

IAF SPACE EDUCATION AND OUTREACH SYMPOSIUM (E1)
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CROSS-CULTURAL ANALYSIS ON THE GENDER EQUALITY PERCEPTION AS A DRIVER FOR
THE FUTURE SPACE WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT

Abstract

"Workplace gender equality is achieved when people can access and enjoy the same rewards, resources and opportunities regardless of gender". However, creating a culture of equality in the working environment is a challenging goal likely to "not be attained for 99.5 years" (Workplace Gender Equality Agency). After the definition in September 2015 of "2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development Goals" by the United Nations General Assembly, several international programs have been promoted to encourage a gender-inclusive environment, especially in Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics (STEM) fields. In

this framework, the Rome Local Group (LG) of Women in Aerospace Europe (WIA-E) is collaborating with other international aerospace organizations to promote Gender Equality principles. In particular, WIA-E Rome LG analysed the Gender Equality condition within STEM fields, focussing on data provided by the Italian Space Agency and outcomes from prior studies on the Italian academic and industrial aerospace fields and at European level. The results of this study were presented at the IAC 2018. As next step, WIA-E Rome LG started a cooperation with the Japanese women in aerospace organization (Sorajo) and UNISEC Global to overcome regional barriers and to promote activities for increasing the general awareness about dynamics and special challenges of gender equity, recognized as fundamental for the professional development. As result of this cooperation, this paper aims to describe the innovative approach adopted to investigate how a different cultural environment could affect the perceptions about Gender Equality of the aerospace workforce, including professionals, researchers and students, to eventually identify the unconscious bias and highlight possible causes. Consequently, the rationale and the methodology defined to carry on this research are detailed. Moreover, the paper describes the results and outcomes obtained from the analysis of data collected during the dedicated “Gender Equality in Space Field” Panel Discussion, organized in December 2019 in Japan, and the one to be organized within September 2020 in Italy. Indeed, an electronic survey is used to investigate the participants’ perspectives to characterize similarities and differences between these two cultures. A better understanding of personal perspective and opinions about Gender Equality is fundamental to define a suitable strategy aiming at proposing solutions to address gender inequality issues and support the future space workforce development in both countries. Pursuing a culture of equality will allow the space community, and therefore the STEM one, to advance and thrive in the aerospace workplace, thus leading to sustainable, long-term economic growth.