Gender equality and Young Minds

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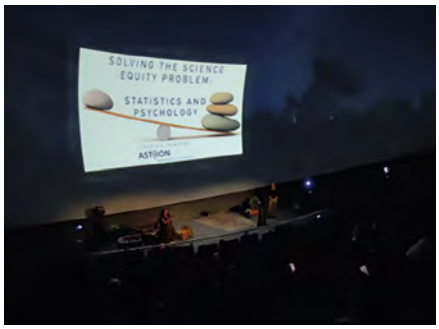
Since the beginning of history, women have been part of science and technology and their contribution has been key to the progress of these disciplines. However, in most cases, their achievements and discoveries have been systematically ignored and they have rarely received the recognition they deserve.

The gender gap does not start with careers or the first job opportunities, it starts in childhood. From a young age, boys and girls are exposed to a series of stereotypes and prejudices linked to gender roles that condition their development and behaviour. In recognition of this reality, in December 2015, the United Nations General Assembly designated 11 February as the International Day of Women and Girls in Science with the intention of highlighting the role of women in the history of science and raising awareness of the lack of parity in STEM (Science, Technology, Engineering, and Mathematics) careers.

In this regard, the Young Minds (YM) sections actively participate and organize multiple events to emphasize and raise awareness of this issue. For example, the Groningen section, from the Netherlands, celebrates girls and women in science through their own tradition of organizing a yearly "International Day of Women and Girls in Science" event. The 2024 edition featured three distinguished speakers, namely Patricia Piers (Head of R&D, Ophthalmic Implants, Johnson & Johnson Surgical Vision), Jacquelien M.A. Scherpen (the Rector Magnificus of Groningen University), and Jessica Dempsey (director of ASTRON, the Netherlands Institute for Radio Astronomy). The three inspiring women spoke about the power of mentorship and having (male) allies towards the success of women in STEM. They also explained how and why achieving a more equitable workplace should be an active consideration in policy-making.

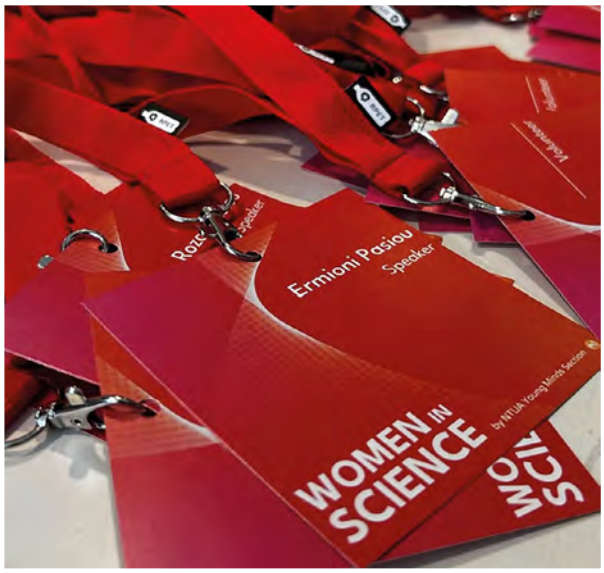


▲ FIG. 1: The "International Day of Women and Girls in Science" event organized by the Groningen YM section.

Physics League, another YM section, from Valladolid, Spain, also has a yearly activity focused on gender equality. In this case, they organize an event for teenage girls to bring physics closer to them. They collaborate with a foundation that created the project "STEM Talent Girl", an innovative, high-impact educational project that seeks to attract, develop and stimulate the scientific and technological talent of girls and young women in secondary school, high school and university. With experiments of electromagnetism, thermodynamics and optics the group of teenage girls enjoyed a different afternoon after their classes and could meet face-to-face with women working and studying STEM related mayors.

To continue with some more examples, NTUA Young Minds, from Athens, Greece, organized a full event featuring an online Women in Science Talk Series and a live Celebration of Women in Science. The talk series highlighted the remarkable achievements of pioneering women in science, shared inspiring stories, and promoted gender equality in STEM, while the celebration included expert lectures, a poster

▼ FIG. 2: Physics League during the physics experimental demonstrations in the "STEM Talent Girl" activity.



▲ FIG. 3: The credentials prepared for the women in science event organized by NTUA Young Minds.

session and science slams showcasing graduate research, speed mentoring sessions, interactive workshops and kiosks from collaborating teams and organizations. And Luzada YM, from Santiago, Spain, also has a gender equality yearly event named "Ultra-violetas". In the latest edition they focused on the differences between gender in education and how they condition the academic path of the students. The event had two parts, with a series of lectures about gender roles in education and a round table where all thoughts and concerns were put in common. Needless to say that the event was a success, as all the ones mentioned above.

We are proud of the YM sections being present and involved in visualizing the gender equality problem in STEM and collaborating in making some steps towards a better and more equal society. ■

▼ FIG. 4: Speakers of the "Ultra-violetas" event organized by Luzada.