

PRESS RELEASE Women in Life Science Denmark

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Women at the top of Danish Life Science create national network

New professional network for female executives and specialist aim to promote female talent

Denmark is the Nordic country with fewest female top executives. Only 20 percent of executives in Danish companies are women, while only 14% of companies have a female CEO. The aim of a new professional network is to change this.

Women in Life Science Denmark (WiLD) is a network for top executives, board directors, experienced specialists and leading researchers. The aim of the network is to strengthen value creation in Danish Life Science and unfold the full talent potential in the industry by increasing diversity at the top executive and specialist levels.

The ambition of WiLD is to create a professionally inspiring network forum for leading women across the industry and academia and at the same time increase visibility of women at the top levels of leadership. By acting as clear role models the WiLD members wish to inspire the next generation of women to strive for top level positions in corporate and academic institutions, both in Denmark generally and in the Life Science industry specifically .

Denmark holds the place as number 32 on the World Economic Forum's gender equality index while our neighbouring countries Finland, Norway and Sweden are in the top five. Although the life science industry is attractive for women and there is gender parity in the industry overall, this is not reflected in the diversity profile of top leadership teams: Here only 11 of the largest 40 companies are led by women, while at the universities only 23 percent of full professors are women.

With this network, women with influence within Danish Life Science will seek to increase diversity at the senior level for the benefit of society and companies. Specifically, Women in Life Science Denmark will seek to

- unfold the full talent potential in the Life Sciences by increasing diversity and inclusiveness
- increase visibility of female role models and their paths within Life Sciences and in the greater society
- contribute to value creation through professional knowledge sharing and networking

In addition to launching the network, two synergistic initiatives will be introduced during 2023.

The first initiative is a mentor program targeted towards female talent within Life Sciences. The mentor program enlists members of WiLD as mentors to offer individual mentoring of up-and-coming female talents, who will be offered membership in the network. In addition, the WiLD members will offer talks on various career options in the life science industry at educational institutions, in industry organisations and the like.

The second initiative consists of an expert panel of industry experts from the WiLD network. The panel can be accessed to contribute expert knowledge to the media and participate in public discourse – and thereby increase the visibility of female experts and role models both within the Life Science industry and in the society at large. This is essential to rectify the gender bias towards female experts in the public realm. The expert panel is targeted towards media, researchers and collaborators and will be publicised on WiLD's web page.

Lene Gerlach, concept initiator and chairperson of WiLD states:

“The life science industry is a beacon in Danish industry, both as pertains to innovation, export and importance to our society. But when it comes to diversity, we are very far from reaching our goal. With this network we

wish to contribute to unlocking the full talent potential in Denmark by activating female talent and bringing it in play.”

Lene Gerlach underscores the importance of the network not only being a forum for professional discussions but also a community where individuals contribute to a greater good - to make women in the industry visible via their professional expertise, as role models and as participants in the public debate.

Lene Gerlach has throughout her career in the life science industry been employed in both pharmaceutical and biotech companies and sits on several boards.

In just four months passed since Lene Gerlach formed the concept for WiLD and discussed the idea with leading women in her own network and to the first WiLD gathering – held in the Mærsk tower at Copenhagen University. And the interest has been overwhelming, with membership fast approaching 80 women in top leadership positions across the industry and at Århus, Copenhagen and Denmark’s Technical universities.

Kirsten Drejer, seasoned by many years as CEO of the biotech company Symphogen and co-initiator of WiLD states:” It has been rewarding seeing how fast WiLD has grown with the ongoing uptake of very competent and dedicated women from the Life Science industry – there is no doubt that there is a need for such a network forum! We need to act to change gender disparity at the top leadership level and here WiLD can make a difference by helping a new generation of women ascend to positions of leadership”.

As an extra confirmation of WiLD’s relevance and importance, the Novo Nordisk Foundation has provided a contribution of DKK 420.000 over three years.

“The board of directors of WiLD we are very grateful for the high level of interest and support and I owe a big thanks to the women who contributed their time and expertise in transforming this concept into reality. And to the Novo Nordisk Foundation for their immediate faith in us and in our project. With their very real contribution we will now be able to raise awareness of the network, to increase our reach and find support for this very important mission” states Lene Gerlach.