



WWW-ICT
Widening Women's Work in Information
and Communication Technology

Women's trajectories in ICT professions

G rard Valenduc
FTU - Work & Technology Research Centre
Namur, Belgium

<http://www.ftu-namur.org>

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

WWW-ICT publications



Final report



Leaflets for agents of change

Downloadable from www.ftu-namur.org/www-ict