

Module 7

Who am I?

Short biographies based on Annex I of the TAG Handbook

Sofia OGREZEANU

I was born in Romania in 1920. Thanks to my mother, who was very committed to me, I was able to start studying medicine in 1939. During the Second World War, I worked in various military hospitals. In 1943, I began an internship in neurosurgery at a hospital in Bucharest, where I proved my exceptional skills in this field. I was the first female neurosurgeon in the world and worked in this field for 47 years!

Sarmiza BILCESU

I was born in Bucharest in 1867. When I am 17, I took the entrance exam for the law faculty of the Sorbonne-but it took 2 weeks for the commission to actually decide to let me study as a female because they feared unrest among the male fellow students. Only after my first exam did my professors take me seriously. In 1890, I became the first woman in the world to earn a doctorate in law. I decided against a career as a lawyer, despite my admission, but I was very active politically and campaigned for equal rights for women.

Elena MASERAS

I was born in Spain in 1853 and grew up in a family of doctors. I also wanted to study medicine and received special permission from the king to enroll at the University of Barcelona. However, I had to either study at home or sit apart from the male students in the lecture hall. After graduating-I had to wait more than 3 years for permission-I did not work as a doctor, but as a teacher at the first public school for girls and worked at a newspaper.

Joanna of Castile

I am the sister of Catherine of Aragon, Queen of England during her marriage to Henry VIII of England. At the age of 16 I was married to Philip the Handsome of Austria. The death of my siblings made me heir to the throne and I became Queen of Castile in 1504 and of Aragon in 1517. I got my nickname "the madwoman" because I often had emotional outbursts, for example when my mother and husband died. My son, Emperor Charles, sent me to a convent, where I died at the age of 75.



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Beatriz Ângelo

I was born in Guarda, Portugal, in 1878. In 1902, I graduate in medicine, making me the second woman doctor in Portugal. I am the first woman to perform surgery in Portugal. After the abolition of the monarchy in 1910, I immediately register as a voter for the first elections the following year. Twice I have to go to court to get this right, although the law clearly entitles me to it as a Portuguese citizen, widow and mother and thus head of the family! A large crowd of onlookers had gathered in front of the polling station, many of them against women's suffrage. Nevertheless, I was the first woman in Portugal and Western Europe to cast my vote!

Adelaide de Jesus Damas Brazão

I come from a working-class family and was born in Portugal in 1867. Thanks to my husband, who was very supportive, I was able to study medicine and obtain my doctorate. My doctoral thesis dealt with the need for maternity protection for women workers, and even after my studies I worked for the creation of maternity wards, day care centers, children's homes and social solidarity institutions. I am a staunch republican and feminist, working to raise the status of women in society. In 1925, I attend the Congress of the International Council of Women in Washington as a representative of the Portuguese government. I spent my twilight years in Angola.

Margherita Hack

I was Professor of Astronomy at the University of Trieste from 1964 to November 1, 1992, and the first Italian woman to direct the Astronomical Observatory of Trieste from 1964 to 1987. I was also Director of the Department of Astronomy at the University of Trieste from 1985 to 1991 and from 1994 to 1997. During my career I have worked at many American and European observatories. In addition to my scientific work, I am best known in Italy for my anti-religious views and criticism of the Catholic Church. I was an avowed atheist. I was also very active politically and published several books, including one about my vegetarian lifestyle.

Artemisia Gentileschi

I am considered one of the most successful women painters of the 17th century. I come from Italy and was the first woman to be admitted to the Accademia di Arte del Disegno in Florence. I was already painting professional pictures at the age of 15. My paintings often depict women from myths, allegories and the Bible, including victims, suicides and warriors like Susanna and Judith. During my life I have known many famous people, such as the Medici family, Grand Duchess Christina of Lorraine and Galileo Galilei. My most famous self-portrait shows me as a lute player.

Louise Otto-Peters

I was a poet, author, and journalist. Politicized during the 1830s, I, like many other women, actively participated in the 1848 Revolution. When political participation for women was banned, I continued to write and publicize. When in the 1860s the social structures became slightly less constrictive, I founded the Leipzig Women's Educational Association together with Auguste Schmidt, Ottilie von Steyber, and Henriette Goldschmidt in 1865. I was the organization's president until her death in 1895. To combat the increasing poverty of women and the lack of proper education possibilities, the ADF aimed at helping women help themselves, to give them access to school, vocational and university education, and to independent gainful employment. By 1870, it had more than 10,000 members. From 1849 until 1850, I published the feminist *Frauen-Zeitung* until press regulations prevented me from doing so. In 1865, I became the editor of the journal *Neue Bahnen*, the mouthpiece of the ADF and the most important publication of the German women's movement.

The Mothers of the German Basic Law (Elisabeth Selbert, Friederike Nadig, Helene Weber und Helene Wessel)

The four of us were representatives of an entire generation of women who grew up during the Weimar Republic and the Second World War and who helped rebuild the country after the war. As members of the Parliamentary Council, we played a key role in the creation of the German Basic Law and were responsible, among other things, for ensuring that the phrase "men and women have equal rights" found its way into it. Although there were significantly more women than men living in Germany after the war, it was not a matter of course that we had political voting rights and were treated equally. And so we also had to fight for this very sentence to be included in the Basic Law. Only after demonstrations, many letters and statements were we able to convince the other members of the Parliamentary Council.

Zora Janžekovič

I am from Slovenia and was born in 1918. I was a doctor of plastic surgery. Early on, I specialized in the treatment of burn wounds and developed a procedure in which the injured tissue is replaced with the patient's skin. Proper treatment of wounds and prevention of contamination was also a major theme in my work. Although in my career I have to constantly and repeatedly assert myself against prejudices, surgeons from all over the world came to me in Maribor to learn from me.

Angela Vode

I was born in Slovenia in 1892. According to the usual conventions, I became a teacher-one of the few professions that women could take up. However, I was dismissed for political reasons. I continued to devote myself to my political convictions and became a member of the Communist Party. In the so-called Nagode trial in 1947, I was accused of being a spy and an enemy of the working class and sentenced to 20 years in prison. I have written several books in which I repeatedly call for the participation of women in public life and emphasize the importance of women's economic independence.

Emilie du Châtelet

I was born an aristocrat in Paris on December 17, 1706. My father provided me with a good and comprehensive education. I am passionate about physics, as is my husband. Together we work on various works. Among others, I deal with Leibniz and Newton. From the latter, I translate the Principia mathematica-still the only French translation of this important work!

Marie-Anne Pierrette Paulze

I was born in Montbrison on January 20, 1758. Initially, I received a typical contemporary education for girls in the local convent. However, I soon became interested in natural sciences and especially chemistry! At 13, I married my husband, 15 years my senior, who was a chemist and is now considered the founder of modern chemistry and the discoverer of respiratory physiology. He involved me in his work and I supported him by translating and illustrating and documenting our experiments. All drawings of our "Traité élémentaire de chimie" published in 1789 were made by me.