



E-NEWS

FOSTERING GENDER MAINSTREAMING IN THE ICT SECTOR

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Inova Consultancy, a partner of the transnational consortium for the implementation of the EC co-funded project **Gender-IT**, had the opportunity to **interview a female Research Assistant and PhD student at a UK University, Sarah Pearce***, and to discuss her experiences as a female PhD student in the IT field.

INTRO:

Sarah Pearce is a Research Assistant in a Computing Research Institute at a UK University and currently she is doing her PhD in Computing. Her area of research is digital multimedia. She has been a co-author of several scholarly publications and she has contributed her knowledge to many IT projects on a European level. She was born in Bangladesh, where she graduated from the prestigious Engineering University of Bangladesh in Computer Science and Engineering. She obtained her master's degree from the United States. Based on her interest, she chose a UK University for her PhD and was easily admitted. She has been in the UK more than 3 years and she plans to work here after finishing her PhD. Sarah* is the mother of a five year old boy.*

Q1: Why did you decide to study IT?

Since high school, I have been always interested in subjects like Mathematics, but especially in Science. This motivated me to apply to study Engineering in the beginning. I have always been encouraged by my parents to study hard and be accepted to one of the best universities in the country. Throughout my childhood, and the society in which I grew up, my friends and family were always encouraging me to do well at school and to enjoy a better future.

Q2: What do you think about your PhD course and previous courses? Were there any other girls on your IT degree?

I enjoy my research very much and I have learnt so much during my undergraduate course and studies in the USA. I think I do not think I would change my decision if I had a chance to start everything again. Writing a PhD is very challenging and requires a lot of hard work, but I find it very interesting. When I was doing my bachelor degree years ago there were very few girls studying IT courses, only two or three. However, I know that there are many more female students nowadays. In the US, I met a few more girls, maybe five or six. When I started my research in the UK there were two other girls in my group; it would be nice to have more women on my course.

Q3: How do you feel being a woman in a male-dominated field?

I do not think that gender makes a big difference. When we work together, we work as a team and only our knowledge and devotion matters. I think the individual's way of adapting to the environment really depends on a personal attitude. Motivation and devotion to your work does not come with a certain gender. If you are happy, serious, dedicated and disciplined with what you are doing I cannot see other barriers. However, there is one thing that is different for me and my male colleagues: it is my working schedule. I am a mum and I have daily responsibilities that are as important as my career. I always need to stick to my plan in order to deliver work and be at home for my child. However, I suppose it may be a similar situation for my male colleagues who have children.

KEY DATA:

gender-IT is a project co-funded by the European Union's Lifelong Learning Programme, under the Leonardo da Vinci Action.

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476,733.00 EUR
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AGREEMENT n°:

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PROJECT LEADER:

[IMCS](#)
[INTERCOLLEGE LTD.](#)
Cyprus

PARTNERS:

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[TARTU](#), Estonia

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Q4: Do you think that mentoring programmes are useful for women working in male-dominated fields?

When it comes to the support in terms of adapting to male-dominated fields and finding confidence in what I am doing, I personally do not see any major problems. However, I believe that it really depends on the individual. I know women who would benefit from such support. They may need to develop their mental strength, aptitude and confidence to achieve what they want. Mentoring programmes may be very useful for them in this way.

Q5: What would your advice be to other girls/women thinking of a career in IT?

I would say they need to remember that they can bring a valid contribution to the field and that thought processes are the same for both women and men. From a sociological point of view girls are allegedly more devoted to their work, so I would be happy to see other girls contributing more to the IT field.

*Not student's real name.

Project Update >>> Visit <http://www.gender-it.eu> for up to date information on project progress and related issues!

The **gender-IT** project is a two-year initiative co-funded by the European Union's Lifelong Learning Programme, under the Leonardo da Vinci Action. It is implemented by seven partners from Cyprus, Estonia, Greece, Spain, Sweden and the UK.

The gender-IT project aims to contribute to innovative and attractive VET practices in the ICT sector in order to cover the existing gender gap with **women accounting for less than 20% of computer systems designers, analysts and programmers in the EU27.**

Its specific objective is to build a sustainable multistakeholder network at a European level which will actively foster gender mainstreaming in VET for the ICT sector.

Its **operational aims** are to:

- Create a comprehensive, virtual resource centre on gender mainstreaming in VET for the ICT sector at European level;
- Promote good practices and innovative approaches in VET for the ICT sector regarding gender mainstreaming;
- Identify trends of gender mainstreaming in VET for the ICT sector and resulting impacts on VET practice;
- Raise awareness, inform and engage stakeholders and women;
- Expand the network, exploit its results and set the basis for sustainability.

gender-IT has been developed by a **transnational consortium** specifically set up for the purpose of implementing the project. It involves seven (7) actors from six (6) EU Member States with complementary expertise. Namely, the IMCS Intercollege LTD (Cyprus) which is the project leader, the University of Tartu (Estonia), ITEC Continuous Vocational Training Centre (Greece), MILITOS Emerging Technologies & Services (Greece), Scierter Espana S.L. (Spain), Emmerce EEIG (Sweden) and Inova Consultancy (UK).

Work is underway to produce the project's deliverables.

Key words: VET, ICT, Gender, EU, E-learning, Cyprus, Estonia, Greece, Spain, Sweden and UK.

For more information on the project structure, partners, and results to date you may visit our multilingual website at <http://www.gender-it.eu>

Latest news >>>

- June 2009: The 1st Steering Committee meeting was held in Tallinn, Estonia

Links >>>

- Workshop "More women, better jobs and boosting growth", 8 October 2009, Brussels
http://ec.europa.eu/information_society/activities/itgirls/gender_workshop09/index_en.htm

How to get involved>>>

We invite you to share your experience, ideas, opinions as well as any questions concerning gender-IT and the issues we try to address. Simply drop us an email at information@gender-it.eu or contact the partner nearest to you.

More information on the **gender-IT** project is available online at <http://www.gender-it.eu>

This newsletter will be issued regularly informing you about project progress, outputs and related developments.

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