

“NO, MUM, THE MAN SHOULD BE THE BOSS”

Director of Regional Development **Diana Pueyo** on what we might miss when talking to our daughters, and why an Unconscious Bias Training is a good choice for Women in Aerospace Europe.

Recently, my five-year-old daughter and I were playing with several female and male dolls. We made up the story of a horse owner who was calling the rescuers' office because her horse was missing (needless to say, my daughter was playing this most challenging part). To avoid stereotypical role patterns, I usually change the roles in our games, sometimes having male and sometimes female characters in a leadership position. So this time, it was a male assistant who was picking up the phone and reporting to his female supervisor. To my utter surprise, my daughter firmly disagreed with this set-up. “No, mum, the man should be the boss,” she said. “But why, darling?” “Because that’s how it is,” she shrugged.

I was speechless. How was it possible that my five-year-old daughter was convinced that a woman could not be “the boss”? Of course, I am aware of the fact that hardly a classic children’s story presents us with what we would consider today as a strong and modern female role model. But what about my daughter’s most proximate living example - me? After all, I am head of a department. I am what she’d call “the boss”. And I am not the only example in our family. Her aunt is a founding associate of her own company, and surely she is surrounded by many more examples of successful female leadership. So what was going on?

Retracing my “parental missteps” I came to a startling conclusion. I have indeed not been telling my daughter anything about what it is I do. So how could I expect my child to establish new gender narratives if I was failing to share stories



about my daily work life with her, let alone about my successes?

I knew straight away that this had to change. Whatever the reason women often fail to sing praises to their own achievements, or even discuss them in a matter-of-factly fashion, it is crucial to share stories of equality and diversity with our kids, as social stereotypes are being engraved into our perception from the earliest age. My own children are wonderful teachers when it comes to showing me how bias-enhancing some of my behaviours are. Established at an early age, Unconscious Bias has been proven* to be one of the key factors leading to an unbalanced presence of women in leadership positions.

Therefore, this year we have introduced an Unconscious Bias training campaign at WIA Europe, consisting of one workshop and consecutive webinars.

Presented by coaches Clare McNamara and Francine Brooks from Engage to Move Ahead, the one-day workshop was aimed at our Local Group Leaders and the Contact Points of our Corporate Members. It was hosted in March by Airbus Defense & Space Netherlands in Leiden, Netherlands. The goal of this workshop was to give tools to the

participants to fight unconscious bias, and to consequently transfer this knowledge to other members of their organisations and Local Groups. During the workshop participants had the opportunity to identify Unconscious Biases, both in themselves and in others, and discuss possible tools that could help detect and prevent them.

In a second step, we held two one-hour Webinar sessions open to all our WIA-Europe members. During the webinars participants were presented with a more compact version of the training, yet covering the same topics as the preceding workshop.

If you are interested in this topic but could not attend any of the webinars, have a look at the training description (<https://www.wia-europe.org/2019/03/15/wia-europe-invites-to-unconscious-bias-training/>) or access the members restricted area of the www.wia-europe.org for further relevant training materials. For any further questions concerning the Unconscious Bias training campaign, please contact

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* See the following Harvard article if you are interested in how to counteract stereotyping and discrimination at an early age:

<https://www.gse.harvard.edu/news/uk/18/11/preventing-gender-bias>



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