can be part of, to make a contribution.

*Did you have any role models when you were growing up?*

Yes– the female Japanese language teacher at my high school for example. I think that they all shared leadership in common.

*What made you decide to become a researcher?*

The creative and innovative learning process of making a research project inspired me to become a researcher. Doing research also provides tremendous opportunities to work and cooperate with colleagues with different backgrounds (e.g. disciplines, cultures etc), which is very interesting.

*What were the greatest challenges that you have faced in your career? Do you think those challenges differ from those of your male colleagues?*



Politics in the work place. Understanding differences in expectations when working with diverse groups. Language. Funding. These are the same challenges male colleagues are facing, too.

*How would you describe the gender balance in your field? If you have professional experience in several countries, how would these compare?*

Female researchers and educators dominate the research field of educational science in Finland in terms of numbers. There are many successful and well-known male educators there, too. On the contrary, I sense from visiting local universities that males dominates the field of educational science in Japan.

*What could be done to encourage women to choose a scientific career and to help them progress in this career?*

I think that careers in science need to be more visual and contextualised in Japan. Not just the outcome of their findings but the process and insights of any research should be more opened up and transparent to a wider audience. Universities also need to consider becoming more 'research-oriented' institutions by encouraging theoretical engagement and praxis. Even at the bachelor's level, there are many aspects that can be improved to highlight innovative and creative parts of 'science' which can help people to make better informed choices in a rational way.

*How could women play a specific role in filling the gap between science (research) and society in Japan?*

There is a gap between Japanese scholars and scholars abroad, but I sense that it also exists within Japan between top researchers (in science) and others. There is a need for active dialogue to bring together multiple perspectives and I think that female researchers could proactively lead such a process, especially in Japan. Improved English communication skills and intercultural communication might be the key for introducing open access research. International research cooperation should be encouraged, as I sense and know that there are many scholars abroad who are interested in Japan as a place to study, but seeing barriers in making it happen.

*Is there any good initiative to promote gender equity from Japan, or another country you've visited as a researcher, that you would like to highlight?*

Not an initiative, but expectations in the work place in Finland were inspiring. I believe that independence, responsibility and efficiency are valued amongst employees. This naturally suggests no overtime and the highest priority is given to having a balance with their personal life e.g. family. Therefore, people organise their work and collaborate with others efficiently and flexibly, making for a friendly workplace for employees with families, especially for women.



*In your experience, how important is mobility for researchers' careers and how feasible is this for female researchers?*

Without having mobility, I may not have become researcher. Being mobility allowed me to work on my research in three different countries, many different locations, and with colleagues from all over the world. It is an asset and should be of the utmost value for researchers in the globalised era. I think mobility is feasible even for female researchers, but it needs support and time for organisation as I have seen many examples in Finland. My female colleague with children have done many short research visits to the U.K. Later, she was invited for a longer research visit, so all her small children and husband moved to U.K. for that period. I heard that it was a great experience professionally and personally for her and her family.

*Are there any specific measures that you believe can encourage international mobility of female researchers and scientists?*

There could be training opportunities for female researchers, so that they would become potential collaborators for scholars in other countries. More opportunities to attend international conferences can also be the key because that is where ideas for future research projects prosper.

*What are your hopes for the next generation of female researchers?*

That they become ethically responsible researchers and take active roles in international arena.

*How can you (we) pass on your (our) passion for research to the next generation of women?*

I would say that stereotypical strategies to promote gender equity is not always necessary. It is more important to embrace diversity and difference (e.g. gender, culture, ethnic, religion) into the field. It is important that researchers and research organisations become critically aware of the current situation and take an active role in opening up science in Japan.



### 3 Event in Japan: Working Women in an Ageing Society Conference



Although the infrastructure to support men looking for second careers is forming in local areas, the measures to address issues related to women, such as the maximisation of their workforce productivity or their share of regional challenges, are underdeveloped. Moreover, many women, whether holding jobs and or working in the local community, must importantly face the care of their own parents or parents-in-law.

Given the above trends, the international conference [-Working Women in an Ageing Society-](#) is organised to specifically analyse strategies employed by the United States, some Asian countries as well as European nations, to maximise the capacities of Working Women in an Ageing Society.

The WWAS Conference aims -amongst other objectives- at promoting “womenomics”, i.e. tapping into the underutilised power of women as workers and leaders to not only change gender views, but to also contribute to the revival of the Japanese economy.

EURAXESS Japan is proud to be one of the partners of this conference, and will actively take part in the event with a booth and a dedicated seminar presenting EURAXESS’ and the European initiative toward gender equality and retirement policies for researchers.

Dates: 3-5 June

Venue: Fukuoka, [International Congress Center](#)

Further information and registration [here](#)



## 4 Event in Europe: Women Innovate, Europe Gains!

Gender equality is a fundamental value of the European Union. But is gender equality a reality in Europe? How are women innovating Europe?

In celebration of the International Women's Day, the European Commission proposes a public debate: "Women innovate, Europe gains!", a citizens' dialogue on gender equality, in particular in the fields of research and innovation.

Join the debate with Carlos Moedas, European Commissioner for Science, Research, and Innovation and Saskia Van Uffelen, CEO of Ericsson Belux.

It will be followed by the award ceremony of the EU Prize for Women Innovators 2016.

The event will be broadcasted via live streaming [here](#).

Date and time: 10 March 2016, 17:30

Venue: Ateliers des Tanneurs, Brussels, Belgium

Further information and registration [here](#)

#####

**About EURAXESS Japan**

EURAXESS Japan is a networking tool for European researchers active/seeking activity in Japan and for Japanese researchers wishing to collaborate with and/or pursue a career in Europe.

EURAXESS Japan provides information about research in Europe, European research policy, opportunities for research funding, for EU-Japan and international collaboration and for trans-national mobility.

**Membership is free.**

Visit us at [japan.euraxess.org](http://japan.euraxess.org) and click on the Join the EURAXESS Japan community hyperlink on the right-hand side of the page.

EURAXESS networks have thus far been launched in North America (USA & Canada) Japan, China, India, the ASEAN hub (encompassing Singapore, Thailand, Malaysia, Indonesia and Vietnam) and Brazil.

*Editor: Matthieu PY, EURAXESS Japan Country Representative*