

## MEPs propose measures to tackle the digital gender gap

- Concrete measures needed to increase the digital inclusion of women and girls
- The media should help promote more women role models
- In 2018, women accounted for only 17% of all ICT students in the EU

**It is necessary to encourage women's participation in technical and high-level jobs by overcoming educational barriers from an early stage, say MEPs.**

In a non-legislative report adopted on Thursday by 598 votes in favour, 45 against and 40 abstentions, MEPs call on the Commission to address the serious gender gap within the Information and Communication Technologies (ICT) sector, via concrete measures and appropriate funding aimed at increasing the participation and digital inclusion of women and girls.

**Encouraging girls to take up ICT classes** The text calls on educational entities to include a gender component in all STEM (science, technology, engineering and maths) and ICT-related curricula, educational materials and teaching practices from an early age to encourage girls to take up and continue studying mathematics, coding, ICT classes and science subjects in schools.

It also asks the Commission and Member States to set up mentoring schemes with female role models in ICT within all levels of education, and to support lifelong learning in order to facilitate women's professional transition to ICT-related positions.

**Promoting gender equality in the ICT sector** Parliament calls for the reduction of the gender gap in the digital economy through targeted measures including EU funds to finance female-led projects in the digital sector, training courses for HR departments on 'unconscious gender-discriminatory bias', annual reports on diversity and the gender pay gap by ICT companies, and EU funds distributed to companies that take into account gender balance criteria.

It also asks the Commission and member states to foster women's entrepreneurship in innovation and to increase financing opportunities for female entrepreneurs and female-led digital start-ups.

**More role models needed in the media** MEPs call on the audiovisual and media industries to increasingly portray women in STEM and ICT-related professions and to include more women on discussion panels, newspaper articles and other spheres where public opinion and discourse on technological subjects is shaped.

Furthermore, they recall the importance of eliminating conscious and unconscious gender-discriminatory bias from algorithms, artificial intelligence (IA) applications, videogames and toys that perpetuate harmful gender stereotypes and lead to a reduced participation of women in the digital, IA and ICT sectors.

**Quote** The rapporteur, [Maria da Graça Carvalho](#) (EPP, PT), said: "Women are a minority in the digital economy. It is urgent that we change this status quo and empower women to benefit entirely from the countless opportunities of digital economy, starting at the early stages of education and up to employment. We need public authorities, media and society in general to commit fully to engage more women in the digital world."

**Background** Eurostat data from 2018 showed that women accounted for only 17% of the 1.3 million people studying ICT in the EU. According to [EIGE](#), 73% of boys aged between 15 and 16 feel comfortable using digital devices that they are less familiar with, compared with 63% of girls, and less than 3% of teenage girls in the EU express an interest in working as an ICT professional in the future. On average, women in the ICT sector earn 19% less than men.

### Further information

[Adopted text \(21.01.2021\)](#)

[Procedure file](#)

[Free photos, video and audio material - Gender balance](#)

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