GENDER EQUALITY

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Telecentre Europe's Position Paper on Gender Equality

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Gender equality

TELECENTRE EUROPE'S POSITION PAPER ON GENDER EQUALITY

Action 60 of the Digital Agenda for Europe mentions:

Women are under-represented in the ICT sector at all levels

The number of young people, in particular girls and women, studying and choosing careers in ICT is decreasing and not keeping up with growing demand for highly skilled ICT professionals.

Why is EU Action required? We need to attract more women into ICT jobs

In order to enhance Europe's competitiveness and put it back on the path of growth as well as empower all European citizens to make the most of the opportunities offered by new digital technologies and impulse innovation in Europe.

This paper consists of four parts:

1. Barriers and main findings

2. Studies in ICT

3. General approach recommendations

4. Recommendations in the framework of the European projects

5. Indications to Member States in terms of education and training

6. Sensitization

7. Recommendations in the communication towards the private sector

8. Data availability

A study on the matter was conducted in 2013 for the European Commission: **"Women active in the ICT sector"[1].** The outcomes of the study point out the various factors explaining the root causes of this situation and makes recommendations to overcome the situation.

Barriers

- Cultural traditions and stereotypes.
- Internal barriers, socio –psychological factors pulling back women from the sector and its top positions: lack of self-confidence, lack of bargaining skills, risk aversion and negative attitudes towards competition.
- External barriers, ICT sector features strengthening the gender gap: strongly male dominated environment, complex reconciliation between personal and professional life and lack of role models in the sector.

Main findings

- Women still unrepresented into the sector.
- To compound the problem: the phenomenon of the "leaky pipeline": women leave the sector mid-career to a greater extent than men.
- Women still unrepresented in managerial and decision making positions. Especially acute in the ICT sector.
- Organisation more inclusive of women in management achieve 35% higher return on equity (ROE) and 34% better total return to shareholders.
- Women can profit from that career choice by earning higher salaries.

Studies in ICT

- The girls are underrepresented in the ICT studies and it decreases over the year. (A trend also true for boys).
- Clarification in data is needed:
    - In the report, ICT studies includes: physical sciences, mathematics and statistics, computing, engineering (and related). Difficult then to get a clear picture.
- The proportion of women in the studies decreases dramatically. Some people foresee that in a few years from now, they will not be represented in the studies anymore[2].

Key priorities for action:

1. **Build a renewed image of the sector among women and mainstream society**
   Convey a more positive image (≠ long working hours, largely male-dominated environment and difficulties in balancing personal and professional life).

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[1] Women active in the ICT sector: final report. 2013. ISBN 978-92-79-32373-7
[2] Clarke, C. (2010). Computer Science. The Incredible Shrinking Woman. En J. T. Misa (Ed). Gender Codes. Why Women Are Leaving Computing. Hoboken, New Jersey: Wiley-IEEE Computer Society Press.

2. **Empower women in the sector**
   Psychological and socio-psychological factors have an effect on the labour market outcomes. Those includes: gender differences in risk preferences, attitude towards competition. Those differences have a strong impact on the gender gap in the ICT sector and can partially be explained lack of confidence of women in their own capabilities, social and cultural dominated by a strong preconceptions regarding appropriate jobs for men and women.

3. **Increase the number of women entrepreneurs in the ICT sector**
   Promoting entrepreneurship in Europe (both for men and women) is critical for the European economy.

4. **Improve working conditions in the sector**
   Problems in the sector which affect the working conditions: persistence of certain informal rules such as "old-boys'" network system" and working conditions (working hours and schedules). Maternity leaves remains the turning point of women's careers in the sector as well. If the working conditions into the sector improve it will have an impact on the perception of the sector and hence attack more students in the ICT studies.

Transversal action 1: Improve data availability: lack of data sources broken down by gender.

Transversal action 2: Identify and exchange best practices.

General approach recommendations

- Create a panel of experts in gender mainstreaming and involve them into each steps of the decision making process.
- Ensure that the **concept of** gender mainstreaming[3] is there all along the processes leading to defining measures regardless of the target audiences impacted by these measures (children, young, families, companies etc.) such as:
  - o Promote new ICT studies,
  - o Train in new ICT,
  - o Sensitise on the possibility to make a career in the ICT sector,
  - o Raise awareness on the economic opportunities at stake in Europe.
- Strengthen the attempts to obtain homogeneous data broken down by gender on the studies path in ICT and the presence of women in the ICT sector professions.
- Define a reference framework of professional profiles to describe the technical requirements of the various IT jobs and encourage member states to use a common system throughout Europe for data collection at national level.
- Define ICT reference curricula to avoid inaccurate data leading to wrong analysis and interpretation.

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[3] https://en.m.wikipedia.org/wiki/Gender_mainstreaming

In the framework of the European projects

- Create a panel of experts in gender mainstreaming and request their input at all steps of the project.
- Integrate gender mainstreaming in all programmes of the EU impacted by ICT (Erasmus+ …).
- Introduce in reference literature chapters dedicated to gender mainstreaming.
- Use gender mainstreaming as an evaluation criteria for all projects linked to ICT (at all levels).
- Provide to applicants guidelines to be used in their project.
- During the analysis and the evaluation of the project beware that
  - There is parity in quantitative terms between the beneficiaries of the two genders
  - There is no risk that the content of the project reinforces any stereotype presenting ICT as being masculine.
  - Encourage consortium to create tools dedicated to education and sensitisation to ICT that are fair in terms of gender.
  - Encourage and financially support translation and dissemination of these tools which efficiency will have been tested.
  - Set up contests with the consortium to reward projects that have taken into consideration gender mainstreaming and that have been successful in terms of gender equality.

Indications to Member States in terms of education and training

- Encourage member states to include new ICT courses early at school (1st degree).
- Provide guidelines to the members states to :
  - Ensure that the finality of the courses goes beyond mastering the software and includes also raising awareness as well as organising workshop to the various aspects of ICT such as programming, coding, databases, networks, etc.
  - Ensure that the curricula are fair from a gender point of view to avoid reinforcing already existing stereotypes.
  - Encourage member states to include education on gender mainstreaming in the curriculum of the teachers, educators, facilitators and also job coaches etc. with a particular emphasis put on the notion of stereotypes and their impact in the choices of training path and careers.
- Make the difference between: skills for ICT users and skills for ICT professional (women are ICT users but there is still a lack professional competencies).
- Start to give trainings in programming and invite girls and boys to follow them.
- Do not ask too many requisite to enter ICT trainings.
- Encourage girls and women to follow these programming courses.
- Need to upscale the knowledge in new technologies in all kind of jobs.
- Checklist of guideline when trainings are organised (1 page infographics) to follow (show women in promotion, adapt class schedule to mothers...).
- Training to Telecentres staff on the existence of an « unconscient gender bias».

Sensitization

- Promote success stories of women who made it in IT (former students who set up their own business) or who have developed a career in the ICT field.
- More collaboration with schools: also point of contact for children.
- Take the example of the initiative « TechMums » (UK) to contribute to help change - see Facebook page (https://www.facebook.com/techmums?fref=nf).
- Stress the flexibility in ICT careers (both for men and women).
- Stress the difference between ICT sector and ICT professions (you can be an ICT professional working in a non ICT sector).
- Make women realise the end-use (give more sense).

In the communication towards the private sector

Encourage the private sector to commit to a larger diversity within their new ICT teams. Reward with a European label and an institutional recognition to companies which obtain best results, in terms of men/women quotas at all levels and more specifically in technical teams.

Data availability

- Gender monitoring: Need for more statistics

About Telecentre Europe

Telecentre Europe is a European non-for-profit organisation (NGO) and a member based association with a central office in Brussels, Belgium.

We represent publicly funded telecentres/telecentre networks, ICT learning centres, adult education centres and libraries across Europe where children and adults can access the Internet, learn the latest digital skills and keep up to date with technology and community developments.

We coordinate a number of projects, programmes and campaigns that empower people through ICT by finding new paths to employment, community life, relevant information and staying in touch with friends and family. All our members and partners believe that Information and Communication technology has an enormous potential to combat social exclusion and poverty.

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