Time to get more women in tech

Flexible working hours, better salaries and a good office environment - getting an Information and Communication technology (ICT) job has many advantages. Still, more than eight out of ten ICT jobs go to men. To mark International Women’s Day, the European Institute for Gender Equality (EIGE) focuses on ways to tap women’s potential in this growing sector.

“Deep-rooted stereotypes are one of the main obstacles for women’s careers in the ICT sector. At an early age, girls learn to consider boys better at learning digital skills. Later in life, they look for career options elsewhere and overlook the benefits of having a job in tech. If we do not break these stereotypes, the EU will keep wasting potential talent,” says Virginija Langbakk, Director of EIGE.

Research shows that a mere 17 % of ICT specialists in the EU are women. Due to the stereotypes in early education, barely any teenage girls consider a future in tech. This trend threatens to widen
gender segregation even more. This is a real problem for Europe. ICT already suffers from a shortage of digital skills and therefore cannot boost the EU economy to its full potential. With more women on board, this would not be the case.

How could the digital sector attract more women? One less-known factor is the favourable approach to work-life balance. Taking a few hours off from work during the day is usually not a problem, working late or very early is not common. Almost 90% of employees in ICT appreciate their working time arrangements. The pay gap between women and men is also lower than in most other sectors.

EIGE’s forthcoming research on Women in ICT also reveals some less attractive sides of the sector, which need addressing. The seemingly different “game” rules for women and men is a worrying trend. The statistics show that women in tech jobs are more educated than men, but still end up in lower positions.

Another challenge is the need for continuous upscaling of skills, which is a prerequisite for a successful career in the ICT sector. This can be difficult for women, who still tend to take a lion’s share of household and care responsibilities and therefore do not have time to engage in trainings outside office hours. An equal sharing of home responsibilities would therefore have a positive impact on women’s careers.

“There is clearly work to be done in the ICT sector and the way to start is with good practices and policies. We have identified some examples on introducing work-life balance to tech companies and on attracting women to ICT. We have also developed guidelines for companies to advance the work-life balance of their employees. This is our contribution to help policy-makers take targeted actions in line with EU’s Directive on Work-Life Balance for Parents and Carers,” says Virginija Langbakk.

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Find our presentation on the main findings of our study ‘Women and men in ICT: a chance for better work-life balance’

European Commission’s International Women’s Day joint statement and press release about the Gender Equality Report 2018

Questions and Answers: What is the EU doing for women's rights and gender equality?

Read about gender segregation in the EU labour market

A set of selected good practices of attracting women to ICT and introducing work-life balance and our step by step guidelines for companies “The investment imperative for work-life balance
measures in the ICT sector” are forthcoming.

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