

Women in ZDMP – Laura Caroline Ribeiro de Melo

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Some questions for you

- How did you become interested in STEM?
- How has your experience as a woman studying and working in STEM been?
- What is your working field?
- What message would you give young girls?

How did you become interested in STEM (science, technology, engineering, mathematics)? What influenced your decision in taking this career path?

Since I was a child, I wanted to be a scientist. My mother, a single parent, always motivated me to do what I wanted to do. My first experience with STEM was when I was a teenager. I did an electrotechnics course in the high school, and there I learned about the basics of programming, fascinated with the possibility of creating so much with only a computer. Thus, I decided to continue my studies in the Computer Science field.

How has your experience as a woman studying and working in STEM been? Have you faced any challenges?

During both high school and university, the main issue was the different treatment of female students. Few teachers treat the female students equally, some publicly made insinuations causing some colleague students to suggest that the female students were doing something “extra” to receive benefits from the teacher. Other teachers and male students had an opinion of a type: “you’re a female, you shouldn’t be here”.

While working as an electrotechnician, I was often treated as a “delicate” worker and not allowed to do even simple jobs that could get my hands dirty. As a software developer I had more luck, and, in general, was respected and treated equally. As a software engineer, there are now rare cases when someone makes insinuations that my progress in the company is not the result of my professional qualities.

While working in research projects I noticed that the majority respect you and treat you equally, but still some colleagues do not take you seriously forcing you to make additional efforts to convince them of your professionalism.

What is your working field and position in the ZDMP project and how has this experience been so far?

I am part of the team involved in development of 3 components: Monitoring and Alerting, Autonomous Computing, and Distributed Computing. I am also a technical lead for both Monitoring and Alerting and Autonomous Computing components as well as part of the Gender Action Plan and the Ethics team. ZDMP has a very diverse team, many skills, nationalities and cultures involved, the possibilities for professional and personal growth are great.

What message would you give to young girls and women who are interested in pursuing a career in STEM?

If you like working with STEM topics or are interested in it, just go for it. I am not saying that it will be easy, but it is certainly worth trying, just use constructive criticism that comes your way to

improve yourself, leave aside everything else and move on. You are the one who needs to define where you should be and what you are capable of, do not let anyone else set your limits.

ZDMP Links

• Component	None
• Work Package	WP 13: Impact
• Tasks	T13.5 Gender activities

References

None