Abstract

Not a job for life?
Women's progression, conversion and drop out in ICT professions

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The presentation is based on selected results of two European research projects. The first one directly addresses the issues of gender imbalances and inequalities in ICT professions (WWW-ICT project, cf. references), while the second one concerns changes in work due to value chain restructuring and addresses knowledge-intensive professions, including ICT professions (WORKS project).

For the last years, the situation of women in ICT professions has not so much improved, despite a lot of awareness campaigns, at the European level and in many countries. Gender inequalities remain significant in the areas of career development, working and employment conditions, and work / life balance.

Among the factors that are shaping the current trends in ICT professions, global changes in the division of labour within and across ICT professions play an important part. Both the technical, social and spatial division of labour are changing, and this evolution entails a diversification of career patterns in ICT, which is not gender-neutral. Occupational profiles in ICT are evolving towards new forms of skills mix, which present advantages and disadvantages for women.

Particular attention is paid to two important features in women's careers in ICT. On the one hand, a high proportion of women enter ICT professions not from an ICT degree, but as a result of a conversion and/or re-training from other curricula. On the other hand, several surveys and case studies highlight that women are more likely than men concerned by dropping out of ICT professions. The issues of conversion and drop out, as particular gender aspects of career mobility in ICT, will be discussed in the presentation.

As a conclusion, some questions will be raised concerning the relevance and efficiency of the campaigns and messages that are set up in order to bridge the gender gap in ICT professions.

References