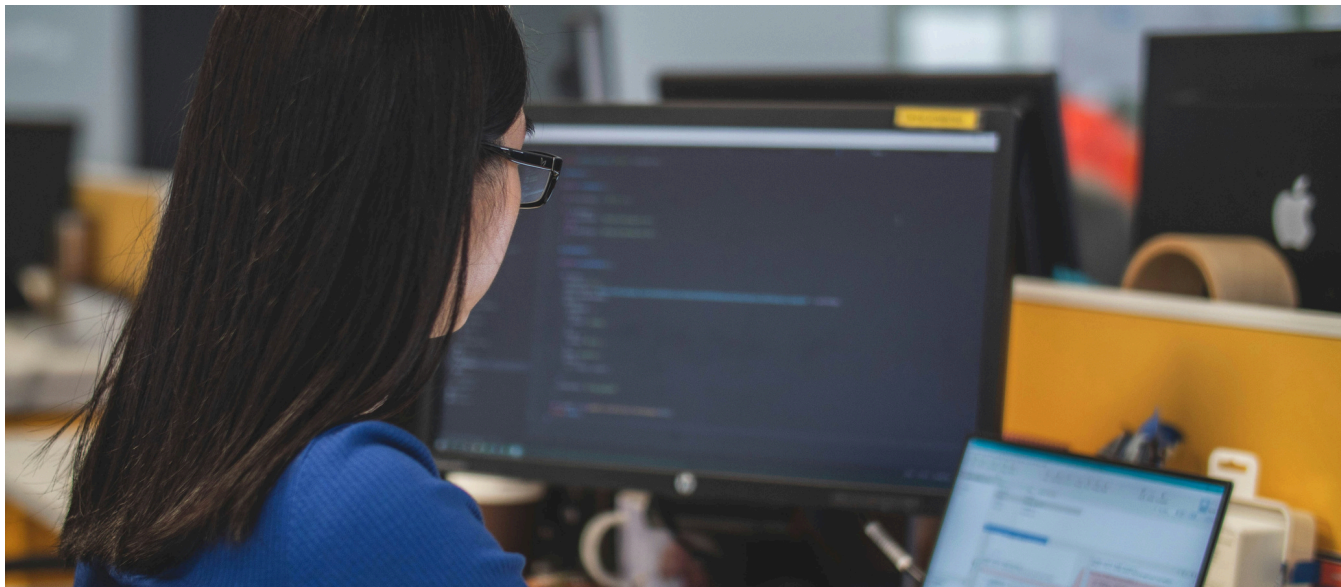


APRIL 25 2024: INTERNATIONAL GIRLS IN ICT DAY*

(*INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATIONS TECHNOLOGY)



What is the International Girls in ICT Day?

Girls in ICT day is celebrated every fourth Thursday of April. It is a day proclaimed by the United Nations to call and draw more attention to girls and women studying/working in the ICT sector, as well as to encourage girls and women to choose careers in this sector. Twelve years ago, the first International Day of Young Women in ICT was established by the International Telecommunication Union (ITU) and since then it has been celebrated every year with a new theme. The theme for 2024 is leadership, focusing on the need for strong female leadership figures and role models in science, technology, engineering and mathematics, also abbreviated as STEM.

How to involve girls in ICT/STEM?

Get them while they are young!

Gender stereotypes appear to be the biggest cause of girls' underrepresentation in ICT/STEM domains. As girls get older, they internalise stereotypes such as 'boys are good at maths, girls are good at language', making them less good/less interested in science and engineering on the basis of a self-fulfilling prophecy. However, these stereotypes can be limited right from childhood, for example by also letting girls play with LEGO and thus developing a technical aptitude in them as well.

Role models!

Having or not having role models in the field is one of the main influencing factors why girls are underrepresented in ICT/STEM domains. Having a role model strengthens the feeling of belonging and also enhances self-confidence regarding one's own abilities in ICT/STEM domains.

Anyone can serve as a role model, but the most effective is a woman who is active (and successful) in an ICT/STEM field. When this role model can also demonstrate the possibility of work-life balance, girls are even more attracted to ICT/STEM.



ICT/STEM in education

Not only can teachers be role models for girls in secondary school, but they can also create a different learning environment that will make girls more likely to make a choice towards ICT/STEM. For instance, a less competition oriented environment leads to more equal opportunities within STEM education.

Furthermore, research shows that girls show more interest in science and technology when it is taught in a non classical way. Thus, a creative, open environment, where there is room for hands-on teaching, active participation and group work, helps spark girls' interest in ICT/STEM.



Having a number of female fellow students in an ICT/STEM field can also be stimulating. The presence of other female students partially lifts the implicit bias of science as a male domain, allowing female students to more easily dare to express their interest in ICT/STEM.

The reduced interest in ICT/STEM is also partly mitigated through education, and an adjustment in the curriculum could also steer more girls towards ICT/STEM. STEM lessons are mainly built on male interests: technology and science as a matter of science itself, the more theoretical side. Girls, on the other hand, are more interested in people-oriented themes, such as, for example, the social context or ethical aspects that STEM entails.

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