

FACTS AND RECOMMENDATIONS ON GENDER EQUALITY IN VOCATIONAL EDUCATION

For all of the V4 countries the data show that women clearly dominate in services, sales, education, social care, healthcare and administrative services. Men prevail in occupations related to construction, industry, telecommunications and information, machinery and equipment operating, and transport.

This is how gender segregation looks like. It means that one group of professions is made of almost exclusively men and the other one almost exclusively women. As a result there are missing women and men in some of the areas such as women in technical professions and men in education and healthcare.

The gender segregation has negative consequences on the labour market, especially when it comes to pay and prestige.

The highly feminized professions (professions with more than 70% of women) are paid the lowest, e.g. hairdressers, beauticians, waitresses, clothing workers, dieticians, medical and pharmaceutical technicians. Women employed in the masculinized occupations earn more than women in feminized professions, e.g. stewards, guides, mechanics and operators of machinery and equipment, electricians, agents and dealers, maritime and aviation workers.

One of the results of gender segregation is gender pay gap. Even though still women in male-dominated professions get much less money than men for the same job, it is still recommended that women enter the male-dominated professions because they will earn much more than in feminized sectors. It will improve the economic situation of women by increasing their earnings and their chances for employment. Consequently it will reduce the risk of poverty due to gender segregation. This will also alleviate the shortage of labour in professional positions and skilled workers that will hamper economic growth in these countries in the near future.

Gender de-segregation has important long-term consequences, since it will also reduce the need for social supports for women in retirement age.

The gender segregation in the labour market has its roots in education, which is permeated by gender stereotypes. This can be clearly witnessed at the vocational educational level when one looks at the number of girls and boys in specific fields of study. In all these countries, the proportion of girls graduating from technical, manufacturing, and construction-related studies is lower than 10%, while they represent more than 80% of those who finish vocational studies for health care and social work. There has been a tendency that boys started to enter “feminised” fields, but girls have not made any inroads into “masculine” fields.

Girls opting for particular vocational training after the elementary school have a limited variety of choices compared to boys. This is because the choices of girls and boys are still very traditional and follow stereotypical career patterns for women and men. This issue is especially relevant for basic vocational education, where gender patterns are even more dissimilar, and youth with this level of education have limited chances to change professions later in life.

Recommendations

Short-term

- increase number of girls in boys-dominated fields of studies using different methods (e.g. offering scholarships for girls choosing male-dominated fields of study or introducing a quota for girls in boys-dominated fields of study)
- re-name fields of study and their descriptions to eliminate gender stereotypes and to encourage girls (and boys) to enter certain fields.
- change the stereotypical division of the subjects to enable students to try various activities and develop various skills (arts and craft lessons for boys and girls equally)
- provide detailed information about the everyday praxis of professions so girls and boys consciously choose the fields of study ((f.e. through mentoring programmes, Girls Days, visiting the workplaces)
- provide role models for girls and boys in primary schools (f.e. through mentoring programmes or Girls Days)
- provide specific funds for NGOs and other bodies who support actions towards gender de-segregation of education

Long-term

- introduce the principles of gender sensitive education in curricula, textbooks, school management, teacher-student interaction, career counselling etc.
- enforce the usage of gender sensitive language and visualisation to describe professions (f.e. on the schools' websites, promotional materials)
- eliminate gender stereotyped image of professions (f.e. through public awareness raising campaigns and cooperation with employers)
- implement gender sensitive education courses for university students of pedagogy and teaching
- establishing co-operation between parents, career counsellors and schools to discuss the importance of conscious career choices