

Women in Data Science – Perspectives in Industry and Academia

Bérénice Batut – *designing communities and projects in this open way is for me really valuable*

Dr. Bérénice Batut started her scientific career with bioinformatics studies at the Institut National des Sciences Appliquées (INSA), Lyon, France. Being involved in teaching in computer science during her PhD at INSA and 1st PostDoc at University of Auvergne in Clermont-Ferrand, France, Bérénice consequently expanded her efforts toward bioinformatics and became a Software Carpentry instructor. In 2016 she moved to Freiburg, Germany and joined the European Galaxy team at the University of Freiburg. During this time, Bérénice came in contact with the German Network for Bioinformatics Infrastructure and ELIXIR Europe. The connection to the ELIXIR and various other training communities led to a fruitful cooperation and her recent appointment as co-lead of the ELIXIR Marine Metagenomics community.



**Bioinformatics Scientist,
Co-lead of the ELIXIR Marine
Metagenomics community**

“In the spirit of openness and reproducibility, we develop workflows together with the collaborators mostly using Galaxy.

Bérénice is a member of the Freiburg Galaxy team and working on computational biology projects mainly orientated towards microbiome data analysis and RNA-seq data, like the microbiome of clouds or foodborne pathogen detection. In joint forces with Björn Grüning, Head of the Freiburg Galaxy Team, and several other Galaxy members, Bérénice helped relaunch the Galaxy Training Network (GTN). Not long ago, the GTN was loosely based on different groups of people interested in training but with no real infrastructure and shared materials. **“Because of that, we worked on developing a framework for the GTN, connecting people worldwide and helping build the community”**, she states.

“One important thing for me is to reach scientific communities, but I also really care about the non-scientist people.”

In addition to Bérénice's activities in the GTN, she is quite active in science communication, for example, the Street Science Community conducting beer sequencing (BeerDEcoded project, identifying microorganisms in beers). Furthermore, she is committed to science communication towards non-scientist groups as well as open science and open source projects. She engaged in the Mozilla Open Leaders Program. Joining as a mentee, she got a lot of personal and professional support during her time in the program. As the program was expanded from Mozilla, she initiated with three of her colleagues – Yo Yehudi, Emmy Tsang and Malvika Sharan - to start “Open Life Science”, a mentoring and training initiative, where participants share their expertise and gain knowledge essential to create, lead, and sustain open science projects. More than 400 participants have been trained in the last three years. **“Being a mentor and seeing people growing in the life science community fills me with pride”**, Bérénice admits proudly.

“Designing communities and projects in this open way is for me really valuable. I learn a lot and want to spread that”

During her PostDoc time in Freiburg Bérénice came in contact with the German Network for Bioinformatics Infrastructure - de.NBI. Through connection to the German bioinformatics scene, she learned of ELIXIR Europe. Her training activities and community engagement in ELIXIR, established a fruitful cooperation leading to her being most recently appointed co-lead of the ELIXIR Marine Metagenomics community. She also serves as deputy training coordinator within the German ELIXIR Node. Reflecting on her own career, she states: **“Giving keynote talks provides my work the recognition I too often denied myself.”**

“I do not value enough the impact of what I am doing. I know that I have my voice; I have my knowledge.”

Seeing the problem in most women's careers, the value of the work being done is often set too low by the women themselves. **“I think I see that in many women. One does not take the space one should be able to take”**, she says openly. Next to the lack of confidence in their professional abilities, there are career alternatives are missing. At the beginning of her career, being an associate professor seemed to be the only viable option for an academic career. Visibility of female scientists, mentors, and role models is important to strengthen the role of female researchers. Even worse, women tend to change their behavior to adapt to the situation. **“Arrested development is not funny, but is happening to many female careers”**, she says. It is highly important for her that the community is aware of the situation. Men often lack to acknowledge or deny the problem many female researchers are facing daily. Making the situation even harder for working women, the system, especially in Germany, is not directed to support women in work. Expected to work part-time, not having permanent positions in academia and lack of supporting daycare limit women's career opportunities. In her view systemic issues need to be solved. Those obstacles keep women away from academia, she concludes.

“It doesn't matter what their daily job is as long as you're inspired by them and what they're doing.”

Being asked about her female role models, Bérénice mentions her PhD supervisor Carole Knibbe (associate professor in computational biology at the Institut National des Sciences Appliquées de Lyon, France), her fellow Open Life Science directors Yo Yehudi, Malvika Sharan and Emmy Tsang, as well as Helena Rasche and Saskia Hiltman from the GTN. Beyond role models in her direct scientific proximity, Bérénice shares her career insights with two of her friends, who also made careers in the field of data science.

What was your most recent google search?

In preparation for our next street science event in Freiburg dealing with the sequencing of beer, I was looking for the taxonomic classification of yeast.

Authors: Irena Maus & Nils-Christian Lübke, ELIXIR Germany Administration Office, October 2022.

We would like to thank Bérénice for this very inspiring interview and wish her continued success in her new position as the Co-lead of the ELIXIR Marine Metagenomics community.

Contact:

For more details please refer to:

wids@denbi.de

www.denbi.de/women-in-data-science

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