



COOPOL: Encouraging women in science

The number of women studying for PhD's in Science and Engineering has increased to 38% (2012 She Figures [1]) however career progression shows a wider gender imbalance and at board level women are significantly under represented. For example women accounted for 29.6% of EU-27 employment in the manufacturing sector (Oct 2011 [2]) but only 16% of company boards contain women (Oct 2012 [3]). The imbalance of female to male researchers involved in the COOPOL project reflects the wider science base but the positive experiences of this diverse group of scientists working together to drive forward research highlights the fact that ability and expertise is not gender related. Some of the people involved in the project present their views below and it is hoped that their experiences will serve as a platform to pursue successful careers in Science and to encourage more women scientists to enter the field and make the most of their talents and skills. Indeed at RWTH Aachen a female masters student, supervised by a female PhD researcher, is now looking for a PhD position.

Selected profiles and views of COOPOL coworkers

Picture of Ellie
here

Eleanor Davis is the project administrator for the COOPOL project based at the University of Warwick, UK. She is responsible for the smooth running and timely delivery of the project objectives. She works closely with the academic and industrial partners across Europe and the European Commission to encourage effective communication and collaboration.

Eleanor comes from an international background having grown up in Austria and studied in both the UK and Spain. She is fluent in German and proficient in Spanish. Her background is in international business and European project and funding management. She previously worked for the UK National Agency for the European Lifelong Learning Programme and works as a freelance external assessor for LLP funding applications.

"I chose to work on a complex research based project to expand my knowledge of EU project management. Working in a predominantly academic setting is at times very different to industry, and at others very similar. However, in all settings people are the key to a successful project and I enjoy the challenge of working with the diverse group present in COOPOL. Working within an academic research setting brings challenges of complex bureaucratic processes, colleagues with heavy workloads and at times conflicting priorities. At times a degree of sensitivity and understanding is needed to encourage people to get things done. This is the key to working within a predominantly male environment. Timely communication and an appreciation of context is also important. I do not have a problem telling people what to do and have been very encouraged to see very talented young female scientists coming through. In our project all are treated equally regardless of gender and position. This is very important to ensure that our young researchers are able to research effectively and feel able to contribute during discussion. We look to empower our young researchers by giving them ownership over the research they are undertaking. It is important not to see gender as a barrier but have faith in your own abilities!"



Simon Rushworth is a technology manager at Chemistry Innovation KTN

Simon is current working to develop the theme of Process Chemistry and Manufacturing, in order to deliver tangible benefits and growth to the UK chemistry-using companies by improving their innovation performance. Prior to this he worked as an Exploitation Manager for a strategic research cluster in Ireland and for over 20 years managing collaborative research projects and technical support activities in the area of ultrahigh purity organometallic precursor supply to the semiconductor industry. Simon has published over 100 papers and presented at many conferences around the world

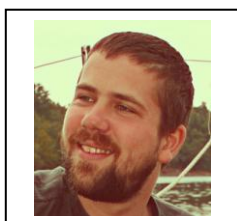
"Working with the COOPOL team has been highly rewarding as the technology is new to me and I am always looking to learn. I have been impressed by the degree of interactions between groups and the professional way that everyone works together to progress science. Male and female coworkers have equal standing and it is great to see them bouncing around ideas to keep the project moving forward."



Jennifer Puschke is a researcher at RWTH Aachen

Jennifer is pursuing a doctoral degree at the AVT.PT, which is an institute at the RWTH Aachen University. Prior to this she studied mechanical engineering specializing in process systems engineering also at RWTH Aachen University. Jennifer works with leading European academic and industry partners in the COOPOL project to develop robust real-time optimisation strategies for economic model-based predictive control.

"I really appreciate working in the COOPOL project. I like the topic I'm working on, it is closely related to my PHD topic and all project partners are kind and helpful. The Cooperation with each of them is seamless. In our project all are treated equally regardless of gender and position."



Alexandr Zubov is a researcher at VSCHT

Alexandr is pursuing a doctoral degree in the group of Prof Juraj Kosek at the Institute of Chemical Technology in Prague, where he previously obtained both BSc and MSc degree. In cooperation with Czech industry he has developed a process simulator of styrene-butadiene rubber (SBR) production by cold emulsion polymerization. His scientific interests are also focused on transport phenomena during polymerization of olefins in gas-phase reactors. Alexandr works with a wide variety of European academic and industry partners in the COOPOL project to develop robust and fast running dynamic process models for model-predictive control systems.

"Participation in the COOPOL project is a big experience for me. It is great to have the opportunity to cooperate directly with top specialists on polymerization processes both from academia and from industry. Communication with project partners across all positions and genders is smooth and very enjoyable for me."



Claudia Houben is a researcher at Cambridge University

Claudia Houben is performing her PhD in the group of Alexei A. Lapkin at the University of Cambridge. She has been awarded a scholarship from the European commission COOPOL project 'Control and Real-Time Optimisation of

Intensive Polymerisation' to support this activity. Prior to this Claudia studied chemistry at the RWTH Aachen University in Germany and finished her Masters degree in 2011. She works with academic and industrial partners across Europe to develop robust real-time optimisation-based control and sensing methodologies and through their application to achieve, in parallel, the intensification of (i) the existing processes, and (ii) the development of novel intensive 'smart-scale' processes.

"I enjoy working with the team at Cambridge and having RWTH Aachen in the project has meant I can keep in touch with my old colleagues from when I studied there. Issues of gender have not occurred with everyone focussed on research capability."

References

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