

Presentation of the ENVH Athena Prize 2016

By Professor Hanneke Takkenberg, Chief Diversity Officer and president of the jury of the Athena Prize

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Ladies and gentlemen,

Erasmus University strives to provide excellent research and education by using our diverse pool of talent. Our ambition is to attract, retain and develop a diverse workforce - and to have a university culture in which everyone feels at home and is able to excel.

When it comes to achieving an equal ratio of women to men, Erasmus University still faces some tough challenges. For example, in the number of female professors. This university aims for 20 percent female professors in 2020, compared to the meagre 10 percent we have now. We'll have to act now to reach that goal.

To get more women at the top of this institution we'll have to improve the transparency of the recruitment and selection processes. Organising the so-called pipeline is key, ensuring there is enough female talent to choose from.

That might be difficult in some disciplines, but I'm very much convinced we'll have to make that effort. Diversity is not just something that is 'nice to have', but rather, a 'must have': a prerequisite for a healthy academic ecosystem.

One of the initiatives in this area is the Athena Prize – named after the Greek goddess of wisdom, science and the arts Pallas Athena. This award is presented by Erasmus University and the Erasmus Network of Female Professors to a member of staff who has made an exceptional effort in the promotion of female talent. The Athena Prize is for someone who acknowledges female talent, in words and action.

It's a recognition for a member of staff who inspires others in shaping an inclusive University culture. Last year, Professor Maria Grever won the first Athena Prize.

The jury has decided to present the second Athena Prize to Saskia Krijger, who has served as Head of Personnel & Organisation with Erasmus School of Economics and is now a consultant at EUR Holding. Allow me to quote from the jury report:

Saskia Krijger has always advocated for increased diversity among personnel and students. She has shown her commitment in encouraging women to develop their careers according to their own wishes by acting as a personal coach.

Krijger was one of the initiators of the Mature Talent programme, a unique and innovative initiative to attract more women within Erasmus School of Economics. She has also helped first generation students who had a non-Dutch background. At EUR Holding, she has also made extraordinary efforts for advancing the position of women and encouraging diversity in talent.

The jury especially appreciates how Saskia Krijger often worked behind the scenes for others and made an enormous effort to create opportunities for women and encourage women to take advantage of these opportunities. She ensured everything ran like clockwork and she is a true professional.

I'm delighted to present the Athena Prize 2016 to Saskia Krijger. I would like to ask her and Rector Magnificus Pols to join me on the podium.