

PRESS RELEASE

Raising the Flag for Ethnic Diversity in STEM Sciences

A group of over 50 enthusiastic Polish- and Arabic-speaking pupils attended a science workshop last Saturday in Edinburgh, where expat researchers promoted diversity in STEM science and language integrated learning.

Edinburgh, UK (19/03/2017) - To celebrate diversity in STEM sciences, Dr Ana Catarino and Dr Stephanie Zihms from Heriot-Watt University brought together Arabic- and Polish-speaking scientists to participate in two workshops aimed at promoting science amongst immigrant and bilingual pupils. According to Scotland's Census 2011, both Polish and Arabic are two of the most spoken languages at home, other than English, in Scotland, with over 54K and 9K speakers, respectively.

Organised under the umbrella of Native Scientist, young researchers promoted a positive attitude towards science and the heritage language of these Edinburgh pupils. With the collaboration of Leith Labs and Bilingualism Matters, and the support of the Biochemical Society, this event covered themes such as microbiology, evolution, geology and laser physics.

Minority ethnic students are less likely to progress to scientific jobs after graduating, facing lower expectations of their abilities - even if they achieve well, as put in evidence by various reports, e.g. the UK scientific workforce by the Royal Society and the report by the National Foundation for Education Research. Native Scientist aims at counterbalance this bias and further similar workshops take place regularly both in Scotland and all over the UK.

Ana, the coordinator of this project, says "The workshops are designed to target pupils who speak a different language at home and in school. They help pupils realise their full potential while acquiring science knowledge and developing language skills. They are a great opportunity to meet role models and raise pupils' aspirations."

Native Scientist is a non-profit enterprise that connects immigrant pupils and scientists to tackle educational disadvantage and promote science and language literacy. Since its foundation in 2013, 70+ workshops have been organised, reaching over 1,800 pupils.

For more information on the event, please contact Dr Ana Catarino, the Native Scientist Project Leader in Scotland, at anai.catarino@nativescientist.com. Currently Ana is a Research Assistant from the Nature and Environmental Research Council (NERC) at the Heriot-Watt University, Edinburgh, working on micro- and nanoplastics pollution effects in marine life.

More information available at Native Scientist's Facebook Page and @NativeScientis1