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Gender inclusive teaching. An experiment conducted at the CERN International High School Teacher Programme. First lessons learnt.

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Educational research has shown that girls are less likely than boys to take up science subjects in high school, in western countries, as shown e.g. by a UK study by the Institute of Physics. This has repercussions on professional choices made later.

For some years now CERN drives a variety of communication, education and outreach activities to encourage girls to take science subjects in school and women to enter in the field of STEM: through social media, presentations at schools and universities, and also through educational programmes.

More recently, CERN launched a raising-awareness initiative targeting high school teachers. A work group on gender inclusive teaching was introduced at the yearly CERN International High School Teachers programme. The aim of the work group is to explore, in a collaborative manner, with teachers from all around the world, and under the guidance of a researcher from the University of Geneva, aspects that may play a role in this gender imbalance early on at school. The underlying assumption is that, while most teachers have been trained to be teachers, inclusive teaching was not part of their curriculum.

The presentation will report on the 2016 work group, why and how it was set up, its limits and future. Sharing experience, addressing stereotypes reproduced in physics classes and other aspects that may influence students' motivation were part of the group work. Teachers discussed, based on research findings and expert opinions, actions they can take to facilitate a gender inclusive classroom. The group was able to produce a document with recommendations that include the limitations set by the cultural diversity within the group and differences in national systems of education.

Experimental Collaboration

Primary authors: GUINOT, Genevieve (CERN); Ms KALTENHÄUSER, Kristin (IT University Copenhagen)

Presenter: Ms KALTENHÄUSER, Kristin (IT University Copenhagen)

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