

Press release

Pioneers, leaders, female entrepreneurs and scientists will speak on diversity in Bern on 24 November

Dame Jocelyn Bell Burnell, renowned British astrophysicist, will be the guest speaker at a CSEM event on diversity

Neuchâtel, 19 November 2021 – Five prominent speakers will address the issue of diversity in science and engineering at CSEM’s flagship event, [Diversity in Science and Tech: Why it Matters?](#) The event, to be held at the Bellevue Palace Hotel in Bern on 24 November, will include a talk by guest speaker Dame Jocelyn Bell Burnell – the British astrophysicist behind the discovery of pulsars.

The pandemic affected female scientists and engineers disproportionately, as they saw a bigger decline in their time available for research, were called on less to speak publicly as experts, and struggled to a greater extent with job security. That’s despite the highly active role these women have played in developing a response to the pandemic. These are just some of the key findings of a [2021 report by UNESCO](#) that points to a worrying gender gap in the STEM fields: science, technology, engineering and mathematics. The report notes that women are especially short on the ground in key decision-making roles.

More women need to be involved in the development of digital technology and artificial intelligence in particular, to prevent gender biases from propagating in the algorithms these systems use and in society as a whole. That will become even more important as digitalization takes hold and manufacturers transition to Industry 4.0.

At the [CSEM event](#), experts will examine gender-related issues in the STEM fields. The keynote address will be given by CSEM CEO Alexandre Pauchard; other speakers will include men and women whose work and whose exemplary careers are helping to drive change.

Dame Bell Burnell and the discovery of pulsars

Dame Bell Burnell, the main speaker and a pioneering astrophysicist, will discuss the gender gap in her field and how she was able to forge an outstanding career in circles where women have traditionally been underrepresented. She discovered the first radio pulsars in 1967 – a finding that led her thesis supervisor to later win the Nobel Prize.

Knowledge about pulsars (or neutron stars) has paved the way to major advancements in our understanding of how the Milky Way and supernovas are structured.

Dame Bell Burnell has received several honors for her work. For instance, she was awarded the Special Breakthrough Prize in Fundamental Physics for her revolutionary discoveries, and received the Copley Medal, the Royal Society of London’s most prestigious distinction.

A look at the STEM sector

How do things stand in the STEM sector? This question will be addressed from different angles by Patricia Widmer, Program Director Open Enrollment and Diversity at the University of St. Gallen, and John Antonakis, Professor of Organizational Behavior at the University of Lausanne's Faculty of Business and Economics. Following that, the question of how more women can access leadership positions will be discussed by two successful female entrepreneurs: Pia Sandvik, CEO of the RISE Research Institutes of Sweden (who will be streaming live from Sweden), and Trudi Haemmerli, Entrepreneur & Business Angel Investor.

Three proposals for improving diversity

The event will conclude with a panel discussion where the speakers will share their ideas and put forth three concrete proposals on how to move forward. The discussion will be moderated by Nathalie Ducommun, a Swiss journalist and producer at Swiss broadcaster RTS.

"Enhancing diversity will not only help drive innovation and excellence, but will also be essential for building a representative society in both the physical and digital space," says Pauchard. "According to the WEF's [2021 Global Gender Gap Report](#), only 32% of the workforce in data and AI are women. We need to up that percentage if we are to address the needs and vision of people who make up half of the world's population."

Children welcome

Because it can be hard for some parents to arrange childcare on a Wednesday afternoon, CSEM will be providing on-site childcare free of charge for children aged four to eight. Caregivers will speak English, French and German. Space is limited; to reserve a spot, send an email to agn@csem.ch.

To view the event program and to register: [Diversity in Science and Tech: Why it Matters?](#)

For additional information or to request an interview, contact:

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About CSEM

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