

SAASTA speaks to Dr Kristof Fenyvesi, who will deliver a keynote address at the STEMI Olympiads and Competitions Community of Practice Conference tomorrow

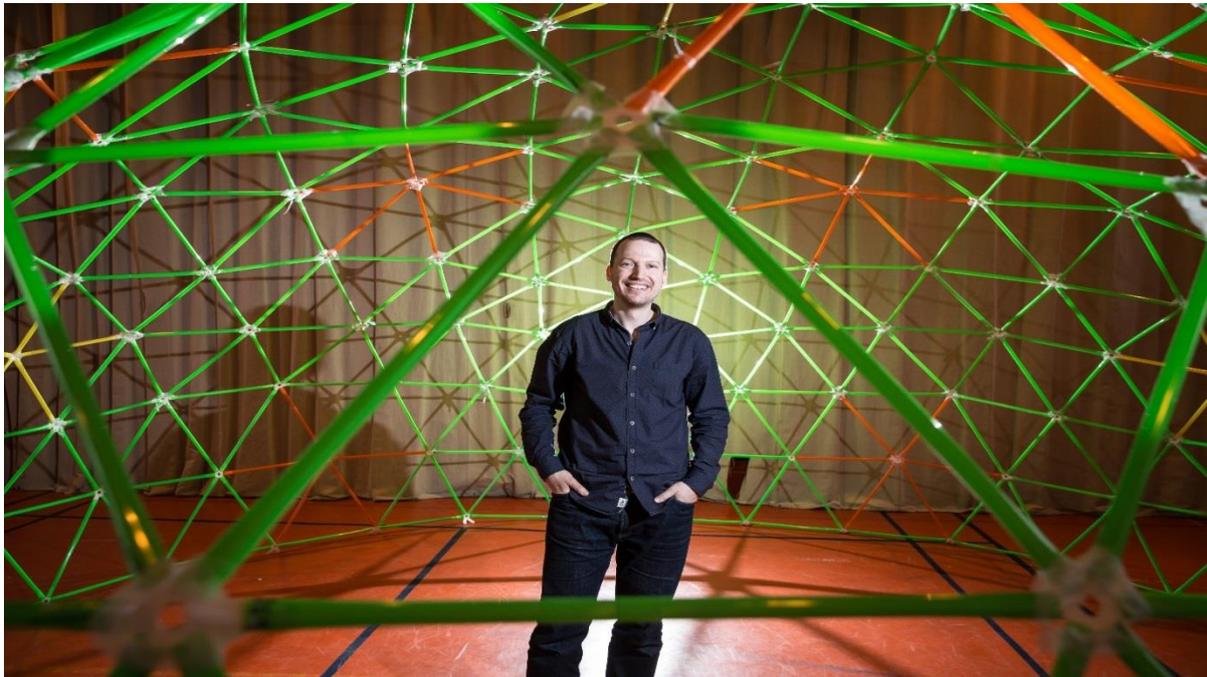


Image: *Dr. Kristóf Fenyvesi, researcher at the University of Jyväskylä's Finnish Institute for Educational Research and founder of the Experience Workshop Global STEAM Movement, inside a 4Dframe Geodesic Dome built by students. Photo: Márton Kállai.*

The STEMI Olympiads and Competitions CoP biennial conference prides itself on bringing together diverse stakeholders and experts from the STEMI community to share expertise, focus on collaborations and stimulate conversations that promote the advancement of STEMI Olympiads and Competitions.

This year the conference is themed “Strengthening the impact of Olympiads and Competitions through collaborations, partnerships, and cooperative opportunities” and will be held virtually from Tuesday, 20 July to Thursday, 22 July 2021

Dr Kristof Fenyvesi, a Researcher in STEAM (Science, Technology, Engineering, Arts and Maths) and founder of Global STEAM network will deliver the keynote address on 20 July at the opening of the Science, Technology, Engineering, Mathematics, and Innovation (STEMI) Olympiads and Competitions Community of Practice (CoP) biennial conference.

SAASTA had an opportunity to speak to Dr Fenyvesi:

SAASTA: How are you feeling about delivering a keynote address at the ASTEMI conference in South Africa?

KF: I am looking forward to the conference. Thanks to my cooperation with Nelson Mandela University's [Govan Mbeki Mathematics Development Centre](https://govanmbekimathematicsdevelopmentcentre.co.za/), the Open Design Afrika Festival (<https://opendesignafrika.org/>) and the Living Maths project (www.livingmaths.com), I visited South Africa quite a few times, met impressive people, and made friendships that went beyond work relationships. Following the South African National MathArt Competition (<http://mathart.co.za/>) from the beginning, I can't stop being amazed by the children's multiple and diverse creativities. The South African teachers have unique talents to engage and inspire whole communities even in the most challenging situations, as we have right now.

<https://youtu.be/PPYCIAq19YA>

Video: [Govan Mbeki Mathematics Development Centre](https://govanmbekimathematicsdevelopmentcentre.co.za/) of Nelson Mandela University and Experience Workshop's collaborative STEAM project in Nelson Mandela Bay.

SAASTA: What will be your key message to ASTEMI members and delegates?

KF: I think it is vital that SAASTA and partners organise this conference. It is important to meet right now. We can find ways only together to overcome uncertainty and insecurity when hopelessness is the greatest threat for future generations.



Image: [Govan Mbeki Mathematics Development Centre](https://govanmbekimathematicsdevelopmentcentre.co.za/) of Nelson Mandela University and Experience Workshop's collaborative STEAM project at the Nelson Mandela University Campus. Photo: Natalie Cathrine Gill.

SAASTA: What is the purpose of STEAM research and the impact when it comes to STEM?

KF: STEAM means the integration of Science, Technology, Engineering, Arts and Mathematics in everyday learning. At the Finnish Institute for Educational Research at the University of Jyväskylä we are working on enhancing teachers' and other professionals' cooperation to advance children's and young people's 21st Century Skills. Involving the students and their parents by building a strong and happy community is as important as developing the physical and mental environments, technologies, and teaching and learning methodologies.

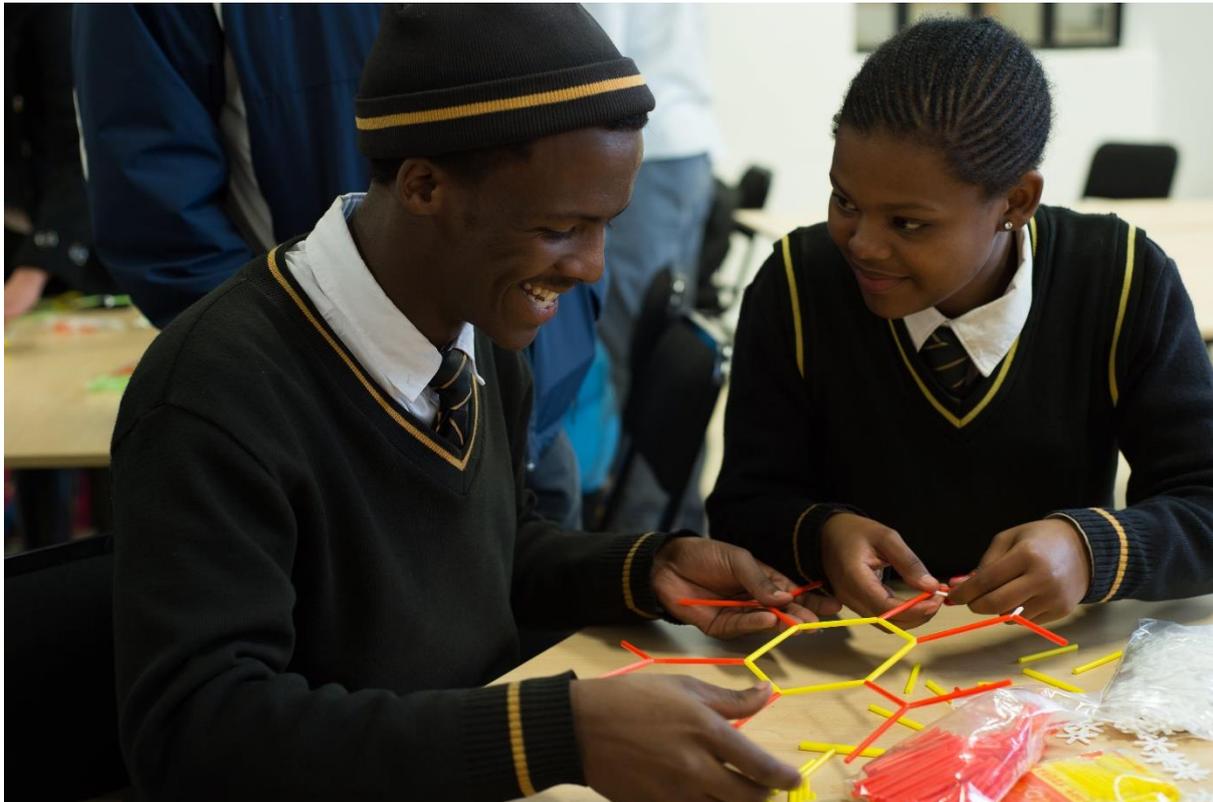
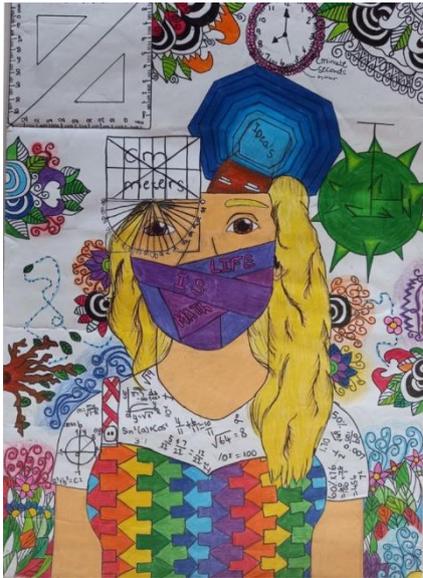


Image: [Govan Mbeki Mathematics Development Centre](#) of Nelson Mandela University and Experience Workshop's collaborative STEAM project in Nelson Mandela Bay. Photo: Natalie Cathrine Gill.

SAASTA: Why is your research so important in this day and age?

KF: Recognising each other's different values through learning is not only an opportunity for transformational change but an everyday creative challenge that involves a whole society. That's why STEMI's focus on the communities of practices is crucial regarding putting forward STEAM education in the South African context. South African children have many stories to tell. We need to be the loudspeakers to help their messages reach the world.



Images: Entries for the 2021 (left) and the 2020 (right) South African National MathArt Competition. Thanks to Werner Olivier and Carine Steyn and their team for keeping this project alive for many years.

SAASTA: What are some of the learnings and discoveries that have led up to your current work with the Bridges Organisation?

KF: Bridges Organization (www.bridgesmathart.org) is the world's largest community focusing on mathematical connections in the arts. I was invited to the community by its founder, a fantastic educator and researcher, Reza Sarhangi, (<https://www.bridgesmathart.org/reza-sarhangi/>) and his committed colleagues, who bring forward the community now, when Reza is not with us anymore. I am responsible for coordinating the community events where an abundance of family and educational programs take place each year. Mathematicians, artists, craft-people, and teachers from all over the globe offer math-art workshops, mathematical movies, dance&math programs, mathematical theater and poetry readings, exhibitions, and many more. Bridges have been an inspiring pool of ideas and a natural birthplace of collaborative innovations, which I try to implement in teacher education, also to contribute keeping the founder, Reza Sarhangi's, traditions alive. Artworks of hundreds of South African students have been introduced in the recent years at Bridges conferences.



Image: *Bridges Conference group photo from Johannes Kepler University, Linz, Austria in 2019. Photo: Henry Segerman.*

SAASTA: Why is your area of research and Experience Workshop Global STEAM Network so important to STEMI?

KF: We launched Experience Workshop (www.experienceworkshop.org) together with mathematicians, visual artists, teachers, parents, and children in 2008. Over the years, we have organised math-art-education events, exhibitions, workshops, seminars, and training programs to tens of thousands of children and teachers all over Europe and Africa, America, Asia, Australia. Now we are working hard with our partners, including renowned educational toy developers (e.g. <https://mondrianblocks.com/>), practicing teachers and academic organisations to start the worldwide association of STEAM education. STEMI members, including South African experts, must have a decisive role in building this network of STEAM professionals.

<https://youtu.be/rUXk1U-htv4>

Video: *Experience Workshop at the Tokyo Science Agora in Japan in 2019*

To register for the conference, click on the link below:

<https://www.saasta.ac.za/conferences/stemi-conference/stemi-registration-form/>