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## Newsletter

June-December 2023

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Dear Member,

We are pleased to share with you the June-December 2023 edition of our WISE newsletter. In this edition we will discuss:

- **Looking back:**
  - WISE annual event
  - Writing retreat
  - ME Female bachelor students gathering
  - Global Goals Jam Eindhoven
- **Upcoming events:**
  - Training for scientists: dealing with stress (by Linda van den Bedem and Louise Mennen on Feb. 8 and 27, 2024/2 x 4 hours)
  - Celebration of Int. Day of Women and Girls in Science (TINT/WISE Event, 20.02.2024)
  - Workshop 'Be the change you want to see: How being authentic can improve academic culture at TU/e' (by Belle Derks and Jenny Veldman 13.03.2024)
  - WISE writing retreat (summer 2024)
- **General information**
- **Women Inspired**
- **Christmas wish**

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### WISE Annual Event 2023

The WISE annual event on 'Social Interactions in Science - Opening conversations' that took place on Monday, October 30<sup>th</sup> was a major success, in terms of attendance (more than 150 registrations) as well as content and discussion. The event started with an inspirational talk by dr. Erika Darics on the role of language in achieving gender equality in academia and how women are "leaking from the pipeline" of the academic hierarchy. Dr. Wyke Stommel discussed the role of gender in language based on the interactions between humans and a gender-ambiguous robot. The analysis of those interactions shows the difficulties that people have in interacting with gender-ambiguous robots because of gendered language. The afternoon ended with a theater play by Lomans & De Roy, which was moderated by Carla-Maria Verwer. The actors presented several situations on crossing and setting boundaries, that opened the discussion on how to communicate effectively when dealing with social pressure at work or with a toxic work environment. The vivid discussion initiated during the session was continued during drinks and dinner, which showed that the aim of this event, namely opening conversations, had been achieved! During one of the situations sketched by the theater group, the audience was asked to 'steer' the response of one of the actors, interpreting a female scientist in a situation where the inappropriate behavior of a colleague took place. This exercise aimed to think about what you could do when you find yourself in such a situation, which was felt by several women in the audience. During the dynamic discussion that took place, there were also suggestions from the audience in the direction of 'fixing the

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women' rather than 'the system'. In reply to this, the WISE board and members stand unanimously behind the credo: fix the system, not the women.



In response to a question posed during the event about how to use gender-inclusive language in education, and as an addition (from HR) please find the link to the workshop [Inclusive Interaction and Education](#) organized by the TEACH program: "Amongst all your roles as a teacher, one of them is to create a safe and inclusive learning environment for your students. In this workshop you will work with the inclusive interaction toolbox and apply the inclusive education design scan. You will reflect upon your role as a teacher and how to apply the lessons learned in your daily practice".

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### Writing retreat (2023 edition)

Huge writing task waiting to be taken care of, but no time left after the meetings, weekly tasks, and duties... WISE members took the last week of August to complete their long waiting writing tasks with the WISE writing retreat! The writing retreat covered a full week with scheduled writing slots of 45 to 60 minutes with 10 min breaks. Monday and Friday's sessions were held on campus, while Tuesday, Wednesday and Thursday's sessions were online. We took the writing slots for efficient uninterrupted writing. In the breaks we chit-chatted and shared our experiences and greatest tips for more efficient writing. The week has ended with a round of drinks at De Zwarte Doos! Most of the attendants were happy to take a break from their daily routines, focus on writing, and achieve their writing goals.

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## Global Goals Jam Eindhoven

### **“How might we affect change in STEM academia so that we retain women in science?”**

On Friday, November 17<sup>th</sup>, WISE joined the Eindhoven Global Goals Jam as a challenge owner to brainstorm about this question. Global Goals Jams are full-day creative workshops that bring together citizens and designers to brainstorm about a challenge experienced in their local context. The program is initiated by the United Nations, and each year there is a focus on a different set of “Sustainable Development Goals”. The goals this year included *#4 Quality Education* and *#5 Gender Equality* – two themes that WISE is very passionate about. The participants came from a wide variety of backgrounds, and all were active in their own initiatives working towards gender equity, diversity, and inclusion.

#### **Interesting discussion from the event included:**

- The tension between educating those who are not yet aware of what they can do to make academia a place where women would like to stay, and creating events that are valuable and enjoyable for women so that they remain in academia (AKA avoiding “preaching to the choir”)
- Highlighting the complexity of systemic challenges women encounter throughout their academic careers and how we might advocate for change at the grassroots, local, and (inter)national level.
- Ways to identify key people as allies in positions of power throughout academia.
- The value of connecting with other initiatives working towards equity within and outside of academia.

Thank you to [Tini Studio](#) for hosting the event, and we look forward to thinking further on this topic with the fantastic input from the participants!



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## Mechanical Engineering female students gathering: UniteME

WISE and the Department of ME hosted a gathering for female students in bachelor of ME on the 23<sup>rd</sup> of November. The gathering was a pilot and it aimed to bring female students together to motivate, empower and inspire them. It is organized at a departmental level according to the diversity destination ME which is creating an environment where everyone feels safe, respected and valued. The

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program started with a personal introduction round to break the ice in the room. It continued with a 30-minute interactive interview with our guest Dr. Ir. Michelle Spanjaards, who completed her studies in the ME department at TU/e. We discussed motivation in ME, education pathways, gender bias, mentorship, and the technical trends in the field. Students were also involved in the discussion and were actively asking questions to Michelle. The program then continued with drinks and bites!



The feedback revealed that the students felt mainly inspired, socialized, supported and valued. The event helped them to imagine their future self in ME and facilitated them to meet the other female students with similar experiences. All the students were motivated to attend the next one!

Yagmur Bugday

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## Upcoming events

- **Training for scientists: dealing with stress** (Feb. 8 and 27, 2024/2 x 4 hours)  
Held by Linda van den Bedem and Louise Mennen, personal leadership coaches. As a female scientist, chances are you have a great passion for your work and are highly motivated to work in academia. At the same time, you probably experience challenges dealing with the system you are operating in. This can decrease your passion and worse, can lead to stress. The workshop is aimed at providing hands-on and interactive training that can help you deal with stress and boost vitality. This training will improve your personal and work life and provide you with practical tools to more fluently deal with the system you are working in. More information will follow soon.
  - **Celebration of Int. Day of Women and Girls in Science** (TINT/WISE Event, 20.02.2024)  
[TINT](#) and [WISE](#) present another inspiring evening to celebrate the United Nations' 'International Day of Women and Girls in Science' on the 20th of February during the evening for an exciting event. Save the date!
  - **Workshop 'Be the change you want to see: How being authentic can improve the academic culture at TU/e'** (13.03.2024)  
Following up on the great interest of our network in the research of Belle Derks (Utrecht University), who was invited speaker at our annual event in 2022, we are happy to present to you the workshop
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on 'Be the change you want to see: How being authentic can improve the academic culture at TU/e'. Belle Derks and Jenny Veldman will challenge us to discuss and define new ways of being a scientist in an environment traditionally built upon competition and individual achievements.

- **WISE writing retreat** (summer 2024)

Research has shown that while carving out time and focus for writing papers and funding proposals is a challenge for all academics, it is particularly challenging for female academics. Writing papers and grants is, however, a very important activity for career progression. As we did last year, WISE would also like to support our members in 2024 to work on their personal writing projects by facilitating a WISE writing retreat. Keep an eye on your email or our social media and stay tuned as we share more information soon.

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### General information

- **A new flyer of the WISE Network** is available! You can download it [here](#). Please feel free to forward it to your colleagues who might be interested in joining the network!
- **New WISE Network LinkedIn page** can be reached [here](#). Follow us to get updates!

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### Women InSpired

Our pick for this edition of our Women InSpired series is **Prof. Silvia Lenaerts**, our new Rectrix Magnifica. As a chemist and a professor at the University of Antwerp, in Belgium, her work has long been focused on sustainability. She has been the founder and head of the Sustainable Energy and Air and Water Technology group at the University of Antwerp, and since 2016 she has been Vice Rector there, with the Valorization and Development portfolio. She is a believer in "trust, openness and long-term cooperation in order to build a smart and sustainable society together". She took the role of Rector on May 11. She will be the first female Rector of a technical university in the Netherlands.

If you like to propose the next pick for the Women InSpired series, please send an email to [e.peri@tue.nl](mailto:e.peri@tue.nl), or [g.m.gronska@tue.nl](mailto:g.m.gronska@tue.nl).



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### Christmas wish

We like to close our newsletter with greetings to our incredible women in science network! May this festive season bring you joy, inspiration, and the warmth of shared accomplishments. As we celebrate the wonders of the holiday season, let's continue to illuminate the path for future generations of women in science, making strides together. Wishing you all a Merry Christmas filled with discovery, collaboration, and the spirit of endless possibilities. Cheers to breaking barriers and forging new frontiers in the coming year!

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