

IMPACT

2019 - 2022



ALBA NETWORK

*Towards diversity and
equity in brain sciences*

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OVERVIEW

According to a 2017 UNESCO report, women accounted for less than 30% of the world's researchers. Despite the recent progress in the promotion of diversity in brain research, striking inequalities persist when it comes to access to high-level positions, invitation to conferences, career advancement, prize nominations and participation in academic decision-making.

To address this issue, the ALBA Network was created in 2018 with the aim of establishing a global network to promote equity and diversity in the brain sciences.

Naming the network ALBA, meaning sunrise in several languages, thus relates to the recognition that our scientific communities are beginning to acknowledge the importance of incorporating diversity and ensuring equity in the way we deal with science. Although traditionally the field of neuroscience has been lagging behind in these topics, we consider that we are currently living an extraordinary momentum when progress starts happening. Therefore, the ALBA Network has the ambition to be an emerging energy that helps in catalysing this promising movement towards a definitive change so that all brain scientists have equal opportunities to thrive.

“

Being on hiring, evaluation and promotion committees, and being in positions of leadership, it became clear to me that the system disfavoured women and other underrepresented groups.

Prof. Carmen Sandi
ALBA Founder



2019 FENS Regional Meeting, Belgrade, Serbia

Official launch and first event to present the ALBA network and raise awareness on gender issues in neuroscience

MISSION & STRATEGY

Advocate for and foster an inclusive and self-aware brain research community

The ALBA network believes that diversity is a fundamental component of excellence in brain sciences, and that access to education, training, resources, mentorship and jobs should be based on an individual's potential, not on their sex, gender identity, sexual orientation, disability, age, socioeconomic status, ethnicity, race, nationality, religion or culture. However, we know inequities exist, and talented scientists are excluded from opportunities in brain sciences because of these factors and personal choices that bear no relationship to their potential to succeed.

ALBA recognises the geographical, cultural and historical differences in the groups of individuals that are underrepresented across countries and within subfields of brain sciences. We expect the scientific community to present at least the same or even a greater diversity than in their respective countries. We are committed to supporting and advocating for actions and policies that foster equity, diversity and inclusion in brain sciences across the globe. These elements form the basis of our four pillars of actions.

Awareness & Advocacy

- Establishing a Declaration on Equity & Inclusion
- Webinars and panel discussions addressing region-specific diversity issues and hurdles
- Advocating for an inclusive research environment with policymakers, funding agencies & institutions

Data & Resources

- Curating a centralised resource of diverse scientist profiles and available data on bias, underrepresentation and effective strategies countering discrimination
- Promoting collection and analysis of data on various forms of scientific underrepresentation

Visibility & Recognition

- Establishing awards to recognise outstanding contributions to science and diversity from underrepresented neuroscientists
- Highlighting success stories of individuals and organisations to create role models

Networking & Mentoring

- Hosting workshops and networking events at major conferences
- Creating a mentoring framework to promote the careers of underrepresented community members

GROWTH & REACH

| MEMBERSHIP

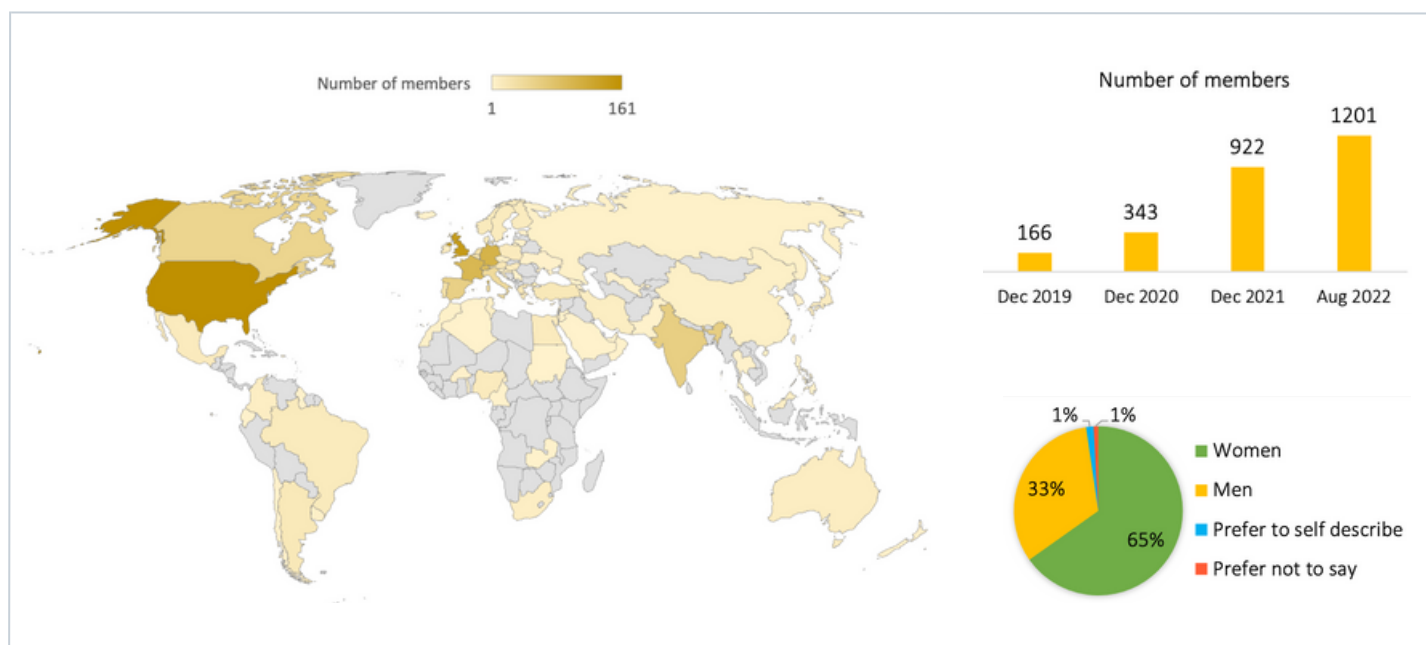
ALBA represents a global diverse network of individual members from the neuroscience community who are committed to supporting and advocating for actions and policies that foster diversity, equity and inclusion (DEI) in brain sciences across the globe. As a member, individuals can contribute to the planning and implementation of DEI initiatives, represent ALBA at events and panel discussions to provide data and insights on various aspects and trends of underrepresentation, and have access to customised diversity and inclusion training programs and workshops.

1200+

Members in

77

Countries



ALBA members at a glance

Growth, geographic and gender distribution

“

The networking aspect has been instrumental to enhancing my confidence and connectedness with colleagues in the broad field of neuroscience.

“

ALBA connects us with a thoughtful community with the common goal of improving DEI in brain sciences.

“

I have also considerably improved my knowledge and understanding of DEI challenges and concrete actions to take.

AWARENESS & ADVOCACY

| ALBA DECLARATION ON EQUITY AND INCLUSION

A landmark document that outlines concrete actions that can be taken at the institutional and individual level to counteract bias and create an inclusive workplace culture, the ALBA Declaration on Equity and inclusion was launched in January 2021 at the Society for Neuroscience (SfN) Global Connectome.

A fully referenced, hyperlinked version of the Declaration is available online where each action point is elaborated upon, describing the issue addressed and highlighting relevant resources (data, testimonies and good practices) on how best to undertake these actions.

“

The Declaration was drafted to be both impactful and broad enough to be widely adopted. We believe that adopting these principles will benefit all members of the research community.



Dr Megan Carey
ALBA Chair, 2021-2022

We are all biased. What can we do?

Commit to recognizing & counteracting bias

- Establish a **working group** that includes key stakeholders & members of leadership
- **Have a policy.** Adopt a written Equity, Diversity & Inclusion policy. Share it widely
- Set **concrete goals** & identify relevant actions
- **Be data-driven.** Continuously collect data to monitor progress & test solutions
- **Raise awareness.** Provide unconscious bias training

Allyship & advocacy

- **Amplify the voices** of minoritized colleagues in both formal and informal settings
- **Nominate individuals** from diverse backgrounds for prestigious events, awards, & recognition

Selection, hiring, and assessment

- **Proactively solicit** applications from underrepresented groups
- Ensure balanced committee representation to minimize **biased gatekeeping**
- Use consistent, well-defined **evaluation criteria**
- Learn to identify and avoid **biased language**, for example in letters of recommendation, teaching evaluations, etc.
- Consider double-blind reviewing or separate streaming of applications to strive for **equitable success rates**

An inclusive workplace culture is a healthy environment for all.

Establish a positive workplace environment

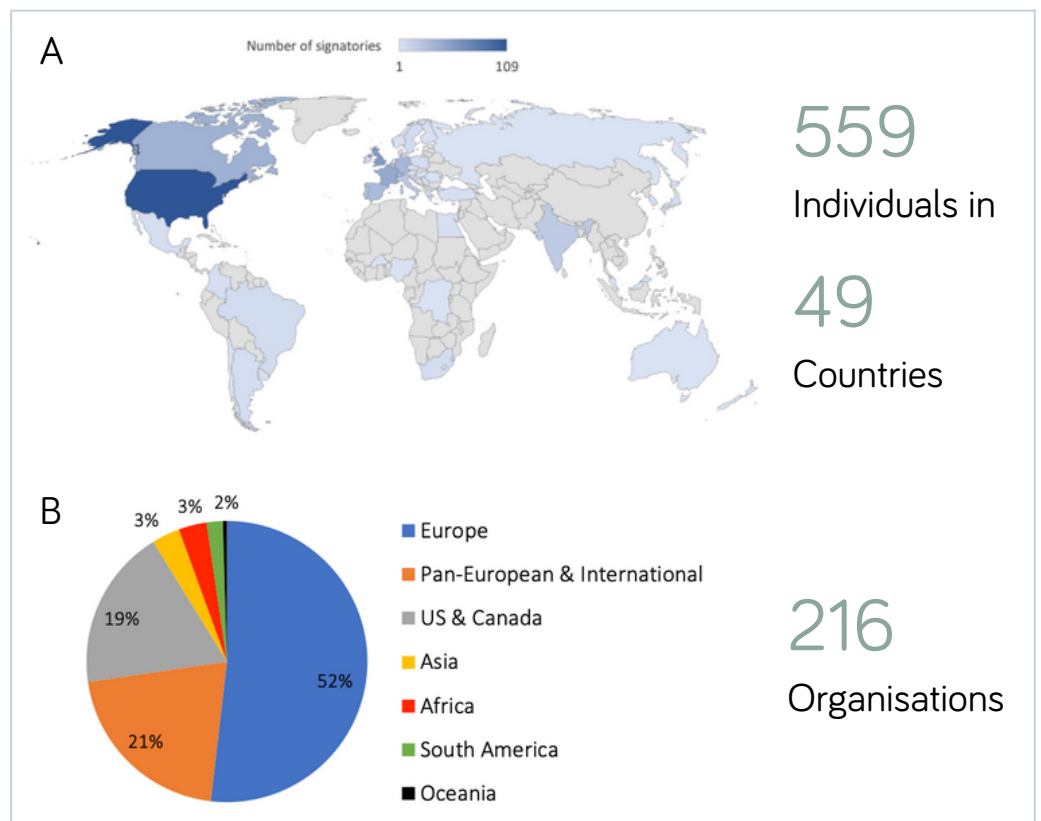
- Adopt and enforce a **code of conduct**
- Follow the [Singapore Statement on Research Integrity](#)
- Endorse the [DORA Declaration on Research Assessment](#)
- Provide **onboarding/ orientation** for new employees to navigate organizational & local cultural norms
- Establish a **mentoring** system

Establish transparent career structures

- Implement clear **advancement** criteria
- Ensure **equal pay** for equivalent positions
- Ensure **equitable service loads** for teaching, advising, and committees
- Explicitly **recognize service** contributions
- Consider broadening **career paths** to provide opportunities beyond PI role

Promote healthy work-life balance

- Schedule all events during **appropriate working hours**
- Allow for **flexible hours** and teleworking where possible
- Facilitate **access to child/family care** (through onsite facilities and/or subsidization where possible)



ALBA Declaration signatories

Geographic distribution of individual (a) and organisational (b) signatories

AWARENESS & ADVOCACY

| BEST PRACTICES

Workshop on racial broaching

In the scientific workforce, racial bias has been shown to influence the ability of faculty to objectively evaluate grant applications and the perception of which research topics are worthy of funding. Despite the evidence, there is hesitancy to talk about race when addressing diversity. This online workshop was therefore organised with the goals of providing agency and empowering the ALBA Team with the right tools to hold difficult and sensitive conversations about race at the workplace. Dr. Sherilynn J Black (Duke University, USA) led the session by outlining the problematics encountered during dialogue about race relations (moral licensing, virtue signalling), the various styles of racial broaching (talking "to" someone and not talking "at" someone) and different strategies to build capacity as a culturally aware leader. The workshop was attended by 39 ALBA members and received extremely positive feedback.

“

Approach the communication with the humility and understanding that you don't have things figured out and that power does not equal competency with racialised conversations.



Dr Sherilynn J Black
Duke University, USA

“

Sherilynn's comments and knowledge were very helpful and gave names to things I have observed often.

Dr Lora Sweeney
ALBA Ambassador



ALBA workshop on racial broaching
Online session for ALBA Board of Directors, Advisors, Ambassadors and Volunteers

Inclusive conference guidelines

Developed by ALBA, this document provides tips for conference organisers and invited speakers on how to meaningfully increase diversity and inclusivity at conferences and reduce barriers to conference attendance and participation.

AWARENESS & ADVOCACY

| GLOBAL DIVERSITY

Diversity and inequity have a different meaning depending on a region or country's culture and history. ALBA launched a global webinar series in 2021 with the goal of obtaining an on-the-ground and multifaceted view of the region- and culture-specific issues faced by underrepresented neuroscientists of different demographics, and also to discuss possible context-specific solutions tailored to these challenges.

Challenges & opportunities for brain scientists in Middle East & North Africa (MENA)

Attendees: 52
Post-event views: 188
Live-captioned & subtitled in Arabic

ALBA-Black in N(euro) networking

Online networking event organised with Black In Neuro (BiN)

Attendees: 60

DEI challenges & solutions in Central & Eastern Europe

Organised at 2021 FENS Regional Meeting

Attendees: 81
Post-event views: 102

Bias in Indian STEM

ALBA-sponsored event at 2021 NeuroFemIndia conference

Attendees: 30
Post-event views: 1293
Subtitled in Hindi, Tamil

What are the main barriers to succeed in Latin America

Based on 2020 IBRO-LARC report "Evaluation of gender inequities in Latin American neuroscience community"

Attendees: 83
Post-event views: 90

What it takes to succeed as a neuroscientist in Africa

Organised with World Women in Neuroscience (WWN)

Attendees: 96
Post-event views: 54

Diversity in brain research in East & South-East Asia: a gender perspective

Attendees: 60
Post-event views: 87

“

Despite being an Argentinean female researcher, I was surprised to discover new factors contributing to inequity in my own region.

“

The webinar on challenges in Africa was very informative, the speakers addressed each topic very well and I loved the practicality in their talks.

AWARENESS & ADVOCACY

| RACE & GENDER DISCRIMINATION

As issues of racial and gender justice have risen to the fore globally, the ALBA Network recognises that structural racism and gender bias are embedded deep in academia and its history. In this context, ALBA organised various online events to highlight the biased and racialised ways of thinking in research and academia, and solutions to increase the representation and visibility of individuals across the racial, gender and sexual diversity spectrum in neuroscience.

Do I have to act like a man to succeed in science?

ALBA partnered with the Heidelberg Pain Consortium to organise a panel discussion at their 2021 Gender and Science Meet between leading female scientists and young investigators. They examined how a diversity of behavioural, social and leadership attributes and attitudes can best be harnessed to create a professionally-balanced and successful environment, with a perspective to foster gender equality in science leadership. With registrations exceeding maximum capacity, this event attracted 485 attendees.



2021 Gender & Science meet
ALBA session panelists

Navigating academia as an LGBTQIA+ neuroscientist

Organised at the 2021 FENS Regional Meeting, this special event featured a panel of established neuroscientists who identify as LGBTQIA+. They discussed the key challenges and biases faced by the community at the workplace and outlined actions to promote equal opportunities and work environments that afford them safety and respectful visibility. With 161 registrations and 91 attendees, this event was a success.



2021 FENS Regional Meeting
ALBA webinar panelists

Artificial Intelligence and Racism – What are the implications for scientific research?

Shakir Mohamed (senior research scientist, DeepMind, UK) gave a keynote speech and illustrated the ways in which race is entangled in AI research using examples from healthcare, language technologies and policing. This was followed by a stimulating discussion with the audience on the types of technologies we can or should develop, bias in data, how we measure performance, and where scientific responsibility lies. The webinar attracted more than 100 registrations and 62 participants.

AWARENESS & ADVOCACY

| PUBLICATIONS

This article introduced the ALBA network to the global community and emphasised the importance of coordinated international efforts to effectively promoting diversity in science.



NEURONLINE
Learning | Discussion | Neuroscience

SfN's home for learning and discussion

Diversity

The Global Scientific Community Needs to Promote Diversity in Research Together

SOURCE: ALBA NETWORK STEERING COMMITTEE

Jul 22, 2021

EJN European Journal of Neuroscience **FENS** Federation of European Neuroscience Societies
The official journal of

EDITORIAL | [Free Access](#)

"Diversity matters series"—The ALBA network

Dana L. Helmreich, Paola Bovolenta, Antoine Adamantidis, John J. Foxe, Yolanda Smith, Vidita A. Vaidya ✉

First published: 29 May 2021 | <https://doi.org/10.1111/ejn.15332> | Citations: 1

The ALBA network was featured in the "Diversity Matters Series" of the European Journal of Neuroscience (EJN), an initiative to present the work of organisations across the world in the neurosciences whose primary commitment is to enhance diversity, equity, and inclusion.

Neuron

Volume 109, Issue 21, 3 November 2021, Pages 3358-3360



NeuroView

COVID-19, stress, and inequities in (neuro)science

Carmen Sandi ^{1,3} ✉, Megan R. Carey ^{2,3} ✉

Chairs of the ALBA network reflected on how the COVID-19 pandemic exacerbated inequalities in science and academia, disproportionately affecting the careers of researchers from underrepresented groups.

**nature
neuroscience**

Comment | [Published: 16 August 2022](#)

Addressing the opportunity gap in the Latin American neuroscience community

[Ana Silva](#) ✉, [Keerthana Iyer](#), [Francesca Cirulli](#), [Elaine Del-Bel](#), [Zulma Dueñas](#), [Edna Matta-Camacho](#),

[José Luis Peña](#), [Gregory J. Quirk](#), [Valeria Ramirez-Castañeda](#) & [Carmen Sandi](#) ✉

Neuroscientists in Latin America face unique challenges tied to their cultural and socioeconomic identity that reduce the impact of their scientific contributions. This commentary reviewed the issues currently faced by the community and outlined key actions to overcome the barriers impeding their global inclusion, visibility and success.

VISIBILITY & RECOGNITION

| ALBA AWARDS

ALBA-FKNE-YIBRO Diversity Access Grants

Founded together with FKNE and Young IBRO, these grants offered waived registration fees to attend the FENS Forum 2020. A total of 286 recipients received the grant: 100 from Africa, 101 from South America, 58 from Asia and 27 from Europe and the Middle East.

ALBA-Elsevier Award Lecture in Brain Sciences

Sponsored by Elsevier, this award recognises outstanding research achievements of an active scientist working at the frontiers of brain research from countries underrepresented among neuroscience publications and conferences. Winners: Prof. Seung-Hee Lee (KR, 2021), Dr María Elena Avale (AR, 2022).

“ This award will be a great opportunity to expose our work to the broader neuroscience community and to promote the careers of myself and other female neuroscientists in Korea.



Prof. Seung Hee Lee
Korea Advanced Institute of Science and Technology



ALBA-FKNE Diversity Prize

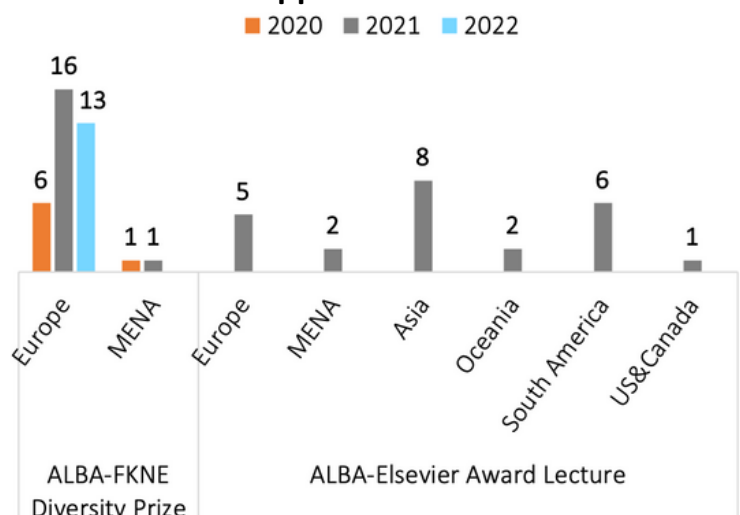
Founded together with the FENS-Kavli Network of Excellence (FKNE) Scholars, this award highlights a scientist or group that has made outstanding contributions to the advancement of diversity, equity and inclusion in the brain sciences. Winners: Prof. Erin Schuman (DE, 2020), Prof. Marian Joëls (NL, 2021), Dr Mahmoud Bukar Maina (UK, 2022).

“ Africa has the greatest genetic diversity, yet African models barely exist in global neuroscience. I hope that this recognition will facilitate new collaboration opportunities in my research on diversifying stem cell models from African residents for neurologic disease research.



Dr Mahmoud Bukar Maina
University of Sussex, UK

Total applications received



VISIBILITY & RECOGNITION

| INTERSECTIONAL ROLE MODELS

ALBA Diversity Podcast

The ALBA diversity podcast, an initiative by the ALBA Promotion of Diversity Task Force, highlights diverse profiles of neuroscientists across different career stages, professional paths and backgrounds, to better understand their personal journeys, and what keeps them going as individuals and as neuroscientists in today's world.

ALBA's podcaster, neuroscientist and science communicator Dr. Shruti Muralidhar, interviewed researchers who emigrated from their home country and became a minority in their work country, discussing the kinds of barriers they had to overcome while establishing their careers. Migration being the central theme, all episodes underlined the importance of recognising one's own implicit biases and promoting a research culture that is inclusive of individuals that lie at the intersection of multiple identities. All episodes are accompanied by an English transcript and can be streamed or downloaded on standard podcast listening apps.

“

Awards are a recognition of your science and mentorship, but the other side is also to inspire young people.



Prof. Huda Zoghbi
Baylor College of Medicine

“

Being a religious person is not contradictory to being a scientist. Science is my way of thinking. Religion is my way of living.



Dr Maryam Ziaei
Norwegian University of Science and Technology

“

I was aware that I had skills due to my disability that others did not.



Dr Noèlia Fernández Castillo
University of Barcelona

“

One of the issues with being an LGBTQ+ individual in STEM is the invisibility.



Prof. Mehmet Kurt
University of Washington

12

Episodes

1063

Total
downloads

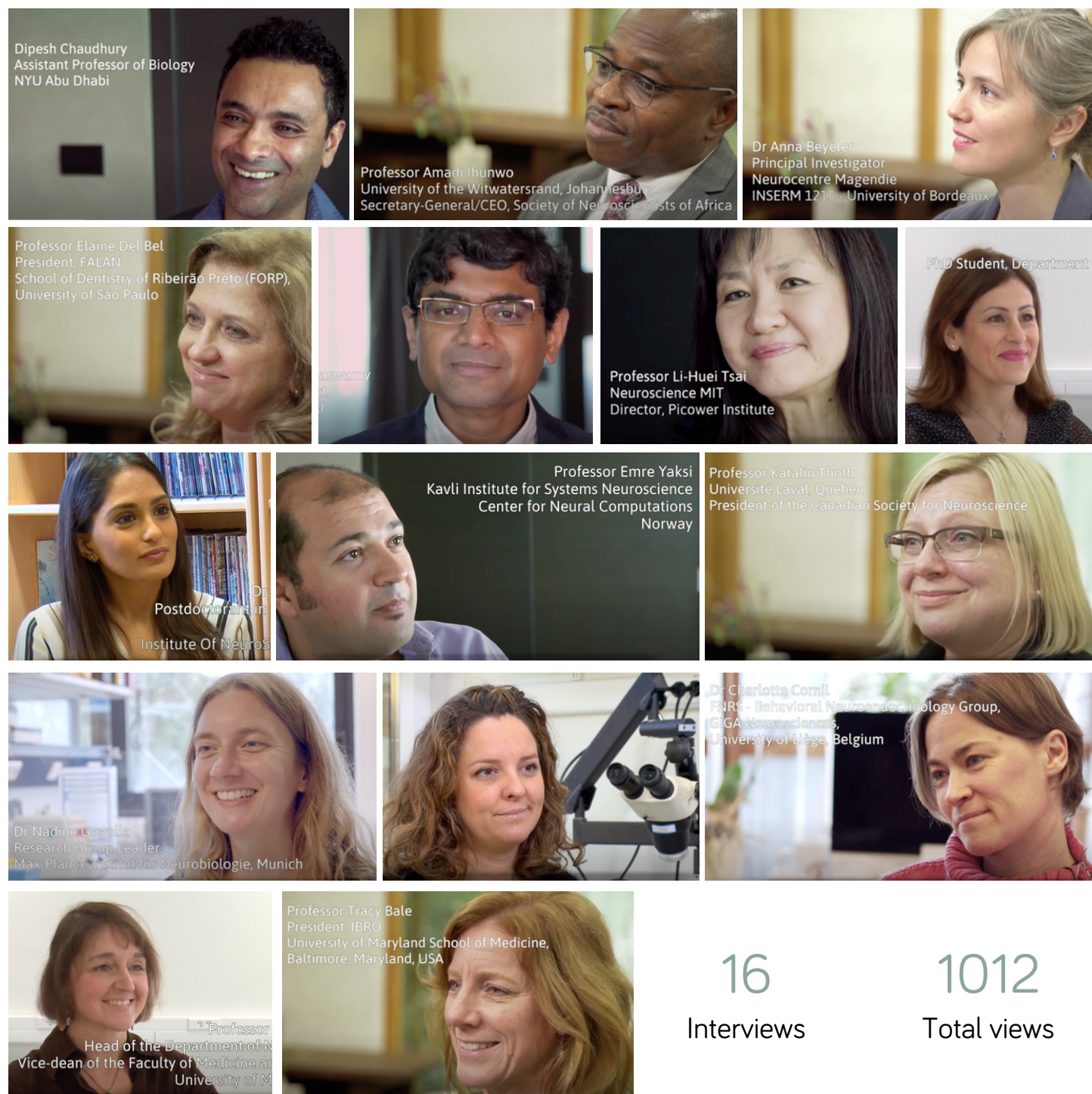
50

Countries
reached

VISIBILITY & RECOGNITION

| HIGHLIGHTING SUCCESS STORIES

ALBA Interview series



16
Interviews

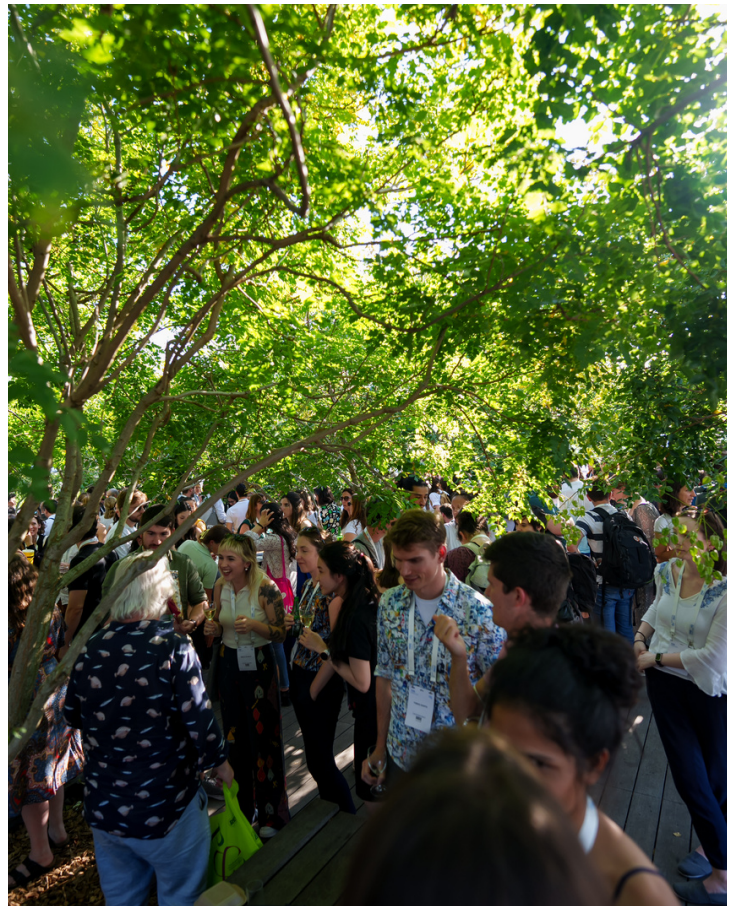
1012
Total views



With the help of a grant from Fédération Wallonie-Bruxelles, the ALBA Network conducted short interviews of diverse profiles of scientists explaining their research interests, challenges and biases faced as they progressed in their career paths. The videos are available on ALBA's YouTube channel in English and French.

NETWORKING

| COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT



35

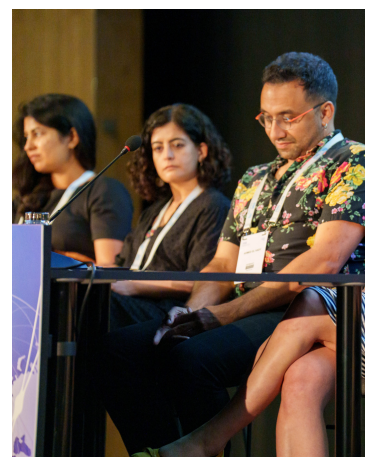
ALBA events at international conferences

10

Online events

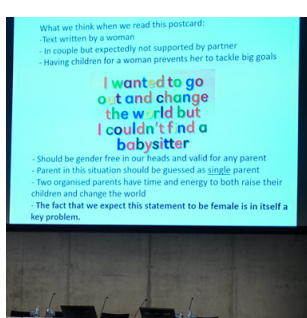
13

Speaking engagements



NETWORKING

| COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT



OUR PARTNERS & ALLIES

| TESTIMONIALS

As neuroscientists in post-colonial Africa where inequality, cultural barriers, stigmatisation of gender-fluid, minority and disabled scientists are still real limiting factors to the success of brain scientists, we have benefited immensely from ALBA's promotion of inclusivity, diversity, and equity in the region. ALBA webinars and events have started some important conversations and reflections on challenges that neuroscientists face in our region and how we can overcome them.

Dr Rachael Dangarembizi

University of Cape Town, Member of IBRO-ARC

The visibility of Colegio Colombiano de Neurociencias (COLNE) as an organisation that brings together scientists and promotes the development of neuroscience in Colombia, has had greater participation and visibility thanks to the support of ALBA, with whom we are working on projects that allow our diaspora to return and contribute to academic, scientific and social of our country.

Dr Zulma Dueñas

National University of Colombia

Supporting ALBA network is key. ALBA has a unique role in coordinating, organising and supporting a long needed change to increase diversity in academia. As a mid-career female (and foreign) PI, one can easily feel lost and without sufficient handles to guide any meaningful change within one's institute. ALBA offers fantastic resources to facilitate such actions.

Dr Aniko Korosi

University of Amsterdam

ALBA network provides excellent educational and bibliographic resources. Inspired by ALBA's event on gender bias, we organised our very own Gender Bias workshop to share this knowledge within our own community and throughout France. Owing to the ALBA network, we were able to transform this grassroots movement into an institutional advisory committee.

Gender Equity Committee

Paris Brain Institute

The founding of the ALBA network was a decisive step in the right direction and in the last years has already significantly contributed on individual as well as societal levels to promote best practices, highlight individuals as well as groups endorsing those practices and offer a contact point for scientists worldwide. I believe it is therefore of greatest importance to continue this program, as it is still very much needed and anything other than a renewal of the ALBA program would be a devastating signal.

Dr Mathias Schmidt

Max Planck Institute of Psychiatry,
EBBS Past-President

As President of the Swiss Society for Neuroscience (SSN), I am enthusiastic about the ALBA Network's missions and the success it has already had. Switzerland has been chosen for an ALBA pilot project to map diversity in the Swiss neuroscience community. This project has received nation-wide support and it is endorsed by the SSN.

Dr Anita Lüthi

University of Lausanne, SSN President

OUR PARTNERS & ALLIES

| TESTIMONIALS

The ALBA Network has been instrumental in prompting the European Behavioural Pharmacology Society (EBPS) to think more deeply about diversity, equity, and inclusion. In particular, the emphasis on collecting data in order to identify problem areas and generate a plan for improvement was especially important for the leadership of EBPS to hear.

Dr Shelly Flagel

University of Michigan, EBPS President-Elect

By fostering and supporting practices to counteract bias, ALBA is promoting a major change in the brain science community. This consist in both enhancing equity and inclusion and improving the quality of science by making the contributions of minorities emerge. In such a short time frame, ALBA has made an incredible impact on the scientific community that will be even greater in the near future.

Dr Igor Branchi

Istituto Superiore di Sanità, EBBS President

The activities of the ALBA Network are a visible sign - for our community and the outer world - that we do care about our colleagues who could face adverse effects on their careers because of their gender, race, immigration status, or faith. Through ALBA's actions, some long-standing, systemic problems with representation in our community are acknowledged and addressed, ensuring that we attract talent from all walks of life, making us all more dynamic and productive.

Dr Ewelina Knapska

Nencki Institute of Experimental Biology,
Polish Neuroscience Society Vice President

Supporting ALBA in its efforts to advocate for diversity and equity is crucial for two main reasons: First, science only thrives when based on diverse ideas. Second, there is a major gap in promoting and recognising the efforts of women and other underrepresented groups in neuroscience. ALBA has proven its ability to have a major impact on both fronts.

Dr Yiota Poirazi

Institute of Molecular Biology
and Biotechnology

ALBA network provides a forum to reflect on discrimination and gender issues in brain research, and best practices on how to avoid them. These are central themes for improving the neuroscience research culture. It is vital that the work initiated by ALBA is continued, to guarantee that scientists and institutions have independent support to voice and handle such relevant issues.

Dr Ana Luisa Carvalho

University of Coimbra

As a scientist of south Indian ethnicity in Europe, I have first-hand experience of how the academic environment can be unwelcoming, unfair and inequitable because of not fitting into a particular stereotype. The ALBA network enabled me to build on my own meaning-making as a minority scientist to lead a working group to promote diversity and inclusion. ALBA is a fundamental and indispensable catalyst for DEI in global neuroscience."

Dr Srikanth Ramaswamy

Newcastle University



ALBA NETWORK

IMPACT REPORT 2019-2022

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The ALBA Network is supported by

FENS

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Neuroscience
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