

IAF SPACE EDUCATION AND OUTREACH SYMPOSIUM (E1)
Space Culture – Public Engagement in Space through Culture (9)

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FOSTERING DIVERSITY, EQUITY AND CAPACITY BUILDING IN THE SPACE WORKFORCE:
THE NEXT GENERATION’S PERSPECTIVE**Abstract**

Today, equity and diversity are seen as powerful instruments for building a strong and resilient workforce in any sector. Gender inequity is visible in many industries, including the space sector. Women are not provided with equal opportunities to lead in the space sector, a fact that is supported by the lower number of female astronauts, researchers, scientists, and engineers. Similar trends can be seen from a racial, ethnic, socio-economic, and other demographic perspectives, showcasing the need to improve diversity and inclusion in the sector.

In summer 2020, Space Generation Advisory Council (SGAC) organized its first global, online congress SpaceGen United (SGU), which gathered 143 delegates worldwide. Keynote speakers, subject matter experts, and invited guests discussed the space sector’s development and challenges. One of the discussions was on the UN Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) 5 “Gender Equality” and 10 “Reduced Inequalities”. We took an in-depth look at the challenges and barriers of gender and under-represented minorities in space science and industry to promote equal opportunities for them.

For one week, fourteen international delegates with diverse backgrounds gathered to discuss, propose ideas and initiatives to support SDGs 5 and 10. The delegation identified different obstacles faced by underrepresented groups in terms of the education pathway, resource access, language barriers and prejudices, and produced concrete recommendations for SGAC and its partners in the space sector to foster gender equality and diversity, equal access to opportunities, and inclusion in the sector.

The delegation emphasized the importance of providing financial accessibility, support and orientation throughout children’s education with adequate educational support to parents. A program to help people overcome potential language barriers in access to the space sector was proposed, ultimately contributing to making the space sector more open to people with all backgrounds. Looking more closely at the public

and private sectors, the delegates came to a general conclusion that representation plays a key role in building an inclusive workforce. Furthermore, incentives to invite and retain women and minorities in the field need to be strategically put in place.

This paper will analyse the identified barriers and discuss the recommendations of the SGU Special Track delegation in detail as well as the implementation of these. The unprecedented value of these conclusions is in their translational value that originates from SGAC volunteers representing all geographical regions.