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Equality in Engineering-outcomes of a workshop (Bristol 2020)

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Science has a diversity problem, and engineering sciences are no exceptions. While equality and diversity issues are gaining attention and progress is being made, tackling discrimination and creating an inclusive environment remains an open challenge. Women, people belonging to minority groups and people with disabilities are under-represented in higher academic ranks, which may discourage early-career researchers of these groups to pursue a career in engineering sciences. Conscious and unconscious bias, insecurity in how to intervene in inappropriate situations, amongst other things, compromise both the potential of research groups and the well-being of individuals.

We will present the outcome of a one-day workshop that will be held in Bristol on the 2nd of April 2020: Equality in Engineering. This is the "spin-off" of an event we organised last year for water scientists at the national level (UK), which attracted a lot of interest and where we were asked to organise an event specifically for PhD students in Engineering. Therefore, the workshop aims at educating and engaging Engineering PhD students on equality issues. PhD students had the opportunity to express their interests on specific topics on an online survey. Thus, we will invite speakers at different career stages to talk about problems related to 1) Work-life balance (e.g. parenting & maintaining a career in academia), 2) The importance of role models and lack of leaders from minority groups and 3) unconscious biases and micro-inequalities. The discussions will be followed by a practical training session on race/ethnicity, equality and privilege. Finally, a group discussions session will be held aiming at identifying major issues related to equality in engineering, which still restrain an inclusive academic environment and ideas on how to overcome these issues. Moreover, during this session participants will have the opportunity to exchange ideas and reflect upon the things highlighted during the previous sessions.

We aspire that the outcomes of this discussion can serve as a call or guideline for future actions, both at the local scale and at the institutional level (e.g. larger research organisations such as the EGU). We also hope to initiate or follow-up on discussions during the EGU General Assembly as we regard overcoming equality-related issues in our society as an ongoing process.