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NEWSLETTER

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WiTEC Board Meeting in Barcelona



On October 19th 2012 we had our second WiTEC Association meeting of the year in Barcelona. As WiTEC's Secretary, I would like to emphasize two very important aspects of this reunion.

After a long time all partners from across Europe who belong to WiTEC had the opportunity to meet. This was an important moment, as we were able to discuss our association's future and from the institutions and companies present we could see the strong potential that we have in WiTEC. Our aims as an association are very clear and they are still valid, but we want to bring new ways of working, new products and new standards of participation that allow us to keep motivating the association's actions. Not only that but we want to incorporate new members who can also develop projects and products through WiTEC, who can be a further encouragement to women across Europe to get involved in technological and scientific fields.

Our second success of this meeting in Barcelona was the approval of a new member from the Swiss University of Applied Sciences (HES-SO). Their involvement represents an important contribution to the potential for the ideas and suggestions which will help to move WiTEC

WiTEC Secretariat

WiTEC-the Netherlands organised the First Conference for Network Gender and STEM: Educational and Occupational Pathways and Participation



VHTO, the Dutch national expert organisation on girls and women in science and technology makes an effort in many different ways to increase female involvement in science and technology in The Netherlands with VHTO participating in various international networks. This leads to international knowledge, benchmarking and cooperation in projects which cross transnational boundaries. One of those

networks is the 'Network Gender and STEM'. In 2007, Associate Professor Helen Watt from Monash University in Australia was invited as a key speaker at a VHTO conference. Our discussions centred around the multitude of research studies and findings which concern gender and STEM participation, but also highlighted that different studies tend to focus on a single or too few aspects. We agreed it would have increased value if the relevant research results of the last few years could be unified, in order to be able to gain a more coherent view concerning gender and STEM (Science/Technology/Engineering/Mathematics) from childhood to labour market. With this in mind, we have formed our Network on this subject with members who undertake related research.

Objectives of the Network are:

- to gain more insight into the various, closely connected aspects of career choices and professional careers of girls/women (and boys/men) in the direction of STEM;
- to detect new approaches to actually improve female underrepresentation in STEM.

The first Gender and STEM Educational and Occupational Pathways and Participation Network Conference was held on 5th and 6th September 2012. Professor Jacquelynne Eccles from the University of Michigan launched the network at the conference. More than 80 researchers and policy makers who are concerned with the subject attended the symposia and panel discussions. The conference brought together academics, teachers, policy makers, experts and the public from across 18 different countries, to explore the missing pieces of the 'jigsaw puzzle': what do we not yet know that we need to, relating to women and STEM?

Girls and women progressively opt out of STEM subjects, studies and careers. Several researchers suggest there is a 'sex-based filter' in the pipeline from secondary education, through university and finally in STEM jobs, that makes that women leak from the stream and leaves only men to arrive at the end of the pipeline.

In the Gender & STEM Network we intend to discuss the evidence along the full length of the pipeline; from participants and other research as well as the implications for policy and potential

interventions:

- Neurobiology: STEM talent (environmental perception of girls; fostering their talent), sex differences and similarities
- Stereotyping: from early childhood (through parents and environment)
- Primary education: STEM in primary schools, female teachers, teacher stereotyping, the image of STEM held by boys and girls
- Secondary education: achievements of boys and girls in STEM subjects, attitudes of boys and girls to STEM subjects, choice of subjects, teacher stereotyping, curriculum, pedagogy and student-teacher interaction, image held by boys and girls of STEM university courses/jobs/professional careers, role models
- University: choice of courses (STEM or non-STEM), teacher stereotyping, curriculum, pedagogy and student-teacher interaction, image held by boys and girls of professional STEM jobs and careers, role models
- Professional careers (again STEM or non-STEM), career opportunities and support.



History has shown that the participation of women in STEM can be changed by policy. For effective interventions we should focus on questions like: What career choices do girls and women actually make and why (useful for interventions that aim at opting in), rather than: Why are there less women than men in STEM (for interventions aiming at dropping out)? So we'll have to change girls' view of what engineers do, with the help of inspiring role models. And go into the classroom and show the children/students what an engineer really is/does/can do. We should do so from an early age, because stereotypical images already start to develop in infancy.

Find out more about VHTO: [click here](#)

Find out more about the network and the summary (proceedings) of the conference: [click here](#)

WiTEC The Netherlands



Gender & STEM Network Conference

"A Personal View"

"It has been a groundbreaking event in which were presented and discussed studies and research over the past four years, carried out by research teams from universities across Europe, North America and Australia. All had a common denominator: the focus of gender differences in choosing or rejecting STEM studies. The aim being to obtain a broad, deep cross-section of society which represents the period from infancy to becoming a professional in the fields of Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics (STEM).

Why undertake these studies? For what purpose? What have been the results? Do we care about them even if we are professionals in other fields of knowledge?



One of the most important findings was the understanding, once again, that young women in university do not get involved in the study of science, technology, engineering and mathematics. The question is why not? Reports presented at the First Congress Gender & STEM showed that women not only showed little interest but actually shied away from these subjects and avoided them from secondary school onwards, especially when the time came to decide on their career. From these results, other questions arise: do they perceive that within these areas of knowledge only men can be successful? Do young girls in their pre-college years feel that they have sufficient personal or intellectual resources to pursue these studies?

Throughout the two-day Congress the differences between boys and girls were demonstrated. When choosing their studies decisions are based primarily on what each gender considers "what must be done". For boys this is engineering and mathematics, for girls; medicine and life sciences. Thus, these "gender mandates" evidently still play a primary role in career choice. Furthermore, when we say gender mandates, we are talking about social influences in trans-generationally preset roles, and cultural stereotypes that are still firmly rooted in the subjective identity of both women and men.

This situation has hardly changed over more recent decades, neither in our country nor in our environment, despite the enormous changes that have taken place in patriarchal society. Women now exert a great number and variety of professions, that only fifty years ago were exclusively occupied by men. However, in the field called STEM, this has not changed, it is perhaps getting worse!, We accept it quite naturally, and even say, with indifference, especially us women, 'that if the progress in the development of the economy, engineering, science and technology has a bright future it is due to the incessant participation of women in society, technology and knowledge'.

This so palpable a fact, that women are absent from the scientific, technological and mathematical fields, has large and serious social consequences. It keeps us away from managerial positions, and other positions of responsibility in public and private organizations. To sum up, it is much more difficult for us to be represented in areas where decisions must be made, strategic decisions which will help to build a less patriarchal and more egalitarian social structure".

Written by **Regina Bayo-Borràs**,
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- on behalf of -

WiTEC Spain

Additional Features



Science it's a girl thing! is a site within first campaign from EU Commissioner for research and innovation, Máire Geoghegan-Quinn, who launched the 'Women in Research and Innovation' campaign to encourage more women to choose research careers.

Check more info [here](#)



dib is a german association of and for women that work in engineering or study engineering. dib is dedicated to achieving equal opportunities for women in education and employment.

Check more info [here](#)



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