61<sup>st</sup> Session of the Commission on the Status of Women

#STEM

"Promoting STEM as an essential factor for women’s labor inclusion and career advancement"

Wednesday, 15 March 2017, from 12:00 – 1:45 PM

Permanent Mission of Italy to the UN

Please RSVP [HERE](#)

Background

One of the existing gender stereotypes in the Italian education system is a supposed poor ability of girl students in STEM disciplines (Science, Technology, Engineering, Mathematics) leading to a gender gap in both studies and career choices in these sectors, which causes the loss of business opportunities offered in such productive areas and related to the new technologies.

Recent data shows a low participation of girls and women in technical and scientific schools and universities. This underlines the difficulties of women in accessing such careers, that represent the greatest employment opportunities for the future.

According to a survey carried by Microsoft over 11,500 women between the ages of 11 and 30 in 12 countries across Europe<sup>1</sup>, most girls become interested in STEM at the age of 11-and-a-half but this starts to wane by the age of 15. Indeed, in this particular stage of life, girl students are probably most in need of educational

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<sup>1</sup> “Why Europe’s girls aren’t studying STEM” - [https://news.microsoft.com/europe/features/dont-european-girls-like-science-technology/#sm.0002lrn3j1719diuz1gtixxg8gsj9#oYFMElhAU4l2z3mos.97](https://news.microsoft.com/europe/features/dont-european-girls-like-science-technology/#sm.0002lrn3j1719diuz1gtixxg8gsj9#oYFMElhAU4l2z3mos.97)
guidance and lack trust in themselves. In this context, a special role can be played by positive examples and models girl students can look at to get inspired and increase their self-confidence.

It is therefore essential to encourage girls and young women to choose educational fields and occupations in accordance with their abilities and skills, not based on gender stereotypes, particularly in STEM, also through the presentation of positive role models able to show girl students the most enthusiastic aspects of their job and increase students’ awareness about paths into science, their educational path and choices and how it led to their current work.

In 2016, Italy started specific initiatives dedicated to students attending primary and secondary schools, with the aim of:

- Increasing their interest in the STEM subjects and combating gender stereotypes in education;
- Facilitating women's access to scientific and technical careers and professions with higher payment levels;
- Exploiting the potential of specific capabilities of women in these areas.

Through the initiative "STEM Month – Women want to count", the Italian Government involved all Italian schools in the promotion of a set of events and initiatives (organized in February as a dedicated month) aiming at triggering debate on the subject, encouraging students to undertake STEM subjects, and combating gender stereotypes and discrimination in schools, also through the support of associations and other stakeholders.

Following the success of the initiative in the business world, a list of stakeholders (which includes universities and research institutions, associations, companies, foundations and other public and private entities with expertise in the areas of mathematics, science and technology culture, computer science and coding) willing to work with the Italian Government on initiatives in STEM subjects was set up within the Department for Equal Opportunities. Such initiatives include the forthcoming organization of summer camps for the study of science, mathematics, computer science and coding.

Furthermore, the Italian Government is currently carrying out the TRIGGER (Transforming Institutions by Gendering contents and Gaining Equality in Research) Project, which aims at promoting systemic actions designed to have a deep, long-lasting and widespread impact at all the different levels in the 5 research organisations involved. Indeed, building on the results of earlier projects, integrated actions are being implemented within each partner university to address different aspects of gender inequality in science in order to:

1) Create a women-friendly working environment;
2) Integrate the gender dimension in the contents and methods of scientific research;
3) Promote women’s scientific leadership at different levels.

Considering that the reduction of inequalities in the access to the professions related to technology and research are in line with the targets included in the sustainable development goals and that "Women’s economic empowerment in the changing world of work” will be the priority theme of the 61st session of the United Nations Commission on the Status of Women, the Italian Government is organizing a specific side event during which the best practices implemented by Italy and other countries will be shared with the participation and involvement of relevant international partners and popular stakeholders and role models.
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<tr>
<th>Time</th>
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| 12:00 – 12:15 | Introduction             | Ms. Monica Parrella  
Director General, Department for Equal Opportunities, Presidency of the  
Council of Ministers, Italy                                                                 |
| 12:15 – 12:30 | Speaker                  | Ms. Samantha Cristoforetti  
European Space Agency (ESA) astronaut and Captain of the Italian Air Force                      |
| 12:30 – 12:45 | “STEM” Initiatives       | Ms Sarah-Jane King  
Deputy Head of Unit of the  
Gender Equality Unit - DG Justice and Consumers, European Commission                           |
| 12:45 – 1:00 |                          | Ms. Kyoko Hokugo  
Director of Gender Mainstreaming Division, Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Japan                  |
| 1:00-1:20 | “STEM” Initiatives       | Ms. Donatella Solda-Kutzmann  
Executive Director, Cabinet Office of the  
Ministry for Education, University and Research, Italy                                           |
| 1:20 – 1:35 |                          | Ms. Virginia Valian  
Distinguished Professor, Psychology and Linguistics, Hunter College and CUNY Graduate - US   |
| 1:35-1:45 |                          | Ms. Elena Falcomatà and Mr. Marino Di Nardo  
Gender expert – Department for Equal Opportunities – Presidency of the  
Council of Ministers, Italy                                                                   |
|          | Moderator                | Mr. Christian Veske  
Stakeholder Relations Coordinator – EIGE                                                             |