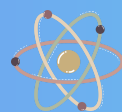




HANAE BOULEHJOUR



Hanae Boulehjour is a PhD student at the University of the Basque Country and Donostia International Physics Centre. Her current research focuses on dilanthanide systems as potential qubits, involving computational and coordination chemistry methods.



Where did you study?

I am from Italy so I studied there. I did my Bachelor's Degree in Chemistry at the University of Turin. Afterwards, I went to the University of Bordeaux (France) where I obtained my Master's degree in Theoretical and Quantum Chemistry. And currently I am doing my PhD at the University of the Basque Country in Donostia.



What is difficult learn science being a girl?

Personally I did not have any difficulties in learning science being a girl.



How many girls were in class with you?



Well, at the Bachelor's degree we were a lot of girls in class but then, when I went to do my Master's degree we were only 4 out of 12 girls. We were the minority.



Why did you come to Donostia?

I discovered Donostia in 2022. I came here to do an internship for six months. But I fell in love with The Basque Country and the Basque Culture and I had the opportunity to do my PhD here, so I accepted the offer. But definitely, because I loved the Basque Country.



What are you doing now?

I am working on my PhD. My project is based on the properties of quantum chemistry. For instance, a computer works on bits but we have arrived at the limits of what we can do nowadays, so we are working on a superior form of bits called qubits and I use the properties of quantum chemistry for that.



Why is chemistry important?

The interesting thing about chemistry is that everything around you is chemistry. Everything is made up of molecules and atoms, therefore everything can be broken down into chemistry. But I would not say that chemistry is more important than other fields.



What is the most difficult thing in your job?

The most difficult thing is to figure out what changes you have to do to improve in order to get what you want. You can spend a week just reading literature about what people before you have done to understand what you can improve.



Which is the best place for a scientist to work?

That is a very wide question. There are schools that have more reputation but it really depends on the field. I know that there are a lot of universities in the USA and Canada which got a lot of fame, but honestly the level of Europe is quite high. And also in Japan they are very advanced on things we are working on.



Do you earn the same salary as a man?

I never thought about this but I guess so. In my case since it is a grant from the government it is the same for everyone. In this case there is no difference between men or women.



Who is your favourite scientist? Why?

Marie Curie! She discovered the X-ray and she was a woman. As a woman in science I feel more related to her. But all scientists are important because you have to take into account all the work has been done before, so it is like a collective effort.



Is it important for a scientist to know English?

Nowadays if you want to work on science you have to know English. Because you have to communicate with scientists all over the world and in my case I am writing my PhD in English.



Did your family support you with your studies?



Yes, they did. My parents gave me a message which I want to share with you: "you have a lot of choices, you can continue studying or you can stop school and go working, you have a lot of open possibilities and no one is better than the other".



Do you think it is important for girls to have scientific female models?

I do not know if it is important, for me it helped me. It is sad because in history women were not allowed to even go close to science and many discoveries would have been made before if women were allowed to do science.



Where do you see yourself in ten years?

I honestly don't know. I don't know if I will continue researching or if I will work for a private company. Making a living researching is an utopia because you have to look for funds and even if you get the money they are expecting results. So I think that I will switch to a private company but it could change.

What advice would you give to a girl who wants to become a scientist?



The advice that I would give to everybody is to be really curious and to believe in yourself.



KIMIKA
FAKULTATEA
FACULTAD
DE QUÍMICA

50
URTE
AÑOS

