

# SARAH GENON

## PSYCHOLOGIST

**S**arah Genon did not want to be a princess, but a knight, fighting for what is right, when watching in TV films in her schooldays! No boring role for Sarah, passively awaiting rescue.

Sarah's first love was psychology, but her parents, for "practical reasons", directed her to marketing. A year later, parental resistance overcome, Sarah enrolled in psychology at the University of Brussels, followed by a master's in neuropsychology and clinical psychology at the University of Liège. A master thesis defence jury member, Fabienne Collette, a non-clinician, then had the intuition to call and invite her to do a neuroscience PhD, involving neuropsychology and neuroimaging techniques. Following a spell at the Heinrich Heine University, Düsseldorf, Sarah became a researcher into brain and behaviour at gender equality aware Jülich.

With an unconventional career path, Sarah notes that in psychology, where women predominate, people have honest exchanges of information, taking an, "I am interested in learning from you" approach. Due possibly to the engineering component, men outnumber women in neuroimaging; attitudes here are more competitive, like "I will show you what I do". Sarah prefers cooperation to competition.

### Early preparation essential to achieve gender equality

While advocating gender equality in leadership, like SP2 Task management, Sarah thinks that gender equalization success depends on early preparation - from primary school to university - by communicating to women in technical careers.

Sarah's advice to younger colleagues is, "Be self-confident! Don't take life too seriously or be afraid to try new things," adding, "Everything can be changed, except death!" Sarah herself welcomes chances to open up to friends. "Revealing weaknesses can be a sign of strength, and you are more likely to get support if vulnerabilities are known," she says.

To arrive at a 50:50 gender split, Sarah wants to see cultural changes in the perception of career-defined men and child-rearing women.

### Marie Curie an inspiration

Marie Curie successfully blended family life and research. While studying medicine in Paris, sister Bronia received money earned from Marie's governess job in Poland, later reciprocated by Marie receiving lodging. Marie's marriage to Pierre Curie was also successful, even though after Pierre's death her reputation was marred by an affair with Paul Langevin. Sarah encourages everyone to find out more about the only person ever to win two Nobel prizes in different subjects, and particularly likes the quote, "A scientist in his laboratory is not a mere technician: he is also a child confronting natural phenomena that impress him as though they were fairy tales." Finally, Sarah reminds all in laboratory research not to forget to have fun!



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