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# Girls in ICT 10<sup>th</sup> anniversary

*European celebration*

22 April 2021, 13:30 – 15:30 CET

Online meeting  
<http://itu.int/go/5Y9A>

Follow us on Twitter  
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#GirlsinICT

Organized within the framework of the ITU Girls in ICT initiative and ITU Regional Initiative for Europe on accessibility, affordability and skills development for all to ensure digital inclusion and sustainable development.



## Girls in ICT 10<sup>TH</sup> ANNIVERSARY

22 April 2021  
A Virtual Event

#GirlsinICT  
[itu.int/girlsinict](http://itu.int/girlsinict)



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# European celebration of Girls in ICT 10<sup>th</sup> anniversary

22 April 2021

*Organised by ITU and EQUALS-EU and supported by CEPT and UN Women*

## Event Summary

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**TABLE OF CONTENTS**

<b>EVENT SUMMARY</b>	<b>3</b>
<b>ABOUT THE EVENT</b>	<b>4</b>
<b>PARTICIPATION AND DOCUMENTATION</b>	<b>4</b>
<b>SESSIONS</b>	<b>6</b>
<i>Opening segment</i>	<i>6</i>
<i>Stories and messages from women and girls in ICT</i>	<i>6</i>
<b>CLOSING REMARKS</b>	<b>10</b>

## EVENT SUMMARY

The ITU "[European celebration of Girls in ICT 10-year anniversary](#)" was organized by the International Telecommunication Union (ITU) and EQUALS-EU, with the support of UN Women and CEPT. It was held within the framework of the ITU Girls in ICT day initiative, which aims to empower girls and young women through ICTs, as well as the ITU regional initiative for Europe on accessibility, affordability and skills development for all to ensure digital inclusion and sustainable development. This virtual celebration was held on 22 April 2021 from 13:30 - 15:30 CEST.

The virtual event was followed and viewed by over **1500 individuals** and supported with captioning. The full event webpage can be accessed [here](#). The agenda for this special event can be accessed [here](#), and the recorded live stream is available [here](#). In the course of the event, more than 25 individuals submitted their contributions to a **video campaign** giving advice to their 10-year-old selves, which can be accessed [here](#).

It was identified that a significant gender gap for women and girls assuming roles and pursuing education in the ICT field is still pervasive. Perspectives gained by girls throughout their stages of growth and development from family and education institutions could assist or deter them from pursuing studies and careers in STEM.

Throughout the event, a call for building supportive communities for women and girls who are already in and want to enter the ICT field resonated among speakers. The support from the ICT community is an important starting place where young girls can learn about technologies and gain a broader perspective on ICTs and their impact on society. Having role models and seeing directly that more girls are pursuing careers in STEM and joining local ICT communities is highly motivating for other girls to start education or careers in technologies.

## ABOUT THE EVENT

The ITU “European celebration of Girls in ICT 10-year anniversary” was held within the framework of the ITU Girls in ICT day initiative and the ITU regional initiative for Europe on accessibility, affordability and skills development for all to ensure digital inclusion and sustainable development. This virtual celebration was held on 22 April 2021 from 13:30 - 15:30 CEST and was organized by the International Telecommunication Union (ITU) and EQUALS-EU, with the support of UN Women and CEPT.

The celebration aimed to raise awareness, share stories and encourage more girls and young women to actively pursue careers in science, technology, engineering, arts, and mathematics (STEAM) to bridge the gender digital divide as well as to engage the European community and promote collaboration through partnerships.

Since 2011, over 377,000 girls and young women have taken part in more than 11,400 International Girls in ICT Day celebrations in 171 countries. More information on the ITU Girls in ICT initiative can be found [here](#), and we invite stakeholders to continue the conversation on Twitter with #GirlsInICT. The event was divided into two sections:

- **Opening segment**
- **Stories and messages from women and girls in ICT**

## PARTICIPATION AND DOCUMENTATION

The ITU “European celebration of Girls in ICT 10-year anniversary” was followed and viewed by over **1500 individuals** through the Zoom Webinar, Twitter Livestream, and YouTube Livestream.

The event was held virtually. Relevant documentation was made available in electronic form on the event webpage ([the link to the event webpage](#)). The forum was supported with **captioning**, and the edited caption text is made available on the event page. **Video recordings** of the event, as well as this outcome report, are also made available on the event website. The event has also been **live-streamed** on Twitter (click [the link to Twitter](#) to view) and YouTube (click [the link to YouTube](#) to view). In the course of ITU “European celebration of Girls in ICT 10-year anniversary”, more than 25 individuals submitted their contributions to a **video campaign** giving advice to their 10-year-old selves, which can be accessed [here](#). Details about the agenda and speakers can be found on the event’s website ([the link to the event website](#)).

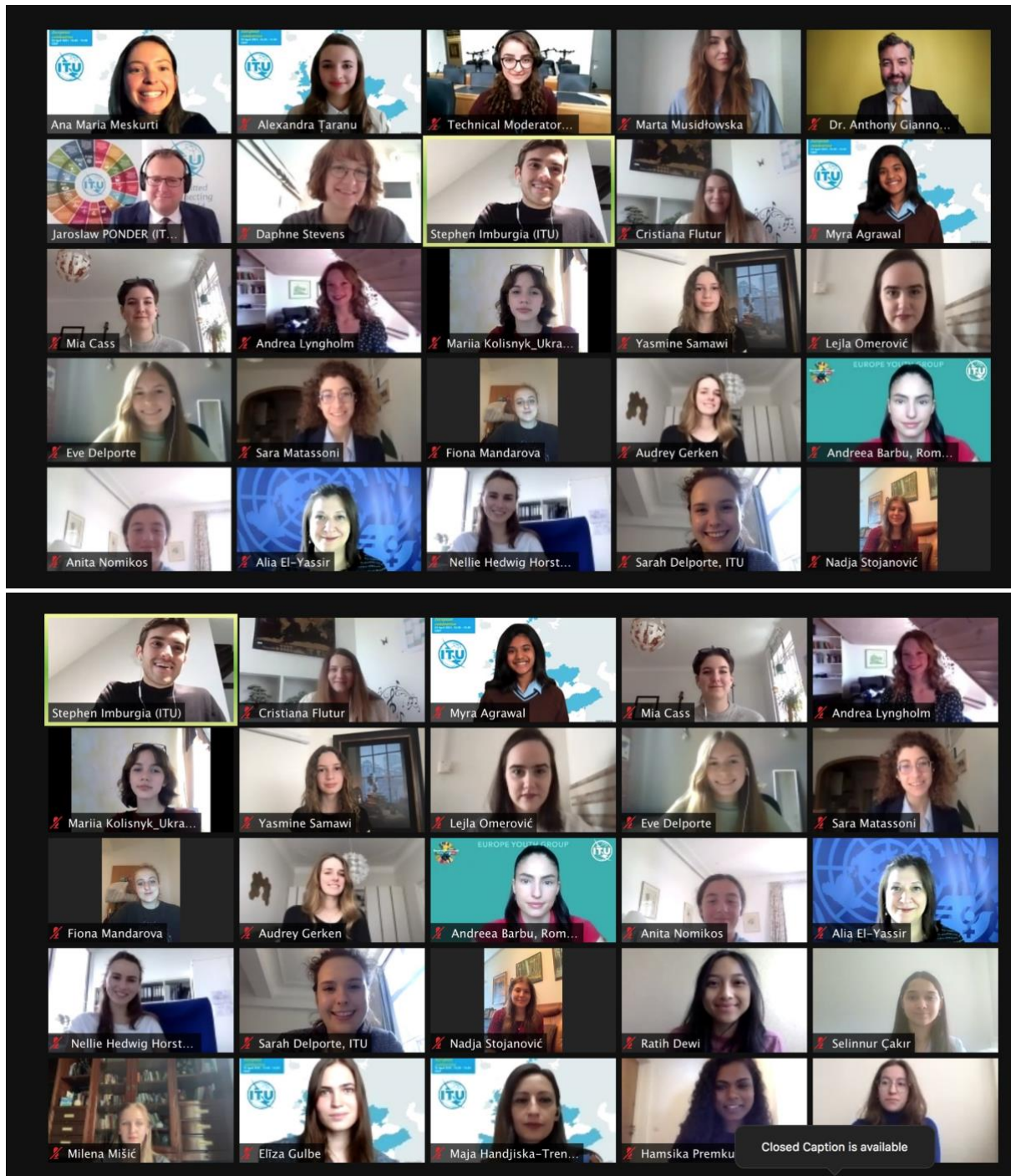


Figure 1 - Virtual Group Photo

## SESSIONS

### OPENING SEGMENT

#### **Video message by Doreen Bogdan-Martin, Director, BDT, ITU**

In her video message, Ms Doreen Bogdan-Martin emphasized how collective cross-sectoral efforts are vital to empower girls in technology, not only for the benefit of girls themselves but for society at large. She further stressed activities and projects such as the ITU-UN Women report on [“Women, girls and ICT in the context of COVID-19”](#) and partnerships such as [EQUALS-EU](#) give great hope in the promotion of gender equality and the advancement of digital inclusion and Sustainable Development for all. Looking back at her personal journey in the field of ICTs, a piece of advice Ms Bogdan-Martin would like to give to her 10-year-old self is “explore, question, discover, and find ways to make an impact. Seize the moment to go after that which inspires you. And don’t hold yourself back”.

#### **Jaroslav Ponder, Head, ITU Office for Europe**

In his opening remarks, Mr Jaroslav Ponder highlighted the event as a significant milestone of ITU Girls in ICT Day which started in 2011 and now has seen 377,000 girls and young women taking part in more than 11,400 International Girls in ICT celebrations in 171 countries. The Europe region is committed to actively participate in the movement where governments, national ICT regulatory bodies, ICT companies, academia, and civil societies organizations have all joined the movement and celebrated Girls in ICT day throughout the region over the last years. He further underlined how at the ITU Office for Europe, gender takes centre stage in which it is taken into consideration in every strategy iteration and implementation on the works with its Member States. Mr Ponder closed his remarks by delivering his appreciation to partners and supporting organizations who have joined forces to make this important event happen.

#### **Anthony Giannoumis, Social Entrepreneur, Advocate, and Researcher, OsloMet, EQUALS-EU**

During his opening address, Mr Anthony Giannoumis reflected on his personal experiences working in the Sciences, Technology, Engineering, and Mathematics (STEM) field. He mentioned how women and girls he knows performed greatly in the field and how he could be a supportive peer for them. Leading EQUALS-EU, a grassroots advocacy project focused on women in innovation, Mr Giannoumis invited participants to visit their [EQUALS-EU's newsletter](#) to learn more about how we can create a more gender-inclusive world and involve women and girls in innovation.

### STORIES AND MESSAGES FROM WOMEN AND GIRLS IN ICT

#### *High-level messages*

#### **Video message on women and girls in science by Mariya Gabriel, EU Commissioner on Innovation, Research, Culture, Education and Youth**

Commissioner Gabriel opened her video message with a powerful statement that “knowledge, skills, and talent know no borders and gender”. In Europe, she added, 41% of scientists and engineers are women. Although there are 48% of female PhD graduates in Europe, women make up only 33% of researchers, 22% of the heads of higher education institutions, and 17% of tech sector jobs in Europe. Therefore, she stressed the need to encourage women to develop skills in science, technology, engineering to finally take advantage of all talent and diversity. Finally, Commissioner

Gabriel highlighted the importance of celebrating and showcasing Europe’s talented women as role models to inspire others to follow and raises awareness of the need for more women in science.

**Maja Handijska Trendafilova, Head of Programme Department, Regional Cooperation Council**

In her address, Ms Maja Handijska Trendafilova stated that promoting girls and women in STEM is an important part of a broader initiative of women economic empowerment. She shared the result of the Balkan survey run by the Council every year which shows business owners four times more likely to prefer hiring men than women. Furthermore, the Council’s observatory employment illustrates a rather bleak picture where men outnumber women in the regional labour force by more than one million. On this occasion, Ms Trendafilova amplified several messages for young girls in the region: First, an attitude of honing competence and confidence, and no fear of failure; Second, to inspire and be inspired by others; Third, to be someone’s bedrock and support framework. Fourth, stressing the importance of the creation of mentoring and coaching programs for young girls and women entering and or switching to STEM education and careers; and lastly, to share good practices to motivate a wide range of practitioners and stakeholders to adopt similar tools/strategies to promote women and girls’ empowerment in the STEM field.

**Alia El-Yassir, Regional Director for Europe and Central Asia, UN Women**

Ms Alia El-Yassir started her message by congratulating all stakeholders on the 10-year anniversary of Girls in ICT and also UN Women, which also recently marked its 10-year anniversary. With the COVID-19 pandemic, ICT became more critical than ever before, as it is essential to access to education, services, decent work, and information. Hence, all actors in the ICT sector need to be committed to addressing the gender digital divide. [A joint study by ITU and UN Women](#) reconfirmed technology as a game-changer, and if this important resource is not inclusive and equal, many groups of young people, particularly women and girls, are at risk of becoming even more excluded and discriminated against. Ms El-Yassir shared about the Action Coalition on Innovation and Technology for Gender Equality, which emerged during the [Generation Equality Forum](#) held in Mexico. The Action Coalition calls for several key actions, including reducing by half the gender digital divide across generations by accelerating meaningful access to technologies and digital literacy, thus leaving no one behind; increasing investments towards feminist technology and innovation by at least 50% to support innovators and their needs; doubling the women in tech and innovation by estblishing benchmarks to transform the ecosystem; and implement policies and solutions against online and tech facilitated gender-based violence and discrimination against women and girls. To conclude her remarks, Ms Alia El-Yassir gave the following message to her 10-year-old self “the best is yet to come and the possibilities are endless”.

**Cristiana Flutur, Co-President of CEPT and representative of Network of Women (NoW) for Europe**

During her intervention, Ms Cristiana Flutur reflected on her journey pursuing a professional career in the field of ICT. She emphasized the importance of having a continuous conversation to ask yourselves whether you see a future in the field and the impacts you made through your career. Furthermore, she added the need to have a network of people to encourage and support each other. Ms Flutur shared about [Network of Women \(NoW\)](#) in Europe, an initiative by ITU and CEPT to establish a supportive network for women in ICT. This network will be a good way to discuss and start breaking the stereotypes and to encounter challenges faced by women working in ICT. Looking back at her 10-year-old self, Ms Critiana Flutur would like to say to her self to “continue to be strong and to follow the education path in STEM”.

### **Andreea Barbu, Generation Connect – Europe Youth Group – ITU**

Ms Andreea Barbu shared her experience as a member of the [Generation Connect: Europe Youth Group](#), in which girls have had the chance to communicate to the ITU the challenges, opportunities and actions they wish to see. The generation connect strategy has enabled the youth to present their experience from over 15 European countries and to represent women in an international space. The Generation Connect – Europe Youth Group has produced the [Youth Declaration](#) which includes, among others, how women can get involved and how they can be protected and encouraged to act. While progress has been made, Ms Barbu stressed that there is more to be done over the next decades to ensure that the advancement is not lost and that women will be better represented in STEM and other fields. Beginning with education offered to girls, policies regarding educational strategies need to be enforced towards an early introduction of the use and programming of a machine to children, be it girls and boys alike with the advertisement of all jobs offered. Ms Andreea Barbu ended her intervention by giving advice to her 10-year-old self to “focus on every subject in schools and become a jack of all trades, because complex minds are those that find solutions”.

### *Stories and messages from European Girls*

**Focus:** For this special occasion, 21 girls representing 21 countries in Europe came forward to share their stories, aspirations, and advice to their 10-year-old self.

**Moderator:** Anthony Giannoumis, Social Entrepreneur, Advocate, and Researcher, OsloMet, and Lead at EQUALS-EU & Hamsika Premkumar, CEO, Development Goals Forum.

### **Speakers:**

- Andrea Lyngholm, Norway
- Daphne Stevens, Netherlands
- Elīza Gulbe, Latvia
- Marta Musidłowska, Poland
- Mia Cass, Denmark
- Milena Mišić, Serbia
- Eljona Avdo, Albania
- Lejla Omerović, Bosnia and Herzegovina
- Fiona Mandarova, North Macedonia
- Nađa Stojanović, Montenegro
- Alexandra Taranu, Moldova
- Mariia Kolisnyk, Ukraine
- Selinnur Çakır, Turkey
- Nellie Hedwig Horstmann, Germany
- Eve Delporte, France
- Nuria Sanz, Spain
- Myra Agrawal, United Kingdom
- Sara Matassoni, Italy
- Audrey Gerken, Belgium
- Anita Nomikos, Greece
- Yasmine Samawi, Switzerland



**Key points:**

***Challenges for Girls in ICT***

- Perspectives gained by girls throughout their stages of growth and development from family and education institutions can deter them from pursuing studies and careers in STEM. For instance, some girls are more accustomed to helping around the home, which is perceived as feminine, than boys and *vice versa*. This makes them feel less prepared to pursue careers perceived as masculine, such as those in STEM.
- STEM education and careers are still highly perceived as a male-dominated field, which for some women and girls makes them see pursuing an education or career in the STEM field as an intimidating endeavor.
- The divisive idea of men and women jobs can be a great challenge for girls who want to enter the STEM field. Furthermore, society oftentimes perpetuates this idea by questioning and discouraging the choice girls made to pursue STEM education or career.
- Early contact with ICT is pivotal in developing interest and encouraging girls to follow education and careers in ICT. Unpleasant first interactions to ICT due to limitation from educators and narrow idea of having a career in ICT could be highly discouraging for girls.
- Some jobs in the STEM field characterised as having a long working hours, unpredictable shifts, and physical strains make it very hard to grant a healthy work-life balance. Family and career balance also includes gender stereotypes and disadvantages. Consequently, people working in STEM, especially in the higher positions, are male. This leaves STEM careers as rather intimidating work environments for young females.

***Aspirations and support for Girls in ICT***

- The support from the ICT community is an important starting place where young girls could learn about technologies and gain a broader perspective on ICT, showing that ICT is not only about programming and technologies, but can yield a great impact on society.
- Parents, teachers, and career guidance counsellors all have a significant role in assisting or hindering the way young women choose their career path. Family's attitudes toward education paths is an important early environment to provide gender-mainstreaming of science and technologies. School activities that involve technologies and sciences would familiarise students and girls with the field and hence give them the chance to explore sciences education and career.
- Events and organizations which share experience, provide support, network, and platforms to collaborate for girls and women who are interested and already have careers in ICT are very important to inspire girls and demystify the stereotypes about tech careers.
- To encourage more girls to consider working in the ICT sector for careers in the future, it is important to introduce successful women that can serve as role models for them. The role models can show a society where women and men, girls and boys are equal, and everyone has equal opportunity to participate and work in society.
- Seeing directly that more girls are pursuing careers in STEM and joining local ICT communities is highly motivating for other girls to start education or career in technologies.

- Knowledge sharing about the telecommunication sector and its impacts and benefits for wider society is important to give girls a full picture of the ICT sector and the wide range of jobs or activities that can be undertaken within the sector.

### ***Advice to 10-year-old self***

- Be kind to everyone and be courageous to do what makes you happy and passionate about, regardless of what others think or say. In the end, all that matters is sticking to the thing that you love and are passionate about.
- Keep learning and believe in yourself, because amazing opportunities are waiting for you.
- If you want to become a part of the ICT field, do not be afraid. We are all there for you. Your ideas matter, because you are working hard on them. There is going to be someone who is going to recognize that. Until then, be brave and be you. Nothing can ever stop you besides yourself. If you are a successful woman in ICT, become a mentor, share your knowledge with girls, become a role model. We need you so we can dream about becoming as successful as you one day.
- Do not be afraid of taking risks. With perseverance and willingness, you will see anything that you set out to. Limits are only set by your mind.
- Self-confidence and getting as many opportunities as possible are important to achieve your goals. It is our time to work for what we love and make things work for us, by working hard together and by pursuing the change.
- When something in the world catches your eye, find others who are willing to teach you. Also, find others who share your passion and are willing to grow alongside you.

## **CLOSING REMARKS**

### ***Jaroslav Ponder, Head, ITU Office for Europe***

Mr Jaroslav Ponder concluded the event by thanking EQUALS-EU as the co-organiser of this inspiring celebration of Girls in ICT Day 10<sup>th</sup> Anniversary, UN Women and CEPT as supporting organisations, all high-level addresses and the empowered girls and young women who shared their beautiful stories and insights. This event not only inspired but also gives practical advice moving forward to follow one's dream, be courageous, and take chances. The advice he would give to his 10-year-old self is to inspire others to build a digital future together. Mr Ponder closed his remarks by reiterating his appreciation to all partners involved and looks forward to future cooperation on girls empowerment in ICT.

### ***Anthony Giannoumis, Social Entrepreneur, Advocate, and Researcher, OsloMet, EQUALS-EU***

In his closing remarks, Mr Anthony Giannoumis extended his appreciation to all girls who have shared their stories and aspirations, "You hear this all the time, you are the future. That is the absolute truth. I want you each to know how much I appreciate what you have done here today for me. As a teacher, as a student. Because I learned from you as much as you do from me".