

IAF SPACE EDUCATION AND OUTREACH SYMPOSIUM (E1)
Ignition - Primary Space Education (1)

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LESSONS LEARNED AND PERSPECTIVES TO OPEN UP THE SPACE SECTOR TO CHILDREN
BY MEANS OF HANDS-ON ACTIVITIES DEVELOPED BY STUDENTS AND YOUNG
PROFESSIONALS

Abstract

Diversity and inclusion are essential to ensure everyone is equally heard and represented in all working areas of society. In addition, companies who actively spearhead diversity and inclusion strategies are more likely to achieve above-average returns. However, diversity is still a thorny issue in Science, Technology, Engineering, Art and Mathematics (STEAM) fields, including aerospace.

The Space Generation Advisory Council (SGAC), a non-governmental and non-profit organization, holding a large network of students and young professionals interested in the space sector, has recently created a Project Group dedicated to diversity and gender equality. One of its activities, the PADAWANS project, aims at introducing to young children, from all walks of life, a multitude of professions and profiles in the space sector by inviting them to share hands-on experiences in their classrooms. Thanks to the pool of professionals invited in their classrooms, children are able to project both their current interests and themselves onto the space sector. In addition, the team brings a novel approach in comparison to similar projects. Relying on the fact that parents play a key role in the education of their children, both children and their parents are involved in the events organized at schools. Moreover, this project benefits from SGAC's large network which includes thousands of students and young professionals all across the world. Therefore, the team aims at encouraging the younger generation to speak up and share their experience in primary schools.

The PADAWANS team has decided to target its focus on primary schools first before moving to higher education. Established in late 2020, the group has already held one event in a primary school in France, despite the COVID-19 situation, and developed educational materials in French and English. In early 2022, the team recruited new members to work on three different topics: supporting the organization of outreach events in schools, creating and providing educational resources in many languages, to be used in schools, promoting diversity in the space sector and communicating about its activities with external partners and collaborators.

This paper presents the implementation of the project and the first activities that were performed since 2020, providing a set of lessons learned and drives for future plans. Such activities will include hosting events in several geographical regions of the world in 2022, adapting its content, establishing a

global collaboration platform for outreach volunteers and assisting in the translation and distribution of existing and new educational materials.