



Pioneering STEM Initiative Achieves 100% Surge in Young Women's Participation

BRUSSELS, 6 December — A groundbreaking STEM Initiative aimed to attract greater numbers of women to STEM roles for the raw materials sector, held its 3rd Women and Girls in STEM Forum, an initiative of the Girls Go Circular programme, coordinated by the European Institute of Innovation and Technology (EIT), a body of the European Union. The initiative achieved a 100 percent surge in young women's participation, and gathered over 800 policymakers, industry leaders, students, and educators to the event to champion gender equality in STEM.

With a focus on green robotics, the competition attracted 270 young women aged between 14-19 years from across Europe, a total of 90 teams from 19 countries. This represents a doubling of participation from 2022, a strong evidence of the initiative's growing appeal. The event culminated in three finalists from Malta, Bulgaria and Luxembourg, with the Malta team securing victory through a combined public and jury vote.

European Commissioner for Innovation, Research, Culture, Education and Youth, Iliana Ivanova, opened the annual competition, said: *"We are here to celebrate the exceptional talents of young women and girls who are budding scientists, researchers, and inventors with ideas and technology that will shape the future of Europe. This is exactly why the European Commission launched the Girls Go Circular project along with EIT RawMaterials, which has successfully empowered over 30,000 young women across 23 European countries and aims to expand to all 27 EU member states by 2024. I congratulate the finalists of the Robot Design Challenge and I am eager to see how these opportunities inspire more young women and girls across Europe to pursue their passions for science and technology."*

The Malta project developed an eco-friendly robot that removes carbon dioxide from the air using the process of enhanced weathering, an effective way of decreasing greenhouse gases and mitigating the effect of climate change. The Bulgaria team presented a drone equipped with deep learning algorithms aimed to prevent and manage wildfires, which have become a significant contributor to CO₂ levels in the atmosphere. Luxembourg introduced a solar-powered robot with data analysis capability for effective control of Varroa mites, which can threaten the health of honeybee colonies.



Despite the talent among girls and women, systemic barriers still hinder their participation in the STEM and ICT fields. In the European Union, women make up only a third of STEM graduates (covering Science, Technology, Engineering, and Mathematics) and 19% of ICT specialists (Information and Communications Technology).

EIT RawMaterials is committed to promoting gender equality in the raw materials sector. The sector is expected to see a significant increase in demand for new talent, particularly in the renewable energy and e-mobility sectors, which will require more than 1.2 million jobs by 2030. Furthermore, continuous innovation and new technological solutions are crucial for improving the sustainability of the raw materials industry, and women and girls play a big role in leading this change.

Bernd Schaefer, CEO and Managing Director of EIT RawMaterials, said: *“The raw materials sector, like many STEM fields, faces a talent shortage. Increasing the representation of women in this sector can help bring in more skilled professionals, diverse thinking, and innovative solutions. Initiatives like the WOMEN IN STEM Forum and the Girls Go Circular endeavor are key to drawing more girls and women to study in this field, which will greatly benefit the Green Transition and the European economy. Congratulations to the winning team for an impressive robot prototype!”*

Facilitated by the European Commission and the European Institute of Innovation and Technology (EIT), Girls Go Circular aims to educate 40,000 schoolgirls aged 14-19 across Europe by 2027.

Martin Kern, Director of the European Institute of Innovation and Technology (EIT), said: *“Women’s participation in entrepreneurship and STEM remains a significant challenge. Presently, just 19% of the professionals in tech fields are women, and merely one-third of graduates in this domain are female. Furthermore, only 15% of startups have women at the helm, leading and founding them. As the European Institute of Innovation and Technology, we would like to see this figure at 50%, and we will continue to support women’s entrepreneurship for as long as necessary to make that happen. EIT believes that some of the biggest global challenges we face today can be solved by bridging this gap in the workforce through education and innovation.”*

Girls Go Circular focuses on equipping girls and young women with digital and entrepreneurial skills, particularly in circular economy. It aims to help close the gender gap, which is aligned with Europe’s Digital Education Action Plan 2021-2027. It offers courses in a dozen of languages and countries and will continue to expand further across Europe also to cover students in Ukraine and the Western Balkans. **ENDS**



Find out more about Girls Go Circular, click [here](#) or contact:

Elisabeth Ippel, Communications Manager, EIT RawMaterials, elisabeth.ippel@eitrawmaterials.eu

Women & Girls in STEM Forum - 2022 Versus 2023 Figures

Participation of Teams in 2023	No. countries participating in 2023	Total competition Participants in 2023
90	19	270

Participation of Teams in 2022	No. countries participating in 2022	Total competition Participants in 2022
43	10	163

External Links

[Find photos here.](#)

[Girls Go Circular Program](#)

[Women & Girls in STEM Forum](#)

About EIT RawMaterials

EIT RawMaterials is the leading European raw materials partnership established in 2015 to advance Europe's transition into a sustainable economy. It is EIT RawMaterials' mission to secure a sustainable raw materials supply for Europe, close materials loops and design products solutions to ultimately develop raw materials into a major strength for Europe by driving innovation, education and entrepreneurship. EIT RawMaterials is also the largest network in the raw materials sector worldwide with over 300 members across the entire raw materials value chain. EIT RawMaterials is one of the nine innovation communities supported by the [European Institute of Innovation and Technology \(EIT\)](#), a body of the European Union.

About Girls GO Circular

Girls Go Circular is an EU-funded education programme that equips girls aged 14-19 across Europe with digital and entrepreneurial skills through an online learning platform on the circular economy. Girls Go Circular supports closing the gender gap in STEM and ICT by empowering girls to become agents of change in the digital and green transition. Thus, the programme contributes to gender equality policy objectives, specifically the Digital Education Action Plan 2021-2027 (Action 13) and the New European Innovation Agenda. Girls Go Circular is coordinated by EIT RawMaterials and supported by the education community within the European Institute of Innovation and Technology (EIT) and the Directorate-General for Education, Youth, Sport, and Culture (DG EAC).