



PROJECT:

# STEMintheCITY

## Bridging the gender gap in technical-scientific disciplines.

Keywords: Digital inclusion, gender, science, technology, education and training, capacity building, awareness-raising

### ABSTRACT

For one month every year, Milan becomes a laboratory for digital inclusion where global best practices on gender equality and education are showcased through a series of meetings, seminars, courses, shows, and role modeling events. The objective is to promote interest in technical-scientific disciplines and new technologies, creating opportunities for the next generation's professional future while eliminating stereotypes and barriers and addressing the persistent gender gap in this sector. In 2019, there were over 14,000 participants, including many young people who joined in customized training programs.

### CONTEXT

The STEMintheCity initiative was born in 2017 with a very specific goal: to create events, projects and dedicated courses on STEM topics (Science, Technology, Engineering and Math). This was done by the Municipality of Milan in collaboration with external partners to promote gender equity and empower girls to take up STEM careers. This annual event has gained more and more interest from stakeholders, even those outside of traditional STEM fields.

Held in April, in coordination with STEM month and International Girls in Information and Communications Technology Day and supported by the International Telecommunication Union, the 2021 edition will focus on digital inclusion and sustainability. While these events and courses are meant to teach and empower young women and girls, it's also meant to raise

awareness among the general public. The initiative is meant to encourage digital and stem inclusion, from a wide range of people, regardless of gender, industry, or background.

It is impossible to imagine the future without having a clear link between a data-driven approach and sustainable innovation. Beyond the goals of diversity and inclusion, this project highlights important issues of fairness, inclusiveness, and sustainability. If we want to guarantee a better future, we need to empower a new generation of scientists dedicated to solving the challenges facing our planet. We need a female presence, alongside the male ones, to research and give us critical answers and solutions.

Traditionally, events happen at venues across the city including the world-famous La Scala opera house, where the opening of the event series usually occurs. In 2020 all events were moved online due to the pandemic.

### CHALLENGES AND OPPORTUNITIES

There were many challenges in establishing, building and maintaining this initiative.

It's critical to establish a clear and compelling value proposition to differentiate from other events and to increase public awareness. Cutting through the noise and making the initiative unique and meaningful by bringing real, tangible value to its participants. Logistically this program relies on strong participation from women in many professions, from private partners, Milan's primary and secondary schools and the

young people who attend the events. As of 2021, all of Milan's Universities have participated in this initiative.

These events give voice to its speakers, as well as the young people and the companies and organizations who call Milan home. They help the participants to better understand how to articulate the problem of inequity in STEM fields and to find successful models to shape young women's studies and careers. This forum also creates opportunities for young boys and girls to learn together and create more mutual understanding, as they grow up and move into the workforce and society.

## STAKEHOLDERS

This passion project, created by Milan Deputy Mayor of Digital Transformation and Citizens Services, Roberta Cocco started as an idea driven by personal experience and grew to become an unmissable and transformative event. Other City Departments have joined in supporting the initiative, including the Gender Equality Office and the Youth Policies, Education and Universities Office.

The Digital Transformation and Citizens Services Office is the main actor involved in the design of this project. Each year an official call for proposals is opened, where external companies and organizations can apply, becoming advocates and agents of the initiative.

While Milan is the sole Municipal organizer of this event, many national and international stakeholders have become enthusiastic collaborators on this initiative throughout the years, and many international speakers have graced the STEMintheCity stage. The City of Milan is grateful to have the support of national and international government actors, including several United Nations agencies and initiatives, namely the Regional Information Centre for Western Europe, the International Telecommunication Union and the Action Campaign on the 17 Sustainable Development Goals.

## IMPLEMENTATION

This project requires organization and coordination with many different partners. Each year the Digital Transformation Office selects a theme for the event. In prior years the event has focused on the role of women in the future, on different industries including innovation, sports, and stem, and the connections between humans and technology.

Since conceiving and launching this project 4 years ago, Deputy Mayor Cocco remains very hands-on throughout each event. External partners can apply to participate each year, bringing many valuable contributions and sharing ideas for the 3-day marathon, closing the event month-long event. Beyond financial support, event partners benefit from enhancing their networks with the other partners and speakers, as well as establishing ongoing relationships with the participants.

A dedicated STEMintheCity platform shares news, articles, events, and links for participants. During the event, it is the main access point for information on what is going on: <http://www.steminthecity.eu>

## LEARNINGS

Since the first edition in 2017, when about 50 schools and universities joined the initiative, participation has now more than doubled, ranging through all levels of education. Initially, there were 3,000 participants, which has grown to more than 14,000 girls and boys in the last in-person edition, in 2019. In 2020 all events were held online due to the pandemic. These significant numbers help demonstrate the impact of this project, and the relevance these topics have in our society. STEMintheCity participants demonstrate a lot of enthusiasm for this program and have shared very positive and optimistic feedback with the Municipality about their experiences.

## FUTURE

The City of Milan would like to expand the work of training young people and promoting gender diversity by creating an international cities network, focused on this important topic. The goal of this expansion is to engage cities in "raising their voices" on the gender gap in STEM disciplines and increasing the reach and impact of this initiative. Beyond the annual event, this network could contribute ideas and projects for a wide range of initiatives including policy papers', partnerships and specialized learning opportunities.

Last year Milan began the expansion of this program utilizing the [steminthecity.eu](http://steminthecity.eu) platform. Through this portal, we have reached students beyond Milan and across Italy. The long-term vision is to share this knowledge and to provide courses and events to every student who has a desire to access and benefit from it.

## DATA AND NUMBERS



**This project is based on the priorities and the values of the Municipality of Milan, but it is also a project that has independent roots that allows other Municipalities to express these values themselves and to add other dimensions that are important in their cities.**



**14,000 participants in the last in-person edition.**

Documented by the Office of the Deputy Mayor for Digital Transformation and Citizens' Services of the City of Milan

With support of **Bloomberg Associates**

Publication date: April 2021