



Breaking stereotypes, Visibility of STEAM studies for women

Ezozí Soba, ULMA Handling Systems



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OTHER TALENTS OF THE ULMA GROUP

Many people from the Group make their professional careers compatible with very demanding hobbies where they demonstrate that all obstacles can be overcome with talent and hard work.

Ezozí Soba, 28 years old and a native of Oñati, has worked in the Marketing and Communication department of ULMA Handling Systems for more than 4 years and actively collaborates as a mentor in the INSPIRA STEAM Project.

With a graduate degree in Industrial Organization Engineering and a post-graduate degree in Marketing and Communication, Ezozí is the perfect prototype of a STEAM woman required by this project.

The aim of INSPIRA STEAM is to promote studies related with science, innovation, and technology to women, hence its name STEAM (Science, Technology, Engineering, Arts and Math). The project does not seek to steer the entire female population towards these types of studies. The objective is that when it comes time for young women to choose a career field, for them to at least consider these as options and not automatically disregard them for reasons related with stereotypes.

Currently, the low percentage of females in university studies and professional training in the fields of electricity, mechanization, engineering, etc., is a reality due to, among other reasons, stereotypes by which these

studies have been masculinised.

Ezozí's role as a project mentor consists of sharing her academic and work experience with Oñati students when choosing their fields of study. Through “group mentoring” work techniques, she and two other colleagues (a telecommunications engineer and a doctor in biology) have guided the students, attempted to break stereotypes, talked about equality and suggested STEAM studies to the young women.

“When explaining this project to my friends I always give the following example: there are 100 different types of studies and many times girls choose from among 50 of the 100. It is not that women disregard the others, but rather for them directly, some studies such as engineering, electricity, machining, mathematics, etc. “don't exist”. The aim of this project is for women to have all 100 options on the table and for them to choose based on their likes and interest”, she explains.

Ezozí acknowledges that when she received the invitation to participate in the project, she was scared and did not understand it very clearly. The age of the girls with whom they had to work with, 13-14 years old, was complicated. It was difficult to manage their reactions, feelings, expressions, etc., but at the

same time, she saw it as a personal challenge. *“It never hurts to make our small contribution. Our intervention will be successful when the young women we have mentored are able to select from among all 100 options when it is time for them to choose. And if they only choose from among 50 options, then that should be due to a lack of interest and not for any other reason” she explains.*

Prior to initiating the project, all mentors received training in topics such as equality, cultural stereotypes, etc. Moreover, a specialized coach demonstrated the keys to addressing sessions with young women at such a complicated age, where insecurities are prevalent. *“It's not easy; it requires a lot of dedication and effort. But thanks to the flexibility offered by ULMA Handling Systems, I can be involved in the project and also do my job without any problem” she says. “Besides, we learn from all our experiences. Did you know that the windshield was invented by a woman? Her name is Mary Anderson and her story is very interesting. What about correction fluid? Correction fluid was also invented out of necessity by a woman called Bette Nesmith Graham. I came into this project with the intent of contributing; however, it has given me the opportunity to learn quite a lot” she said.*