

GemCITE

State of the Art Report

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1. Introduction:

Also in this field of technical professions, women are the hidden reserves for the labour market. The present situation shows a shortage of female IT-specialists which produces the impression, that women could get good jobs if they were qualified. But reality seems different. You can also find barriers of equal opportunities in these professions concerning the factors: gender, age, professional experiences, mobility and availability.

2. Documentation of the gender specific general conditions:

some facts:

The quota of women in technical professions in Austria in the year 2000 was about 4,78 % .

The quota of female applicants for technical oriented tasks is about 10 % .

The quota of women in the area of technical job keepers is about 21% but it is only about 10% in the field of technical engineers.

At the beginning of the 80s, informatics was a very promising vocational aim of girls and women. But time after time this profession has been getting a gender stereotype character like other technical professions too.

This was the reason why the participation of female trainees sized down.

The quota of female informatics - students decreased from 18,3 % in the year 1990/91 to 11,8 % in the year 2000/01.

(An interesting comparison is: the quota of female students for electrical engineer increased during the same time from 2,9 % to 5,7%).

Women who are qualified for male-dominated professions have a higher risk to get unemployed and over 38% of the female technical specialists do not get a job which is equitable for their education.

If women are employed in the IT branch, they work as web designer, in the field of marketing, or at administration but there are only a few female technical engineers. There is even a gender-specific job splitting within IT professions.

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The number of women in management positions reduces with each higher step along the ladder of career.

The new jobs in the field of IT give too less opportunities for apprenticeship, which makes competition tough between young men and young women looking for a job.

In Austria the employment service (former labour office) demands a quota of about 30% female trainees in all IT education-programs. Fact is, that women can only be found in the lower level IT educations and only as a minority in the higher level IT educations.

Although there are projects which prepare women for these high level IT educations like the “RAMPE” (means ramp) from the styrian women´s institution “nowa” , women drop out during the IT education or they qualify, but they do not land a job. (At the RAMPE training, which finished last year, women got all informations about technical job profiles and job conditions and they even got the possibility to enlarge their IT experiences and to prepare for the admission tests.)

Even there is a disparity between job interests of girls and women and their choice of profession. Only 30 % of girls with a technical interest realise this idea by making an appendant technical qualification. So we have to recognize, that it will be very important to analyse the structural factors of the barriers and handicaps for women in the IT business and that it is not enough to explain the absence of women in this field by the so called reduced interests of women in technology.

Austrian activities to reduce the gender gaps in the fields of IT:

There were a lot of activities during the last years, which tried to increase the number of female specialists in the technical professions.

The longest history have educational institutes for women where they are receiving special support and counselling for vocational guidance, for career planning, skill trainings and IT qualifications mainly for basic knowledge. Main focus of these trainings is the compensation of gender-specific disadvantages, also the awareness of female skills and authorities and the encouraging of women to choose untraditional professions or to progress up the career ladder.

At the moment there are a lot of projects in Austria for example: “women into technics” promotions and Technical workshops or so called “girls days” within companies. With the participation in these projects women or girls have the

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possibilities to discover their technical interests and abilities or even to learn by practical trainings.

There are also trainings for career planning (for instance the styrian project nowa - perspektiva) which help women to learn more about job profiles and job conditions and even to clear up the qualification possibilities in the IT branch, which often are too complex and difficult to survey.

At least there is a new web platform called “female change to technology” subsidised from the Austrian ministry for women and the ministry of innovation and technology. This internet platform offers all information about this topic: information about all institutions and projects working at “women and IT” and also various links to literature and research works, or all events and symposiums to this theme.

Two equal projects started this year 2003 in Tirol and Burgenland, both with the working topic: “equal opportunities in IT”.

An interesting research program subsidised by the Austrian ministry of science and art started 2002 with the name “gender and IT”. This project tries to get answers for the question, if technologies by themselves exclude women and other groups of persons. First results are expected in the year 2004.

3. The summary of results accomplished so far European Union projects:

4. The summary of results from one relevant scientific work:

The contents of this report and the aserted facts are taken out of the works:

- Women in technical professions, Vienna 2002, L&R social research.
 - The problem of qualification and integration of women into the IT labour market, Vienna 2001, Helene Schiffbänker.
 - Evaluation of the Training: women@web, Vienna 2002, L&R social research.
 - Processes concerning choice of profession by girls on a divided labour market, Vienna 2003, L&R social research.
- Change to technologi - girls and women go to technics, Vienna 2003, brochure of the ministries: women, innovation, technology.

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5. Comparison of the advisabilities of traditional women promotion and innovative strategies of Gendermainstreaming on national level.

If we want to talk about, we first have to make a definition of what is meant by “gender mainstreaming” and we have to put women advancement into a relation to Gender Mainstreaming.

So what is Gender Mainstreaming?

Since 1999 – and the contracts of Amsterdam – it is obligation for all members of the European Union to realise Gender Mainstreaming. The governments of all nations declared to care that Gender Mainstreaming will be put into action in all political fields.

The definition of the European Commission means in other words:
To do the reorganisation of all processes of planning and decision in all fields and all levels by all acting people being aware of gender-specific facts and discriminations and with the aim of equality between men and women.

So with Gender Mainstreaming equal opportunities should be realised no longer exclusively by specific activities for women, but it should be realised by organising each project in a way that equality is the result.

This means that strategies of Gender Mainstreaming are addressed to women as well as men and that the responsibility to act belongs to all decision makers.

Also men should be demanded to change their attitudes and to be willing to proof the social structure of men`s worlds within companies and to change cultures if it is important.

On the other side, it continues to be important to work with traditional women advancement, especially in profession lines, where women are a minority.

If we would take a picture - from our part of view - Gender Mainstreaming is like a shelter which is carried by several pillars. The pillars are all useful activities and decisions to realise equal opportunities between men and women. One of them is the traditional women advancement.

The results and effects of women-specific education are evident by a lot of studies and research works (for example the evaluation of women@web).

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At the time of our inquiry Gender Mainstreaming is still not implemented in Austria.

Therefore a comparison of its success is not possible.

Austria is still in the start up phase to Gender Mainstreaming. This mainly means that information about it has been disseminated, and that all political decision makers should have become aware of this theme. In some governmental institutions the results of first gender-specific analyses are evident.

Also information of Gender Mainstreaming has been given to all educational institutions which are cooperating with the employment service (labour office) to train employees for a career or which offer vocational counselling / career service.

Last year an equal project started in Styria, called “just gem”, where all partners are working on projects to improve their employment policy.

The styrian employment service for example wants to implement Gender Mainstreaming into the business service. They will start in 2004 with their activities.

6. Which items in the context of Gendermainstreaming and IT-training are most important

Wherever we go, the main argument to answer the question why women are absent in technical professions, is still the description of the so called “technical distance” of women.

This socialised handicap should be compensated by certain pretrainings and supports before educational programs.

If this idea of solving the problems would be right, the women-specific trainings would have been more successful in the field of IT.

But if we remember the facts of gender gaps in IT it is not like that!

Therefore (and even with the new idea of Gender Mainstreaming strategies) it is time to look for the structural barriers and reasons for this status quo.

Research works make evident, that boys and girls at the age of 8 or 9 have the same wide spectrum of profession ideas. But at the time of choosing the

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qualification, girls reduce their ideas into a few traditional job fields, like cosmetics and secretary.

We could even say, that girls and young women anticipate the traditional models of gender-specific division of work and the gender-specific splitting of the labour market.

At this place and in our project to improve the IT education, we cannot only work for the mastering of the question: what happened in the past (means factors of socialisation) but even to manage the gender-stereotype conditions of the labour market.

We have to find answers to the questions:

**What is hidden behind the supposed technical distance of women?
We have to ask if already the criteria concerning the evaluation of technical understanding are watched at a male point of view!**

Isn't it possible that there are different interests and dealings with technics between men and women?

Or could it be possible that the different behaviour of men and women staying on training groups is wrongly transferred on technical skills of women and men. Here the experiences of women academies and mono-education can be useful. The group behaviour of men is that they have more self confidence and that they are more active at trial and error learning. Women are more reserved and they prefer to know first which results they are learning and where they could use their knowledge.

Within women academies women have the possibility to learn along their own interests and life experiences. They even have the possibility to handle it without the competition of male self confidence and without gender-stereotype group dynamics.

These analyses offer a critical position to co-education, because they express that education is concentrated on male interests. Especially coeducation in the field of technical training is constructing masculine men's worlds, where women are exotic and "wonder-women in a rude boys paradise" (title of a symposium in Vienna).

On this point I think it is necessary to prove whether an educational-system which is oriented on equal opportunities and which tries to fulfil all demands of a democratic and integrative education, would be profitable for men as well as for women.

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Because if we want to change mono systems into multicultural diversity systems, also men have demands to the development of a wider spectrum of skills and also men have benefits from avoiding technical single tracks.

In times of proclaiming the work – life – balance, it could be profitable for each person no matter if male or female, to change the images of professions. We have to change the engineer stereotype of the single, being available at any time, achievement oriented, lone fighter - into a job profile which is more handsome and describes the whole variety of activities and demanded skills of a job for a satisfied employee.

And regarding to the labour market: wouldn't it be more profitable for the business to use the diversity of skills of various employees and to avoid gender stereotype cultures and gender stereotype work splitting?

Where we must start to work and redesign the IT education we have gathered in the checklist of “determining factors of gender gaps“out of the former named research works.

We have to reconsider our concepts of education as well as the philosophy behind our education system. We have to redesign the job image of technical professions and we have to work for creative and innovative strategies on the interface of IT-education and IT-business.