Women in Science – 3rd Erlangen Symposium

From the Swiss Mountains to Become Chair of the School of Materials Science and Engineering at the Georgia Institute of Technology: "Following Ones Dreams"

Natalie Stingelin[1]

[1]Georgia Institute of Technology, Ferst Drive, 30332 Atlanta, GA, U.S.A.
natalie.stingelin@gatech.edu

An overview of my journey is given, growing up in a small Swiss mountain town, to becoming a student at ETH Zurich, postdoc at Cambridge University, researcher at Philips Research in Eindhoven, to Professor, first in London, then across the globe in Atlanta – all propelled by scientific curiosity and the desire to educate. Examples of my research to turn around the reputation of plastics are also delivered, presenting research into 'cool' polymers for cars and buildings aimed to reduce the need for air conditioning and improve energy efficiency. Whilst there is significant potential in environmental applications of these materials, efforts are still required to design plastics of desired functions. Clearly, the idea that plastics could play a big part in a more sustainable future world might seem far-fetched, with seabirds trapped in multipack drink rings, and mid-ocean islands of indestructible rubbish, however, here it is shown that new smart plastics may yet rescue the reputation of this all-consuming 20th and 21st century material.