



Participants of the CONNECT program Round 7

CONNECTING Science with New Career Perspectives

In the CONNECT program, female junior scientists learn more about different career paths in the private sector and public administration.

Milena Müller and Alona Bärtschi

Since its launch in 2018, the CONNECT program, led by PSI, has welcomed more than 250 female PhD students and postdoctoral researchers from all ETH Domain institutions and cross-university networks.

CONNECT brings together young female scientists from the STEM fields with successful women who have similar educational backgrounds but work in the private sector or public administration. Through CONNECT, young researchers gain first-hand insights into

career opportunities in the private sector and public administration, including day-to-day work, career paths, and entry opportunities outside academia.

Each program cycle lasts approximately six months. During this time, participants visit partner organizations on site. In addition, the program includes workshops on career-related topics, providing opportunities to reflect on their own career aspirations, develop practical career skills, and learn more about applying for positions outside academia.

Here's what participants from Round 7 have to say about the CONNECT program

Franziska Zilker, WSL

When you look back on the program, what stands out most in your memory?

The first thing that comes to mind is meeting all these women who are in a similar stage of their career and have similar questions. And learning that we all have similar hopes, ideas, and feelings about that process, but everybody is also approaching it a little differently. More generally, I got inspiration in this program in terms of what different jobs in industry look like and having the opportunity to speak to people at specific companies and learn about their day-to-day life.

What positively surprised you during the program?

I was very happy that our group of women was very curious, encouraging, and open. Also, knowing that I'm not alone in this situation, that there are a lot of women who have the same questions and the same doubts. What was also positively surprising was learning that there is no right or wrong way to apply for jobs. Everyone has their own opinion on how a CV should look like, even the HR people amongst themselves.

Anastasia Batenkova, Empa

What were your main reasons for applying to the CONNECT program?

I was in my final year of my PhD and by that time, I only knew academia, how the application process works, what's the next step, how to approach people and so on. I really wanted to transition to industry, but I was lacking this exact information for industry. So, the CONNECT program was the perfect match for what I needed and what it actually gave me in the end.

What suggestions would you give to future participants? How could they use the program to their advantage?

Keep an open mind and stay curious. Also, take it as an opportunity to reflect on your current career and where you might want to go. You could also see it as an opportunity to explore something entirely different.



What would you do differently if you could participate in the program again?

Unfortunately, I missed a few of the events. I would really try to go to each event, even if it's a company that does not necessarily match my profile. It's not only about the companies but also about the network you build. It helps to share your experience with other participants and to discuss some common issues.



How has CONNECT changed your perspective on working in industry?

I think CONNECT mostly helped me to find a connection to HR and to understand their perspective. At career fairs, for example, you often feel a bit uncomfortable because there are so many people who want the company representatives' attention and everyone is getting overwhelmed. At CONNECT it was more relaxed. During the program I have worked out a set of targeted questions that I used further at other career events.

Gabriela Da Silva André, ETH

What was the most inspiring conversation or talk you experienced during the company visits?

I remember the HR representative from Sensirion conveyed to us that you might often not be the perfect fit for a position, but that it's not always about checking all the boxes, but more about the person you are. And I think this opened my horizons a bit. I realized I could also go in a direction where I know I don't tick all the boxes, but as long as I'm interested and would like to get there, I can still try, even if I'm not the perfect fit.



How has CONNECT influenced your career path?

I think I'm much more open to exploring what is out there. In the beginning, I thought I needed to find a job in research, but CONNECT gave me a different perspective and showed me that I could also try something else. I learned that you could go in many directions and not necessarily where you initially intended to go.

What advice would you like to share with future participants in the CONNECT program?

Go and talk to the people at company visits and connect with the other participants to share your experience with each other. Be open to anything, even if your profile maybe does not fit some of the companies. You can still learn a lot and get valuable insights from the different experiences the company representatives share and the tips you can get from HR.

The partner companies

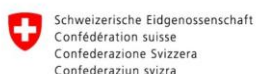
Three to four companies participate in each program cycle. Since the program began, a total of 16 organizations have opened their doors to CONNECT participants. Startups also take part, for example through visits to Park Innovaare.

The participating organizations benefit from the program, as it enables them to engage directly with highly qualified and motivated potential employees. It also provides them with the opportunity to showcase themselves to young STEM talents as attractive employers committed to increasing diversity within teams and promoting gender balance in specialist and leadership roles.

Apply now!

A maximum of 40 places is available per program round. Participants are chosen from the pool of applicants by their respective institutions via a special selection procedure. The next round of the program starts in October 2026.

Find more information on the program and the timetable here: www.connect-women.ch



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Companies from Round 7 and 8

The Vision Behind CONNECT

The academic institutions that participate in the program pursue the following goal:

"The CONNECT program arose from project-related contributions by swissuniversities to equal opportunities during the promotion of young talents. Women have been and continue to be under-represented both in the public sector – including universities – and in the private sector, especially in management positions. This is why we have focused on women as our target group.

Our primary aim is to build a bridge to the private sector and public administration for the participants. In many cases, they have no in-depth experience outside the academic world and have not yet been able to build up a network in Switzerland, so we want to support them in actively planning their career.

Women already obtain lots of information and support on planning an academic career from their academic institutions, but we think it's important to empower women for professional life beyond academia as well. This way, as many of our alumni and researchers as possible will stay available to the market as highly qualified employees – either within or outside our own academic institutions."

The Steering Committee of the CONNECT program together with representatives of the participating institutions in the university sector