MareNostrum Supercomputer and Macedonia Children’s Band Team Up to Encourage Girls to Study Tech Subjects

July 9, 2018

July 9, 2018 — The MareNostrum supercomputer and the Macedònia (https://grupmacedonia.net/) children’s band have teamed up to attract girls to technology. The supercomputer and the Macedònia song titled MareNostrum (https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=lxFFUjpxCOE&index=76&list=PLbABsNMD2jhxro5ErnFe2uuMTn5yff&i=0) are two key parts of tours that 6,000 primary school students from Barcelona will be able to go on next year. The aim is to encourage children to study tech subjects and, in particular, to appeal to girls. The tours focus on making clear that girls can use supercomputers and enjoy doing so.

With the dual aim of attracting children to science and tackling the gender gap, this initiative by Barcelona Supercomputing Center (BSC) has been included in Barcelona City Council’s Barcelona Science Plan (https://www.barcelona.cat/barcelonaciencia/ca/pla-barcelona-ciencia). This morning, the first deputy mayor of Barcelona, Gerardo Pisarello, and the BSC’s director, Mateo Valero, presented the tours and the song at a children’s party held in the gardens of Torre Girona, the building that houses MareNostrum, which is currently the most powerful supercomputer in Spain, the 22nd in the world and the 5th in Europe. It was the first time Macedònia sang MareNostrum live.

The project, called “We Are Young Women Researchers”, arises from Barcelona Supercomputing Center’s desire to contribute to increasing the number of girls studying tech subjects. Various studies have shown that the lower percentage of girls studying STEM subjects (Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics) is based on beliefs that take root in boys and girls at a very young age (primary school and the first years of secondary school), which makes them feel that they are more male vocations and that it is not a suitable career path for them. So the center has designed tours (https://www.bsc.es/ca/descobreix-el-bsc/trobem-nos/visites-per-a-primaria) that place special emphasis on showing that women also work with supercomputers.

Macedònia, a top Catalan female children’s group, is the channel that BSC has chosen to reach out to primary-school girls. They were asked to present their song MareNostrum to their audience through social networks (Twitter, Instagram, musical.ly). Before students visit BSC, at school they will have watched the video in which the members of the group are “doing research” with the supercomputer. “We researchers from around the world make fantastic, amazing discoveries in Barcelona for people all around the world with a spectacular computer” are the first lines of the song. The tour includes more than half a dozen games to introduce students of the world of supercomputers. It is teacher-guided and the majority of people in the teaching materials will be women.

Barcelona Science Plan, which is supporting this project, is a Barcelona City Council initiative to strengthen the city’s research and innovation ecosystem. One of this plan’s strategic aspects is to promote and strengthen the STEAM and EscoLab programs to encourage scientific vocations in primary and secondary schools (especially among girls), guided by the researchers themselves and prominently featuring women researchers.

Source: Barcelona Supercomputing Center

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