Women's trajectories in ICT professions

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Objectives

• A European project 2002-2004 funded under the IST programme within FP5, aiming at bridging the gender gap and improving equal opportunities in ICT professions.

• Some key features of WWW-ICT: integrated, enlarged and dynamic
  – Integrating the explicative factors linked to education and training, working and employment conditions, and professional and technical culture.
  – Encompassing both computer professions and new professions linked to new communication technology. Covering both initial training and vocational training.
  – Considering professional models and professional trajectories as factors of integration or exclusion.
Research methodology

- Integrated theoretical framework
- Strong empirical investigation in 7 countries: Austria, Belgium, France, Italy, Ireland, Portugal, UK
  - 140 biographies of women (and men) in ICT professions
  - 28 case studies of enterprises and sectoral overviews in two areas: IT services and e-publishing
  - Looking for "good practices" aiming at reducing gender disparities in ICT professions
- Conclusions and recommendations
- Dissemination: emphasis on agents of change

Conclusions & recommendations

1. Falsification of some stereotypes, expected and unexpected results
2. Creating a better understanding of ICT professions
3. Career reorientation practices
4. Lifelong learning and training
5. Reconciling work and family/personal life
6. New HRM tools in recruitment, retention and mentoring
7. New issues for collective bargaining and welfare policies
8. Gender-oriented socio-economic research
Falsification of some stereotypes, expected and unexpected results

Falsification of some usual hypotheses on women and ICT
- There is not a lack of family role models
- There are not such problems of relation to technology
- Working conditions, although hard, are not perceived as the main problem

Evidence of traditional obstacles to women's careers
- Occupational segregation
- Glass ceiling

Evidence of characteristics of an open labour market
- Lack of institutionalisation
- Competitive culture among individuals
- High inter-company mobility

Evidence of typical forms of work organisation in the knowledge economy
- Project work
- Flexibility, unpredictability and long working hours

Creating a better understanding of ICT professions

Awareness campaigns
- Cross-disciplined curricula;
- training addressing teachers and career advisors
- Managerial recruiting practices;
- collective agreements on entry rules
- Systems of recognition of the skills acquired by employees and free-lance workers during their career paths

Agents of change
- Parents, teachers and students, vocational advisors, head hunters and human resources managers, European and national educational institutions, trade unionists
Career re-orientation practices

Awareness of the connections and disconnections between degrees and jobs

Re-training opportunity for “generalist” degrees and graduations unsuitable to the new economy

Retraining courses or tutorship for women after unemployment periods or maternity leaves

Agents of change
Vocational advisors, counsellors, social partners, training institutions

Lifelong learning and training

Low-cost public vocational training and/or subsidising private courses with bonus for self-education

Inventing the right mix of formal training and self training

Women ICT professionals as ICT trainers

Training for women at the end of maternity leaves

Supporting and self-helping networks among women ICT professionals

Agents of change
Training institutions, teachers, women’s associations, social partners
Reconciling work and family life

Training courses on project management competencies (time management)

Family friendly practices in companies (in order to break the vicious circle: few women → few family friendly practices → few women)

New forms of organisation and regulation of working time, beyond the "long hours culture"

Agents of change
Companies, HR managers, trade unions

New HRM tools in recruitment, retention and mentoring

Recruitment practices explicitly addressing both women and men (gender mainstreaming)

Retention policies in companies: improving family friendly practices

Role models of successful women careers in ICT

Mentoring for and by women

Agents of change
HR managers, women in top management, women teaching in universities and high schools
New issues for collective bargaining and welfare policies

Framework agreements on working hours flexibility (filling the gap between professionals the ICT sector and in the users sectors)

Framework for "long-term sustainable flexibility" for both employees and free-lance professionals

Agents of change
Public welfare institutions and social partners

Gender-oriented socio-economic research

More focused investigation on:

- gender aspects and issues of new forms of work organisation in ICT environments
- gender aspects in the the future of industrial relations (mix of collective and individual bargaining)
- the multiple ways adopted by ICT professionals to develop their knowledge

Agents of change
Local, national and European research authorities and institutions