

Space Girls' Day

"It is great to see that science and technology can be so much fun! And it is nice that people in these jobs are cool, too," says a 16-year-old while admiring the training pool in the European Astronaut Centre (EAC). On 22 April, the EAC and the German Aerospace Centre (DLR) in Cologne and the European Space Operations Centre (ESOC) in Darmstadt, Germany, were full of teenage girls who wanted to see what it is like to work in the space sector. Girls' Day is a Germany-wide event for schoolgirls between 14 and 16. All across the nation, technology-based businesses, research institutes, laboratories, offices and organisations like ESA and DLR open their doors to inform potential future engineers and scientists about career possibilities in science and technology.

More than 160 girls visited the different centres, made experiments in propulsion technology, tried out computers in ESOC's control room and chatted with female professionals from all disciplines about how they became interested in space. At the end of the day, the girls left exhausted and with lots of new knowledge in their heads – the most important of which is that science isn't scary after all!

For the female teenagers, the personal touch that the ESA-experts added by talking about their experiences in the space sector giving their own explanations of space research can be decisive. Lecturers, teachers and speakers often fulfil a function as role-model for youngsters who look for orientation in choosing a career path. "It was only by chance that I myself ended up in the space environment and I am happy it worked out that way. I wish today's girls would act in a more goal-oriented way. They should be aware of the fact that this will not only have consequences for their future professional career but will also have a considerable influence on their private life."-said Petra Mittler who talked about her work in medical control for astronauts in space at the EAC.

Kristin Wirth, one of the female experts from ESA, hopes to have inspired the scientists of the future: "I am very enthusiastic about science and physics and space and my job within the Rosetta Science Operations Team. So I wanted to get a bit of this motivation across to the girls and encourage them to become engaged in science." Daniela Zajonc from ESA's Education Department and ESA-coordinator for the EAC event, added: "We are not career coaches but role models. We aren't here to give lectures about our work but show girls that female professionals are nice, normal, accessible, fun women." It worked: "This day is great," comments a girl. "I can learn about new jobs and I get help to think about my own life. Can I become an engineer even though my grades in physics are bad this year?"



Physics can be fascinating.



The girls enjoyed the hands-on activities most.



Future control room staff?



Pupils enjoy a chat with a real "space girl" from ESA.



The ESA "space girl" team.