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66th Commission on the Status of Women STEM education as a stepping-stone towards gender transformative climate change policies

**Tuesday, 15 March 2022, 11:30 AM-1:00 PM EDT (4:30-6:00 PM CET)
Online**

Side-Event co-organised by the Council of Europe and Italy, and co-sponsored by Austria, the United Kingdom and the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization.

11:30 AM Opening remarks

Elena Bonetti, Minister for Equal Opportunities and Family, Italy
Claudia Luciani, Director of Human Dignity, Equality and Governance, Council of Europe
Susanne Raab, Federal Minister for Women, Family, Integration and Media, Austria
Baroness Deborah Stedman-Scott, Minister for Women, United Kingdom
Shamila Nair-Bedouelle, Assistant Director General for Natural Science, United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization
Maria Elena Boschi, member of the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe, Committee on Equality and Non-Discrimination, Sub-Committee on Gender Equality

11:50 AM Panel discussion

Anna Cabré, Research Associate, University of Pennsylvania, United States of America
Antara Ganguli, Director of the United Nations Girls Education Initiative (UNGEI)
Loveth Imo, Chief Operating Officer, WAAW Foundation – Working to Advance STEM education for African Women, Nigeria
Faith Karanja, Chair and Associate Professor, Department of Geospatial and Space Technology, University of Nairobi, Kenya
Jeanne Lenders, Policy Officer, Gender Sector, European Commission, Directorate-General for Research and Innovation
Karen Morrow, Professor, Hillary Rodham School of Law, Swansea University, United Kingdom
Linda Laura Sabbadini, Chair of Women20, Italy

12:40 PM Interactive session

12:55 PM Closing remarks

Elena Bonetti, Minister for Equal Opportunities and Family, Italy

Moderator: Valeria Robecco, journalist, President of the UN Correspondents Association

The conference livestream can be followed via
[BlueJeans link](#)/[UN TV link](#)/ <https://www.facebook.com/CoEDemocracy>

Rationale

Gender equality is a prerequisite for sustainable development and the efficient management of climate challenges. Women and girls are the best sources of knowledge of their own circumstances and needs, therefore should be consulted in all issues related to them. Women are powerful agents of change who, on the basis of full participation, can formulate and execute efficient climate strategies and/or solutions in relation to adaptation and mitigation and can build climate resilience as a product of their diverse areas of experience and practical knowledge across sectors.¹

Currently, the majority of climate change adaptation and mitigation policies are based on scientific and technical research and knowledge produced in the fields of Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics (STEM). Such framing of climate change adaptation and mitigation solutions privilege STEM-professions, while downplaying social interpretation, contextual considerations and social science professions. From gender equality perspectives, such framing raises the issues of limitations and barriers for women's access and presence in education, research and decision-making in climate-change related sectors, also fueled by the persistent presence of gender stereotypes.

Numerous analyses based on sex-disaggregated data² show that STEM studies and research fields are, to a great extent, dominated by men, and that women face significant challenges and various types of barriers when aiming for high and prestigious academic positions in these fields. Social sciences and humanities are sectors in which women are more prominent, but they offer fewer opportunities to penetrate the new climate-related research and employment sectors.

Most policy-makers active on issues related to the climate (environment, transport, energy, infrastructure, innovation) have economic or engineering backgrounds.³ They tend to focus on societal costs and technical solutions rather than the social context when addressing climate change.⁴ The recent climate change policies tend to create employment in sectors such as energy, construction, industry, mobility and forestry, which are male-dominated. Conversely, job opportunities in sectors such as consumer services, tourism and catering, which are female-dominated, are tending to decrease.⁵

The needs of our changing times and societies are diverse and the solutions needed to address climate change should be based on a broader pool of diverse and creative proposals. Women's presence in research and employment in sectors related to climate change is crucial in order to break the cycle of male-domination, to bring in greater diversity of perspectives and solutions, and to promote a more gender-balanced outlook on science.

The [2021 World Forum for Democracy of the Council of Europe](#) concluded that financial, educational and social interventions are key to the increase of women's participation in assemblies and climate-related decision-making. The [Council of Europe Gender Equality Strategy for 2018-2023](#) focuses on achieving balanced participation of women and men in political and public decision-making and aims to tackle the gender imbalance in decision making in all sectors, as it constitutes an obstacle to women's empowerment and an impediment for sustainable development.

¹ [European Parliament Report \(2018\) on women, gender equality and climate change](#)

² European Commission (2021): SHE Figures <https://ec.europa.eu/assets/rtd/shefigures2021/index.html>; OECD (2019): *Why don't more girls choose STEM careers?* <https://www.oecd.org/gender/data/why-dont-more-girls-choose-stem-careers.htm>

³ European Institute for Gender Equality (2021): Decision-making in environment and climate change: women woefully under-represented in the EU Member States, in Gender Statistics Database, https://eige.europa.eu/gender-statistics/dgs/browse/wmidm/wmidm_env/wmidm_env_nat

IUCN (2015): Gender and climate change. Strengthening climate action by promoting gender equality, at <https://www.iucn.org/resources/issues-briefs/gender-and-climate-change>

⁴ Diana Liverman et al (2022): Survey of gender bias in the IPCC, in Nature, Vol 602, 30-32 (2022), <https://www.nature.com/articles/d41586-022-00208-1>

⁵ Sørensen, A. K. (2019), Gender segregation in the Nordic labour market. Retrieved from: <https://nordics.info/show/artikel/gender-segregation-of-nordic-labour>; Eurofound and European Commission Joint Research Centre (2021): European Jobs Monitor 2021: Gender gaps and the employment structure, <https://www.eurofound.europa.eu/publications/report/2021/european-jobs-monitor-2021-gender-gaps-and-the-employment-structure>

On the occasion of the first [G20 Conference on Women's Empowerment held in Italy in 2021](#) it was clearly stated that the inclusion of women and girls in STEM disciplines is also functional to the promotion of a gender perspective in the development of the technologies necessary for energy transition, environmental preservation, and the fight against climate change.

The protection and promotion of women's fundamental rights is at the heart of Italy's current [Presidency of the Committee of Ministers of the Council of Europe](#). Women's participation in the labour market, family support services and the promotion of leadership roles for women in the economy and society must be priority themes in recovery programmes, which must be devised with the full involvement of women in the decision-making process. Women's empowerment is also directly linked to the prevention of violence against women, including "economic violence". Italy considers the [Istanbul Convention](#) as the most advanced instrument at multilateral level to fight violence against women and domestic violence and encourages additional signatures and ratifications. It is also essential to continue to work on reconciling professional and private life to ensure that women are not obliged to choose between family and work, giving up, in many cases, their own financial independence. A high-level event on this subject, jointly organised by the Council of Europe and the Minister of Equal Opportunities and Family, in collaboration with the Italian Ministry of Foreign Affairs and International Co-operation, will be held in Rome on 12 April 2022.

It will be also necessary to increase the inclusion of women in leadership position and in the decision-making processes of policies related to the environment and sustainability.

Key Objectives

- Discuss ways to increase girls' take-up in STEM fields and women's career advancement and maintenance in STEM research fields.
- Present tools and methods developed and applied in education systems around the globe to promote STEM education and attract young people, especially girls, to these research fields and careers.
- Present the role which gender equality policies and strategies play in creating more women-friendly academic and research working environments and careers.
- Discuss the role of mentors and decision makers in STEM educational fields to promote gender equality and positive role models for the deconstruction of gender stereotypes.
- Explore ways to increase the integration of gender considerations in emerging policy and programming on climate change mitigation and adaptation.
- Highlight opportunities for leadership and inclusion of women in climate change and environment related decision-making processes.

Target Audience

Ministries responsible for education, research, innovation, gender equality, environment and climate change; university rectors and academia; research institutions; private companies investing in research and innovation; policy advisers and researchers supporting working in these areas; NGO's working on the promotion of women in decision making; social activists for women's rights and the environment; international organisations working on climate change, women and gender issues; all those who seek to better understand and act upon the crucial liaison between inclusive education and decision-making and the future of our planet.