



Union for the Mediterranean
Union pour la Méditerranée
الاتحاد من أجل المتوسط

11 FEBRUARY 2025

WEBINAR ON INTERNATIONAL DAY OF WOMEN AND GIRLS IN SCIENCE

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CONCEPT NOTE

REGISTRATION LINK HERE



February 11, 2025, marks the tenth annual celebration of the International Day of Women and Girls in Science¹, recognizing the vital contributions of women and girls to scientific and technical fields, and as agents of change.

Achieving gender equality in science will be essential if we are to address the complex global challenges we face, such as climate change, biodiversity loss, extreme poverty and the need for ethical approaches to artificial intelligence. Despite some progress in recent decades, gender equality in science remains elusive. **Even countries that have reached gender parity** in terms of researchers are still facing important challenges in achieving it in all aspects, since vertical and horizontal segregation persist.

The gender gap varies across scientific disciplines. Some fields, such as physics, tend to attract more men than women, whereas life sciences and health disciplines often showcase a more balanced gender distribution and, in some countries, a majority of women. In general, women continue to constitute a minority within domains pivotal to propelling the Fourth Industrial Revolution and shaping the future landscape of the job market, such as in artificial intelligence where women constitute a mere 22% of professionals.

An array of societal factors and systemic barriers hinder the access of women and girls to scientific careers. These barriers include social, cultural and gender norms which guide expectations and roles and which generate low levels of self-efficacy, lack of visible role models, underrepresentation in leadership roles, poorly qualified teachers, unsupportive learning environments and inadequate professional structures and work cultures.

In the Euro-Mediterranean context, empowering women in STEM is a strategic imperative for achieving any scientific,

¹ UNESCO. (2015). *International Day of Women and Girls in Science*. <https://www.unesco.org/en/days/women-girls-science?hub=375>

Current representation of women in STEM

FEMALE EDUCATION

EU level

- STEM disciplines, female enrolment 31,3%
- Gender gap widens as seniority levels increase, with only 35% of women in engineering and technology in Grade C positions and 19% as full professor.

MENA level

- 58% in Tunisia - 42% in Morocco: women engineering graduates.
- Lebanon: 54% enrollment rate for women in Science.
- Egypt: women 48% the total number of graduates in STEM.
- Jordan: 45% enrolment in computer science.
- Palestine: women 49% of tech-based graduates.
- Tunisia: 1st Female-led Tunisian AI InstaDeep.

FEMALE LABOUR MARKET'S PARTICIPATION

- Women account for only 28% of STEM workers (World Economic Forum, 2024)
- 14% of female tech leaders in major companies (2023)
- 18% of AI researchers are women.
- Only 34% of tech-focused startups are founded by women in the MENA region.

developmental and cultural goal, and foster peace and stability across the region.

The Union for the Mediterranean's (UfM) 5th Ministerial Declaration on Strengthening the Role of Women in Society (Madrid, 2022)² underscores the importance of addressing these barriers and highlights the need for targeted measures to promote women's participation in STEM fields. It calls for the creation of targeted mentorship programs, initiatives to promote women's leadership in scientific research, and funding mechanisms to support female entrepreneurs in innovation and technology sectors. Moreover, the declaration emphasizes the importance of integrating gender-responsive approaches into research agendas, particularly in addressing transboundary issues such as climate change, renewable energy, and water security. These focused actions align directly with the objectives of this webinar and serve as a framework for fostering meaningful progress.

The Mediterranean region is experiencing remarkable growth, with a shift toward greater female participation in the STEM field, paving the way for future generations of Mediterranean women. According to UNESCO, 57% of STEM graduates in the MENA region are women, reflecting a strong foundation for advancing gender balance in science³.

Similarly, in Europe, female participation in STEM is on the rise, with nearly 7.3 million female scientists and engineers recorded in 2022—an increase of 310,500 compared to 2021—accounting for 41% of total employment in science and engineering⁴. This collective progress underscores the region's potential to leverage women's contributions in STEM for broader socio-economic development.

A UfM report on Science and Innovation Diplomacy in the Mediterranean⁵ highlights the significant achievements of women in the Mediterranean who are leading groundbreaking research and serving as policymakers, research leaders, and champions in their fields. However, it also emphasizes the need for further support to expand women's roles in science

² Union for the Mediterranean. (2022). 5th Ministerial Declaration on Strengthening the Role of Women in Society. Madrid. <https://ufmsecretariat.org/ufm-ministerial-strengthen-role-women-in-society-2022/>

³ UNESCO. (2024). Global education monitoring report 2024: Gender report. <https://unesdoc.unesco.org/ark:/48223/pf0000391998>

⁴ Eurostat. (2024). International Day of Women and Girls in Science: Women in science and engineering. <https://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/web/products-eurostat-news/w/ddn-20240212-1>

⁵ Gual Soler, M., & Pérez-Porro, A. (2021). Science and Innovation Diplomacy in the Mediterranean. Union for the Mediterranean. <https://ufmsecretariat.org/publication-speech/take-away-ideas-report>

diplomacy and leadership. Addressing systemic barriers and enhancing capacity-building initiatives remain critical.

Achieving gender equality in science is all the more necessary today as we witness backsliding in some countries with regard to equal access to education and knowledge as well as increased numbers of women scientists living in conflict and disaster-hit areas.

This webinar provides a platform to celebrate accomplishments, share good practices, and chart actionable steps to further support women in science and innovation for regional prosperity.

POSSIBLE TOPICS OF DISCUSSION

- ***Need to embed science into the curriculum from an early age, beginning in pre-school***
- ***Need to invest in scholarships, awards and other incentives to reward excellent performance of girls in STEM subjects of***
- ***How to encourage businesses to implement corporate social responsibility initiatives supporting women and girls in science through community outreach programmes and partnerships with educational institutions***
- ***How to develop accessible databases and platforms that identify and provide contact information for female leaders in science to facilitate their involvement in panels, events and committees;***
- ***Which the role of networking among female scientists, including through formal mentorship, sponsorship and networking programmes to allow them to share their experience with others and to facilitate collective learning.***





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AGENDA

From 10h30
to 12h00

1. WELCOME & OPENING REMARKS

Facilitator: **Giuseppe Provenzano**, Project Manager
Higher Education and Research, Union for the
Mediterranean

Joan Borrell, Deputy Secretary General, Higher
Education and Research Division, Union for the
Mediterranean

2. KEYNOTE SPEECH

Roula Khadra, Science Coordinator/International
Officer Water Resources Management, CIHEAM BARI

3. PANEL DISCUSSION

Moderator: Anna Dorangricchia, Project Manager,
Social and Civil Affairs Division, Union for the
Mediterranean

Panelists:

- **Naouel Abdellatif Mami**, Vice Rector for External
Relations, University Mohamed Lamine Debaghine,
SETIF 2, Algeria
- **Oumayma Raimi-Rodé**, Innovation Portfolio
Manager: Youth and Gender, UNICEF
- **Alicia Pérez-Porro**, Head of Policy Engagement &
Institutional Relations, CREAM
- **Ayumi Moore Aoki**, Founder and CEO Women
in Tech® Global and Member of the International
Consultative Group of Experts for Closing the
Gender Gap in Science, UNESCO

4. INTERACTIVE Q&A SESSION

Open discussion with participants.

5. CLOSING REMARKS

Antonella Autino, PRIMA