



**EUROPEAN COMMISSION**

**PRESS RELEASE**

Brussels, 3 October 2013

## **Digital Agenda: Bringing more women into EU digital sector would bring €9 billion annual GDP boost, EU study shows**

Getting more girls interested in a digital career and getting more women into digital jobs would benefit the digital industry, women themselves and Europe's economy. This is the key finding of the European Commission survey on women active in the ICT sector, published today.

According to the study, there are now too few women working in the ICT sector:

- Of 1,000 women with a Bachelors or other first degree, only 29 hold a degree in Information and Communication Technologies (ICTs) (as compared to 95 men), and only 4 in 1000 women will eventually work in the ICT sector.
- Women leave the sector mid-career to a greater extent than men and they are under-represented in managerial and decision-making positions (even more than in other sectors).
- Only 19.2% of ICT-sector workers have female bosses, compared to 45.2% of non-ICT workers.

But if the trend were reversed and women held digital jobs as frequently as men, the European GDP could be boosted annually by around € 9 billion (1.3 times Malta's GDP), according to the study. The ICT sector would benefit since organisations which are more inclusive of women in management achieve a 35% higher Return on Equity and 34% better total return to shareholders than other comparable organisations.

The study also suggests that women who work in the ICT sector earn almost 9% more than women in other parts of the economy, and also have greater higher flexibility in arranging their working schedules and are less susceptible to unemployment (by 2015, there will be 900,000 unfilled ICT positions in the EU).

European Commission Vice-President for the Digital Agenda Neelie Kroes said: *"We now know, beyond doubt, that more women in a business mean a healthier business. It is high time the IT sector realised this and allowed women a chance to help the sector and Europe's economy benefit from their enormous potential"*.

The study also suggests four priority areas where action should be taken:

- Building a renewed image of the sector among women and society, with actions such as disseminating most appealing ICT topics for young women (exciting, diverse, profitable etc.);
- Empowering women in the sector, e.g. promoting, together with industry, harmonised European educational curricula to foster clear and straightforward ICT careers paths;

- Increasing the number of women entrepreneurs in ICTs, e.g. improving access to seed and venture capital programs for women entrepreneurs;
- Improving working conditions in the sector, e.g. by highlighting the improved performance of businesses employing women.

## Background

Some of the study's key findings:

- On women leaving the sector too early: while 20% of women aged 30 with ICT-related degrees work in the sector, only 9% of women above 45 years of age do so;
- On women being underrepresented in managerial and decision-making positions: 19.2% of ICT-sector workers have female bosses, compared to 45.2% of non-ICT workers;
- On the number of female entrepreneurs in ICTs being too low compared to non-ICT sectors: women make up 31.3% of self-employed Europeans and only 19.2% of ICT entrepreneurs.

The study also points to the factors that prevent women from fully participating in the sector: (a) cultural traditions and stereotypes about women's role, (b) internal barriers and socio-psychological factors, such as lack of self-confidence, lack of bargaining skills, risk-aversion and negative attitudes towards competition and (c) external barriers, such as a strongly male-dominated environment, difficulties in balancing personal and professional life and lack of role models in the sector.

The study showcases a variety of profiles of women working in the area of digital technology: from a videogames developer and a digital communications specialist to an ICT policy-maker. Profiling of digital role models for girls and giving visibility to women in the sector is the key way to attracting many more girls to consider a career in the ICT sector, the report concludes.

## Useful links

[Women active in the ICT sector executive summary](#)

[Women active in the ICT sector study](#)

[Women in ICT in the Digital Agenda](#)

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### Contacts

Email: [comm-kroes@ec.europa.eu](mailto:comm-kroes@ec.europa.eu) Tel: +32.229.57361 Twitter: [@RyanHeathEU](#)