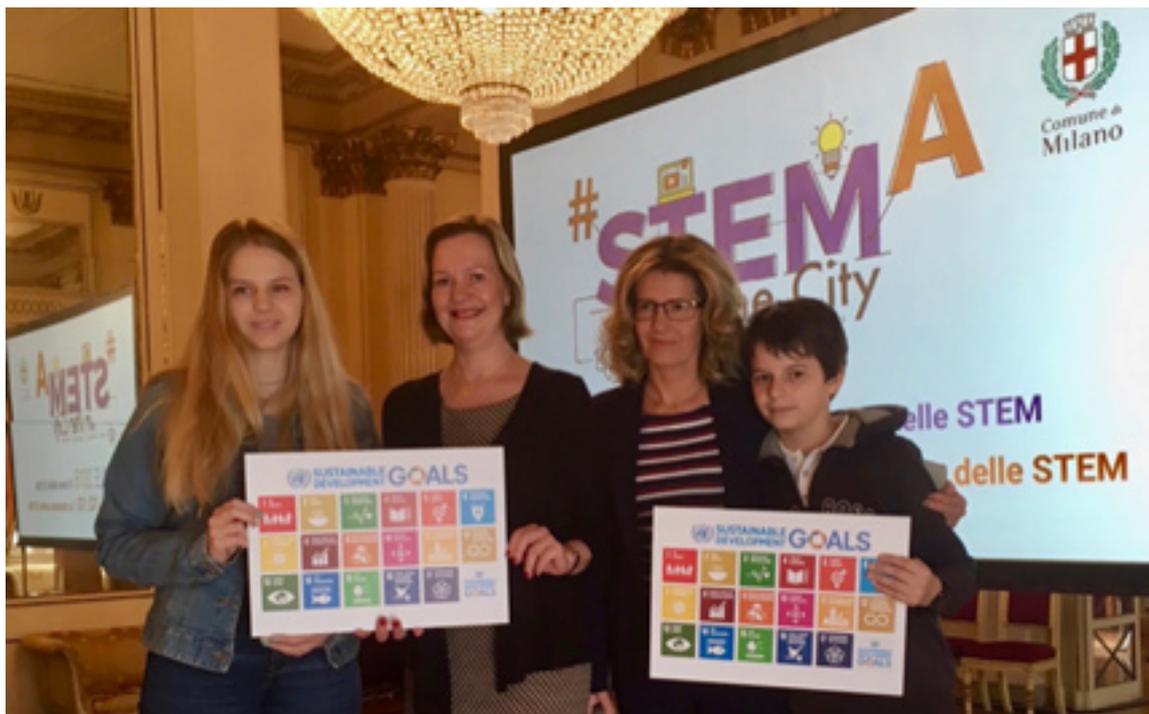Now in its second year, the municipality of Milano is organizing the #STEMinthecity initiative. 300 Italian & European girls and young women came together to learn about the opportunities of pursuing STEM-related education. During the opening session at the Scala theatre, the young audience was listening to inspiring stories from scientific experts, all female, and had the chance to interact with them during a series of role modelling sessions across 50 events organised in schools and universities.

All speakers addressed the importance to close the digital gender gap. They shared personal experiences and ideas and encouraged the young audience to tap into the current opportunities offered by science and digital technologies. Caroline Petit, Deputy Director of UNRIC explained:" to achieve the Sustainable Development Goals, we need digital inclusion, digital equality for women". In Europe less than 15% of all STEM graduates today are female and only 1 in 7 women with a degree in STEM actually works in that area. The city of Milan calls families, communities, schools and universities to break social norms and parental expectations. Further, with a rapidly digitizing job market, girls and young women must be trained in ICT skills today to be able to participate in tomorrow's economic opportunities. Furthermore, we need diversity to

ensure that the algorithms behind technology such as Artificial Intelligence and Robotics are not dominated by patterns of male thinking.

For this year's edition of #STEMinthecity, having the theme "Imagining a New World - New Frontiers, for a science of possibilities", well-known female figures from the field of STEM attended the kick-off event. Welcomed by Alexander Pereira – Superintendent of Teatro alla Scala, who stressed the necessity for diversity in all fields – fencing Olympic champion Diana Bianchedi encouraged the audience to dare and to challenge limits. Fedderica Maddalena, one of the three Italian Eurofighter pilots, appealed to the young girls in the audience to "follow their dreams and to not be afraid of their potential". Michela Matteoli, Director of the Neuroscience Institute, added that girls "should never feel guilty about having to choose between family and a career in science". This was echoed by Ms. Cocco, working with Milano's Mayor Giuseppe Sala to foster the emergence of digital citizens so that they can participate in and benefit from the digital society.

Ms Petit gave a masterclass to students of the Bocconi University and the University Carlo Cattaneo about the Sustainable Development Goals and why it was important for girls and young women to embrace technologies: technology and gender equality are vital to achieve the Sustainable Development Goals and gender equality in technology can only be realized, if we ensure girls and young women access to STEM education today.

The European Union is an important partner in making the public aware of the necessity to train girls and young women in science and technology as a precondition for gender equality in tomorrow's digital society. While the four-day event #STEMinthecity took place in Milano this week, the European Parliament, the European Commission and UN WOMEN organized a high-level event on "Closing the digital gap for women and girls". Keynote speakers were Neven Mimica, European Commissioner for International Cooperation and Development, Linda McAvan, Chair of the Committee on Development of the European Parliament and Phumzile Mlambo-Ngcuka, Executive Director of UN Women. Phumzile Mlambo-Ngcuka emphasized that development "cannot be thought without technology" and that therefore "girls and women will be left behind, if they will not have full access to technology".

If you want to find out more on these issues, please visit:

[SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT GOALS – GOAL 5 (GENDER EQUALITY)](#)

[UNESCO – EDUCATION AND GENDER EQUALITY](#)

[UNWOMEN](#)

[EUROPEAN COMMISSION – GENDER EQUALITY](#)

[#STEMinthecity](#)