

Supporting work life balance to get more women into ICT

Digitalisation provides a unique opportunity for economic growth and the greater inclusion of women in the labour market. The need for STEM and ICT skills is growing in all sectors, from healthcare to manufacturing. With the sector demanding highly skilled employees, women have the chance to enter well-paid jobs with flexible working hours. However, the number of women graduating from STEM courses has remained persistently low in almost all EU countries since 2004. Getting more women into ICT would reduce the persistent gender-pay gap in the labour market, which is partly due to a disproportionate amount of women concentrated in modestly paid jobs such as teaching and care-work.



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How to successfully promote gender equality and work-life balance in the ICT sector:

• Forging partnerships

The most successful initiatives to get women into ICT saw companies collaborate with a diverse range of partners. These companies worked with universities to enlarge the talent pool of qualified women graduates, as well as with NGOs and service providers to implement work-life balance measures in their organisations. This joined up approach helped businesses both hire and retain women ICT specialists.

• Offering a wide range of services to ensure work-life balance

EIGE's research found that a diverse range of measures to suit the different needs of employees works best. The most effective options to allow work-life balance are telework, flexible work, parent-child office, parent support groups, women networks, and mentoring programmes.

• Fighting unconscious bias and stigma

Organisations identified by EIGE as having good practices had all at some point decided to adapt the culture of their organisation. Changes had been made to ensure that family and care-related leave do not harm the career progression

of employees. Part-time or flexible work options had been introduced to address stigma and bias against parents and carers at work. Senior leaders acted as role models by leaving the office on time and taking holidays as well as family related leave. Companies also checked all communication products for unconscious bias, adjusting both language and images used. Organisations also offered staff training on unconscious bias.

• Normalising parenthood

All of the companies featured in EIGE's examples of good practices had made real efforts to normalise the notion of parenthood within the organisation. From gifts for newborns to celebrating important family milestones and family breakfasts at the workplace, businesses were sending the message that work and parenting can co-exist.

EIGE's project has collected examples of good practices implemented by ICT companies to improve work-life balance in the ICT sector, as well as campaigns to get more women into ICT. These aim to make ICT jobs more attractive to girls and women.

Good practices encouraging women and girls to enter STEM professions

DigiPippi — the coolest girls' club in Denmark

DigiPippi's aim is to engage girls in the world of technology through tech workshops and tech brunches for mothers and daughters. These activities are aimed primarily at girls aged 7 - 13, who are already digital consumers but often lack a fundamental grounding in technology.

Ireland - Women-ReBoot – Have you still got it?

Women-ReBoot is an intensive programme managed by Software Skillnet - a skills network that partners with tech companies to enable already qualified women to re-enter the workforce after a career break. Thus it seeks to address

the skills shortage in the tech industry. Women participants benefit from a combination of training opportunities to update their skills, as well as practical work experience, one-to-one coaching and peer mentoring.

Poland - Encouraging and supporting Girls in IT and STEM in Poland

The main aim of "Girls as Engineers!" and "Girls go Science!" initiatives is to introduce women high school students to technical and engineering studies and promote this educational path as attractive in the long run. In order to overcome the difficulty of attracting highly skilled professionals to this field, promising career opportunities are offered by matching labour market demand with skills.

ABOUT THE STUDY

The European Institute for Gender Equality (EIGE) commissioned the study 'Supporting work life balance and addressing women's underrepresentation in the labour market: approaches and good practices in ICT sector'. The aim was to identify, collect and select the most promising examples of both workplace work-life balance initiatives, as well as campaigns and projects promoting ICT and STEM skills and professions among women and girls. The study was carried out by the WorkLife HUB and supported by a network of country experts in the 28 Member States. Further information related to the study is available at: <http://eige.europa.eu/good-practices>



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European Institute for Gender Equality, EIGE

The European Institute for Gender Equality (EIGE) is the EU knowledge centre on gender equality. EIGE supports policymakers and all relevant institutions in their efforts to make equality between women and men a reality for all Europeans by providing them with specific expertise and comparable and reliable data on gender equality in Europe.

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