



A Gender Story: Educational sheet

“It is crucial to combat gender stereotypes in all age groups, ranging from very young children to the older population. In general, everyone should be involved, i.e. men and women of all ages. **Special focus should lie on young people, as they have to be well-informed about career choices.** Hence, schools and universities, but also families should be targeted.

At the same time, it is of great importance that employers are involved as well, since they play a key role in promoting gender equality and combating segregation, e.g. by changing recruitment, retaining and promotion policies. **Evidence suggests that diverse teams are more effective and more creative.**”¹

What are gender stereotypes and how to recognise them?

First of all it is important to define the concept of gender: Gender refers to the roles and responsibilities of men and women that are created in our families, our societies and our cultures. The concept of gender also includes the expectations held about the characteristics, aptitudes and likely behaviours of both women and men (femininity and masculinity). Gender roles and expectations are learned. They can change over time and they vary within and between cultures. Systems of social differentiation such as political status, class, ethnicity, physical and mental disability, age and more, modify gender roles. The concept of gender is vital because, applied to social analysis, it reveals how women’s subordination (or men’s domination) is socially constructed. As such, the subordination can be changed or ended. It is not biologically predetermined nor is it fixed forever.

Gender stereotypes are preconceived ideas whereby females and males are arbitrarily assigned characteristics and roles determined and limited by their gender. Gender stereotypes both result from, and are the cause of, deeply engrained attitudes, values, norms and prejudices against women and men.

A typical gender stereotype in education is that girls/women perform better in humanities than boys/men; while perform worst in STEM (Scientific Technology Engineering Mathematics) than boys/men. This implies also that boys/men attitudes towards caring professions is not considered a strength and they are usually divert towards more technical studies.

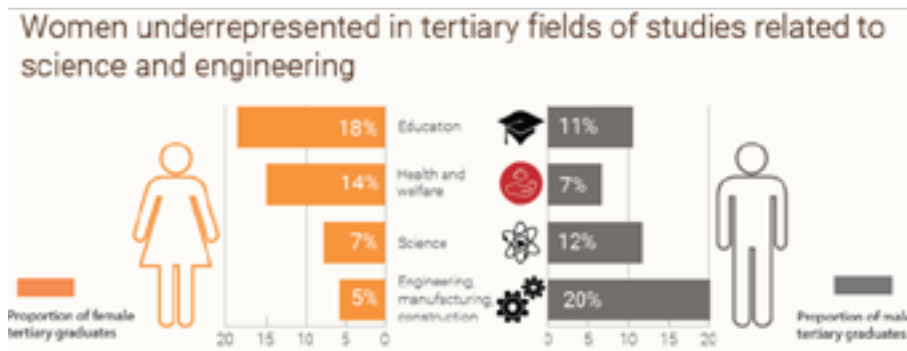
Gender stereotypes in the labour market see girls/women often evaluated on the basis of their physical attractiveness and external image in general, than boys/men. At the same time boys/men are (socially) required to avoid emotions and any sentiment while competing for a job in the labour market, because it is considered a weakness for them.

Gender stereotypes at the workplace consider girls/women less interested to career progression and high job positions than boys/men. While boys and men are forced to highly perform at the workplace beyond the working hours and despite their personal/family obligations.

1. Opinion on how to overcome occupational segregation - Advisory Committee of the EU Commission on Equal Opportunities for Women and Men

Why tackle gender stereotypes in education, training and at the workplace?

Based on gender stereotypes that are assumed as real facts, discriminations in the education-training and labour market chain continue to happen and to negatively affect individual performances and, in general, the society as whole, whilst gender parity in social institutions could yield substantial economic benefits, leading to an annual increase in the world GDP growth rate of 0.6 percentage points by 2030².



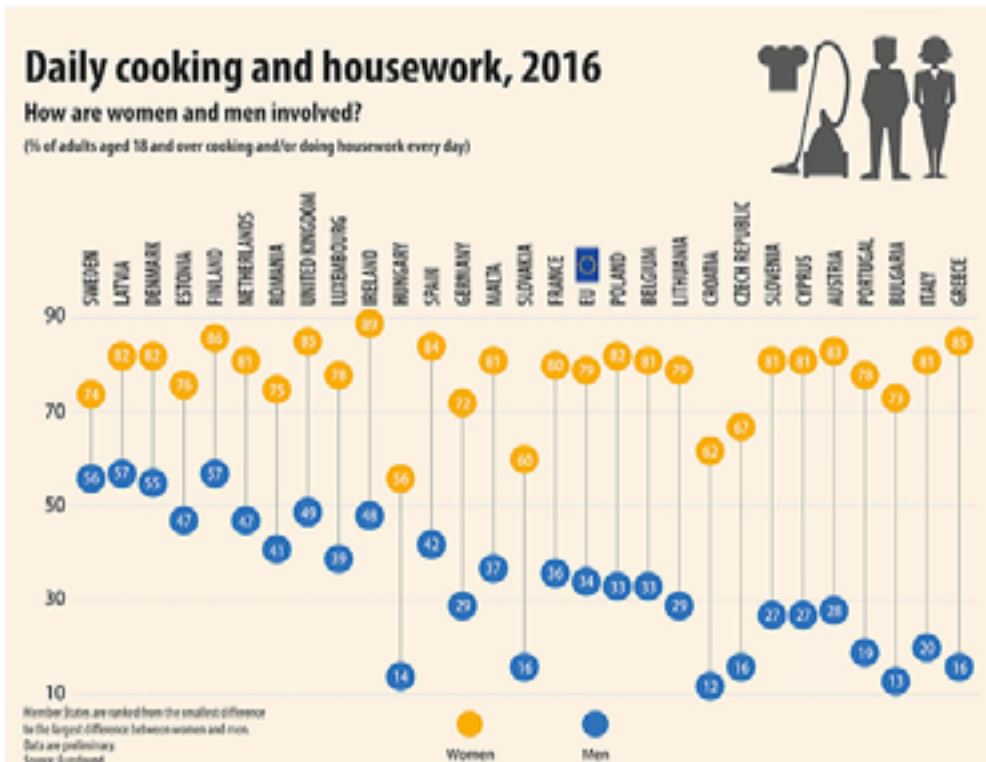
Women should be given educational choices to expand their education and career options into areas where men are predominant and into new and growing work opportunities (like the digital and green economy). Men, too, should be given educational and career choices in «female» dominated fields (especially the care economy, but also primary and secondary education). For too long, the focus was merely on encouraging women to enter men-dominated arenas, but men have so far had very little encouragement to enter female-dominated areas.

Considering also that **women in tertiary education in Europe are better than men, with a percentage of 32,8% of women with tertiary education against the 28,9% of men**, but still **women are less employed than men** and in general employment segregation by gender traps women in low-productivity, low-paying jobs, a waste of talents is clearly evident with negative implications on the economic growth and development.

Moreover gender pay gap still characterises the European and global labour market, with **women in EU earning on average a 16% less than men for the same job positions and tasks**.

A high pay gap is usually characteristic of a labour market that is highly segregated, meaning that women are more concentrated in a restricted number of sectors and/or professions (e.g. Czech Republic, Estonia and Finland), or in which a significant proportion of women work part-time (e.g. Germany and Austria). The institutional mechanisms and systems on wage setting can also influence the pay gap.





Gender stereotypes or discrimination practices are present not only in relation to the wage but also to the work distribution. The unequal sharing of paid and unpaid work between women and men affects their labour force participation over the life course, and limits women's possibilities to participate in lifelong learning and to develop skills and qualifications needed to enter the labour market or new occupations.

A much larger share of women than men do child care, housework and cooking. In EU working women spend on average 26h /week on housework and care while men only 9h. For all Member States, there is a much larger share of women doing child care, housework and cooking than men. In the EU in 2016, 79 % of women cooked and/or did housework on a daily basis, compared with 34 % of men.

Overall, traditional gender stereotypes impact the choice of study fields or occupations that women and men take by driving interest towards specific subjects that are deemed 'appropriate'; make it challenging for individuals to remain in their chosen career pathway when opting for a course or a job that differ from what is socially accepted; and can drive recruitment and employment practices. Awareness and continuous improvement are needed all along the education-work chain in order promote gender equality.

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