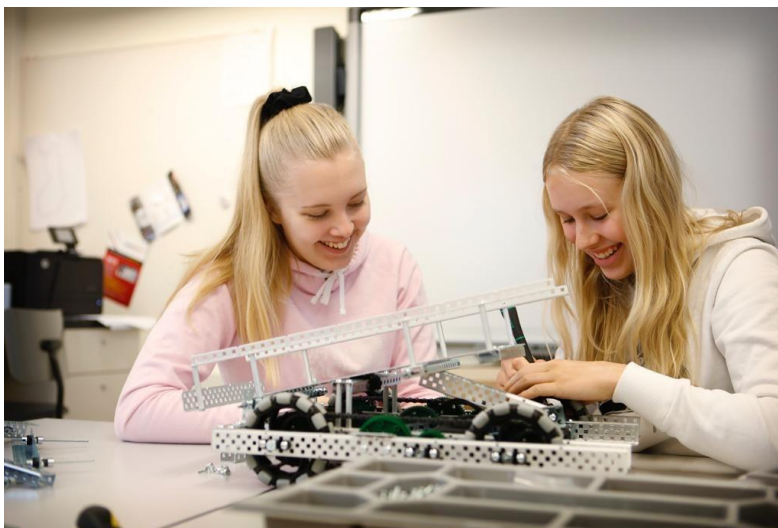


## Robotics is for everyone

Why do we need to talk about girl power like it's a weird thing? How has it become such a huge topic? Do people think that girls can't do as good as boys? We have thought these things a lot and now we're going to tell our opinion based on our experiences.

In our robotics team we only have two members and we are both 8th grader girls from Riihimäki, Finland, so girl power is very normal to us. In our point of view, it isn't weird at all that girls also do robotics, because we have always been taught and treated the same way as boys. When we started VRC this autumn, we knew that we were the only girls in our school's VRC club. We didn't think it as an obstacle, it was more like a challenge to us. At first, we were a bit unsecure, not because we are girls, but because it was a new and challenging thing.



We make the best solutions when we get different point of views, girls and boys'. That's why we feel like we can always ask help from other teams too. So, having girl power is a good thing, but it shouldn't be so surprising and weird. Often people come up to us at competitions and presentations and say: "It's great to see that there are girls here too". Even though it doesn't offend us in any way, you can see that many people still have prejudices. We also asked some of our male friends' opinions. They all said the same that the sex doesn't define your ability to do robotics and it may feel obvious to us, but it isn't to everyone in the world. We have noticed when travelling around the world with robotics that girl power is a bigger thing than it is in Finland, because the gender equality is pretty good, so girl power isn't so highlighted here.



Our role model is our robotics teacher, Reetta Viitanen. She is also a robotics education booster here in Finland. Reetta has been working with robots since 2014. Before that there wasn't much robotics in Finland, but she saw it as an important skill and wanted to bring it up. She always inspires us and it's motivating to see how good and talented she's in all parts of robotics. She is so interested in technology that it encourages us to do it too.



Robotics doesn't just teach you how to build and program. We have learnt a lot of other important skills like problem solving skills and language skills. We have also noticed that teamwork is a big part of succeeding. Communication skills develop, because you need to be able to express your own ideas to your teammates and do compromises. We can use the skills we have learnt from robotics in other school subjects and it will be a big help in the future.

Why is there less girls than boys in technology? We think that prejudices affect it a lot. Because even though there are equal options for both genders there is usually more boys. Girls are maybe afraid of doing it, because there is more boys and it has been thought as a "boys' thing "

Can we reduce inequality somehow? Some people might think that there should be own competitions suited to girls' skill level and easier challenges for girls. We don't think those solutions could make things any better. They would just emphasize the inequality. The most important thing is to identify your own strengths and learn new things, not to care about your sex. We hope that someday we can motivate other girls to do robotics too.

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VRC Girl powered online challenge