

UK Science and Innovation Network Case Study

FCO Chief Scientific Adviser Carole Mundell promotes Women in STEM at the 2nd Polish-British Science Forum in London

On 20th September, FCO Chief Scientific Adviser, Carole Mundell, alongside Director General at the Polish Ministry of Science and Higher Education, Anna Budzanowska, launched the 2nd Polish-British Science Forum in London.

The Forum, focused on Women in STEM, was co-organised by the Polish Embassy in London, Polish Ministry of Science and Higher Education, UK Science & Innovation Network in Poland and the British Embassy in Warsaw.

It was one of the deliverables agreed by our Prime Ministers at bilateral intergovernmental consultations¹ last year. It built on the success of the 1st Polish-British Science Forum held in Warsaw last year and the Polish-British Year of Entrepreneurship, Science and Innovation (YESI), celebrated throughout 2018. The Forum showcased the strength of our bilateral relations on science and innovation as well as promoting gender equality, diversity and inclusion in STEM education and careers, AI and the wider Data Economy.

Over 200 participants from Polish and UK academia, government, business, and research and innovation communities, talked about challenges that girls and



¹ <https://www.gov.uk/government/news/joint-communiqué-between-the-prime-ministers-of-the-uk-and-poland>

women still face when choosing STEM education and professions, including sticky floors, leaky pipelines and glass ceilings.

In order to promote greater diversity and inclusion, as well as conquer some deeply rooted prejudices and stereotypes, we have to start educating children



as young as five to show them that there are all sorts of amazing STEM careers within the reach of both boys and girls.

And what better way to educate than by reading together a beautifully illustrated book by Dr Bryoney Mathew, “Blue Broccoli and Nanobots”? At an evening

reception, hosted by the Polish Ambassador to the UK, Arkady Rzegocki a day before the Forum, Bryony did not only talk about her book, but also signed and handed out some free copies to participants.

Inspired conversations started at the reception continued the next day, throughout the Forum, both in the panel discussions and during the breaks.

Everyone emphasised the need for the greater female representation in STEM education and careers as well as instruments we could use to achieve it: mentoring, empowerment, partnerships, support of men and new technologies like AI and machine learning.



The Forum, which generated over 399k impressions and 115k reach of the Forum’s official hashtag, showcased some of the most successful female careers in the STEM sector both in the UK and Poland that will hopefully inspire next generations of female scientists, researchers and engineers.

Other Related Events

Ahead of the Forum, the Polish Embassy hosted a roundtable meeting of UK and Polish research and innovation funding agencies, a further intergovernmental consultations’ commitment. It allowed both sides to understand better respective agencies’ programmes, research priorities and funding mechanisms.

A linked study visit of a group of Polish AI researchers took place on 19 September, a follow-up from joint research workshops on AI organised last year in Oxford by SIN Poland, British Council and the Polish Ministry of Science and Higher Education. The Polish delegation attended a series of meetings with representatives of the UK AI sector, including the Office for AI, Digital Catapult, Tech UK, Warwick and Buckingham Universities.



Both the Forum itself and the side activities, demonstrated once again that there are already strong research and innovation links between the UK and Poland and an appetite on both sides to collaborate even more closely together in future.

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