

## Sylvia Ekström

Elargis tes Horizons – 7 November 2026

### Introductory Lecture: **Discovering the secrets of the stars**

What if your passion could change your life, even if you discovered it later in life? This is the story of Sylvia Ekström, an astrophysicist and professor at the University of Geneva. Before dedicating herself to the stars, she worked as a midwife for eleven years! At the age of 33, her curiosity about the Universe led her to return to her physics studies and eventually specialize in astrophysics.



Today, she studies and models the lives of massive stars: their birth, evolution, and sometimes spectacular deaths. Her research helps us understand how stars produce the chemical elements that make up our planet... and all living things.

Passionate about sharing knowledge, Sylvia Ekström also enjoys explaining the mysteries of the Universe to the general public. She is notably the author of the book *100,000 billion billion stars*, published in 2025.

Her journey reminds us that it is never too late to learn, change direction, and follow our curiosity!

### 4 questions for Sylvia

- **Complete the sentence: As a child, I wanted to be...** An ethologist, studying animal behavior. I already imagined myself among wild animals in Africa!
- **Complete the sentence: My life as a student...** I loved discovering the elegance of the mathematical description of the world.
- **What qualities make a good scientist?** Curiosity, curiosity, and curiosity. Never settle for saying “I don’t know,” but always move towards asking, “How can I come to understand?”
- **What advice would you give to young girls today?** Follow your heart and study what excites you, without worrying too much about where you will be tomorrow. You build your life and create opportunities as you go.