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## Gender segregation in education and employment in Cyprus

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## Introduction

The aim of this research was to identify those attitudes and behaviours that perpetuate gender stereotypes and influence gender segregation in education and employment in five EU countries: Cyprus, Italy, Portugal, Spain, and Slovenia. Gender segregation is a phenomenon by which certain sectors or fields in education or work witness a high concentration of one gender over another. Horizontal segregation refers to the dominance of men or women in certain educational and/or occupational sectors. Vertical segregation refers to the over-representation of men in leadership positions. Educational choices strongly contribute to the reproduction of horizontal segregation in the labour market. Thus, in pre-primary education only 4.9% of teachers are men (Eurostat 2016), while employment in science, technology, engineering, and mathematics (STEM) is still male dominated. Women represent a minority among engineering graduates, reaching only 27%, but a majority of graduates in the humanities (67%). Gender segregation creates inequalities such as the gender pay gap, which stands at 16.2% in the EU (Eurostat 2016), although female university graduates outnumber males.

In order to identify attitudes and behaviours that perpetuate gender stereotypes, we interviewed young people aged 17–28 years who were in transition periods and therefore needed to make educational and/or occupational choices. We also included in the research a sample of professionals working with young people in transition periods, teachers, youth workers, and career counsellors working in education or facilitating career choices.

As the current report focuses on the research results in Cyprus, we provide some background information regarding the status of gender equality in the country. In the last two decades Cyprus has promoted gender equality policies and legislation, mainly within the framework of the country's harmonisation with the *acquis communautaire* (Pavlou & Christodoulou 2012). Government policy and current legislation cover violence against women, with the ratification of the Istanbul Convention and the resultant amendments to the national laws. The legislation in Cyprus also covers equal treatment in employment, penalisation of sexual harassment in the workplace, equal pay, maternity protection, and limited parental leave among others. A number of national action plans and strategies have been developed that specifically address gender inequality, including the National Action Plan on Equality between Women and Men (2014-2017).

Regarding gender equality in and through education, the Ministry of Education and Culture established a committee to monitor and coordinate activities promoting gender equality. One of its most important activities was the Strategic Action Plan on Gender Equality in Education (2014-2017), which includes the following measures:

- Structural reform of the education system (i.e. the introduction of programmes to increase girls' participation in technical fields of study, the use of new technologies and the development of a New Modern Apprenticeship for girls).

- Training and workshops in gender equality and gender sensitisation for teachers and career guidance counsellors.
- Strengthening school resources on gender (i.e. developing up-to-date educational material to combat gender stereotypes from an early age, particularly: encouraging boys to actively participate in family life and girls to take part in politics/public life; encouraging relationships based on equality and mutual respect between the sexes; introducing vocational and social education).

The Cypriot Educational Reform (2010-2011) programme introduced a number of changes throughout the primary and secondary school curricula. In this process, the gender dimension was recognised as one of the parameters of the reformed school curriculum. Specific learning objectives related to gender equality were introduced under the subjects of Health and Life Skills Education (Agogi Ygeias) in the elementary schools and under Home Economics in the secondary schools (gymnasium level, up to the age of 15).

In addition, the Cyprus Pedagogical Institute of the Ministry of Education and Culture has launched a webpage dedicated to gender equality, offering easy access to relevant material and information on good practice. The webpage includes useful material for teachers on promoting gender equality through education, reducing negative gender stereotypes and providing equal opportunities to girls and boys in the learning process.

Although there have been important steps forward recent decades, moves towards gender equality have been sporadic. Many of the National Action Plans do not tend to foresee a dedicated budget or long-term evaluation and have therefore proven ineffective at reaching their goals.

## Methodology

This research adopted qualitative methods, collecting data from in-depth interviews and focus groups. Individual interviews were conducted with young people in transition from school to the workplace and/or university. The interview sample was recruited by service organisations. We used this method because the research involved targeting groups that were difficult to find. The targeted profiles of the interviewees are indicated in Table 1.

**Table 1. Profiles of targeted sample for in-depth interviews**

1.	Female, 15-18 years old, below upper secondary
2.	Male, 15-18 years, below upper secondary
3.	Female, 19-29 years, in final year of VET, with work experience
4.	Male, 19-29 years, in final year of VET, with work experience
5.	Female, 21-29 years, university graduate with work experience
6.	Male, 21-29 years, university graduate with work experience
7.	Female, 19-29 years, NEET, involved in Youth Guarantee Programme
8.	Male, 19-29 years, NEET, involved in Youth Guarantee Programme
9.	Female/male, 19-29 years, NEET, not involved in any programme

Key: VET = vocational education and training; NEET = not in education, employment or training

We approached organisations serving the targeted groups and asked them to choose potential interviewees from their pool of beneficiaries, making random checks to ensure they met the age and sex criteria. Representatives of the organisations asked potential interviewees for permission to pass their contact details to the researcher from MIGS so that they could arrange to interview them on their educational and career choices. The MIGS researcher then contacted them individually via email, attaching a letter describing the research and giving ethical details. If the person was willing to give an interview, the researcher called them and arranged a meeting at a place and time of the interviewee's choosing.

To recruit the sample, we used different organisations for different target audiences. More specifically, for the recruitment of one male and one female not in education, employment, or training (NEET) involved in a youth group, we approached the Human Resource Development Authority in Cyprus. For the recruitment of one male and one female interviewee in the last year of secondary education, we approached a private school giving English and mathematics classes. The most challenging recruitment task was to identify a NEET, male or female, who was not involved in a youth group. We approached the Department of Labour, which put us in touch with one person, who was eventually unwilling to give an interview. We then went back and asked for another person who was available. To recruit a man and a woman in the final year of tertiary education, we posted an invitation in the public spaces of the University of Nicosia and interviewed the first two students who responded by contacting us.

The in-depth interviews followed a semi-structured protocol that was prepared by our partners at the University of Valencia. The interviews in Cyprus were conducted by Maria Angeli, a MIGS researcher, in locations of the interviewees' choosing, namely in cafeterias in Larnaca and Nicosia, at the MIGS offices, and at the University of Nicosia. Table 2 gives the names, nicknames, and socio-demographic information of all participants in the in-depth interviews.

**Table 2. The in-depth interview sample**

No.	Name	Nickname	Family members	Sex	Age	Education or occupation status	Parents' education	Parent's occupation
1	Marina	The booklover	3	F	26	In final year of tertiary education	Father: Tertiary Mother: Secondary	Father: Lawyer Mother: Saleswoman
2	Angelos	The gamer	5	M	26	In final year of secondary education	Father: Tertiary Mother: Tertiary	Father: Business administrator Mother: Nurse
3	Anna	The go-getter	4	F	17	In final year of secondary education	Both parents: Primary	Father: Public servant Mother: Housewife
4	Costas	The conservative	5	M	17	In final year of secondary education	Both parents: Secondary	Father: Hotel staff Mother: Policewoman
5	Joanna	The sporty one	5	F	22	NEET involved in a youth programme	Both parents: Secondary	Father: Public servant Mother: Saleswoman
6	Maria	The family lover	6	F	28	In final year of VET with work experience	Both parents: Primary	Father: Employee in the private sector. Mother: Housewife
7	Antonis	The pragmatist	5	M	22	In final year of VET with work experience	Father: Primary Mother: Secondary	Father: Public servant (social security) Mother: Cleaner
8	Aris	The philosopher	4	M	27	NEET, involved in a youth guarantee programme	Father: Secondary Mother: Tertiary	Father: Builder Mother: Banker
9	Eva	The optimist	5	F	22	NEET, not involved in any programme	Father: Primary Mother: Secondary	Father: Private sector employee Mother: Office worker

In addition to the in-depth interviews, three focus groups were conducted, two with professionals working with young people in education and the third with career-oriented professionals working with young people, such as university staff and a public-sector

employment office employee. As it was impossible to form a mixed group of school career counsellors and secondary teachers, we conducted two separate focus groups with educators. The memberships of the three groups are profiled in Tables 3, 4, and 5.

**Table 3. Members of secondary school teachers' focus group**

No.	Acronym	Age (years)	Gender	Sector	Profile
1.	W.A. teacher PU	38	Female	Public	Public school teacher
2.	W.B. teacher PU	43	Female	Public	Public school teacher
3.	W.C. teacher PU	40	Female	Public	Public school teacher
4.	M.A. teacher PU	33	Male	Public	Public school teacher

**Table 4. Members of school career counsellors' focus group**

No.	Acronym	Age	Gender	Sector	Profile
1.	W. school career counsellor PU	38	Woman	Public	Public sector career counsellor
2.	W. school career counsellor PU	55	Woman	Public	Career counsellor at the public sector
3.	W. school career counsellor PU	46	Woman	Public	Career counsellor at the public sector
4.	W. school career counsellor PU	42	Woman	Public	Career counsellor at the public sector
5.	M. school careers advisor PR	44	Man	Public	Career counsellor at the public sector
6.	M. school careers advisor PR	42	Man	Public	Career counsellor at the public sector

**Table 5. Members of labour market focus group**

No.	Acronym	Age	Gender	Sector	Profile
1.	W. careers advisor PR	32	Woman	Private	Careers advisor at a private university
2.	W. careers advisor PU	43	Woman	Public	Careers advisor at the Ministry of Labour
3.	W. careers advisor PR	40	Woman	Private	Private sector careers advisor
4.	M. careers advisor PR	33	Man	Private	Private sector careers advisor



## Research ethics

Strict research ethics were followed to ensure the anonymity of participants and the confidentiality of their data. Participants' real names were excluded from public documents and from the interview transcriptions. Voice recordings were secured with a passcode on the personal computer of the researcher. Information leaflets and consent forms were disseminated to all research participants before the interviews and a signed consent form was collected before each interview. In order to protect participants' personal data, the consent and demographic forms were secured in a locked drawer in the researchers' office.

## Research results

### 1. Young people's perspectives from in-depth interviews

This first section of the research results focuses on the analysis of the individual interviews with young people aged 17-28 years. The aim of the interviews was to explore if and how gender stereotypes influence and guide young people in their educational and/or occupational choices. All interviews followed the same research protocol (Annex 1) according to which, after an icebreaking question about their hobbies, interviewees were asked to choose ten occupations they liked from a list of fifty. There was a wide range of jobs and professions on the list, some male dominated and some female dominated, some requiring a university degree and some not, both white- and blue-collar occupations, etc. Some interviewees could not find ten occupations they liked, in which case they were allowed to choose fewer. In each interview the researcher would pick four occupations from those that the interviewee had chosen and would ask questions in order to identify their beliefs about each of them. Specifically, these questions concerned what kind of people would choose each job, what skills it would require, what the working environment would be like, the social status of a person in that occupation and whether it would make any difference whether a man or a woman did that job. Later on in the interview, the participants were asked to imagine themselves at the age of forty and to say who their role models (heroes/heroines) and anti-role models (anti-heroes/heroines) were.

Participants were encouraged to answer freely, as there were no right or wrong answers. In order not to influence their answers, the researcher avoided revealing that the research was on gender segregation. She only mentioned that it would examine young peoples' educational and occupational choices in five EU countries.

The fact that interviewees gave job descriptions and talked about how they saw themselves in the future gave us useful information on gender stereotypes associated with certain occupations in society and on how people make personal choices based on the stereotypical assumptions about the nature of particular occupations and their beliefs about their own skills. In the data

analysis that follows we describe how male interviewees tended to differ from females in the choices they made and which gender stereotypes most frequently emerged. According to these gender stereotypes, some occupations are seen as more appropriate for women and others for men.

### **1.1. Identity and gender stereotypes**

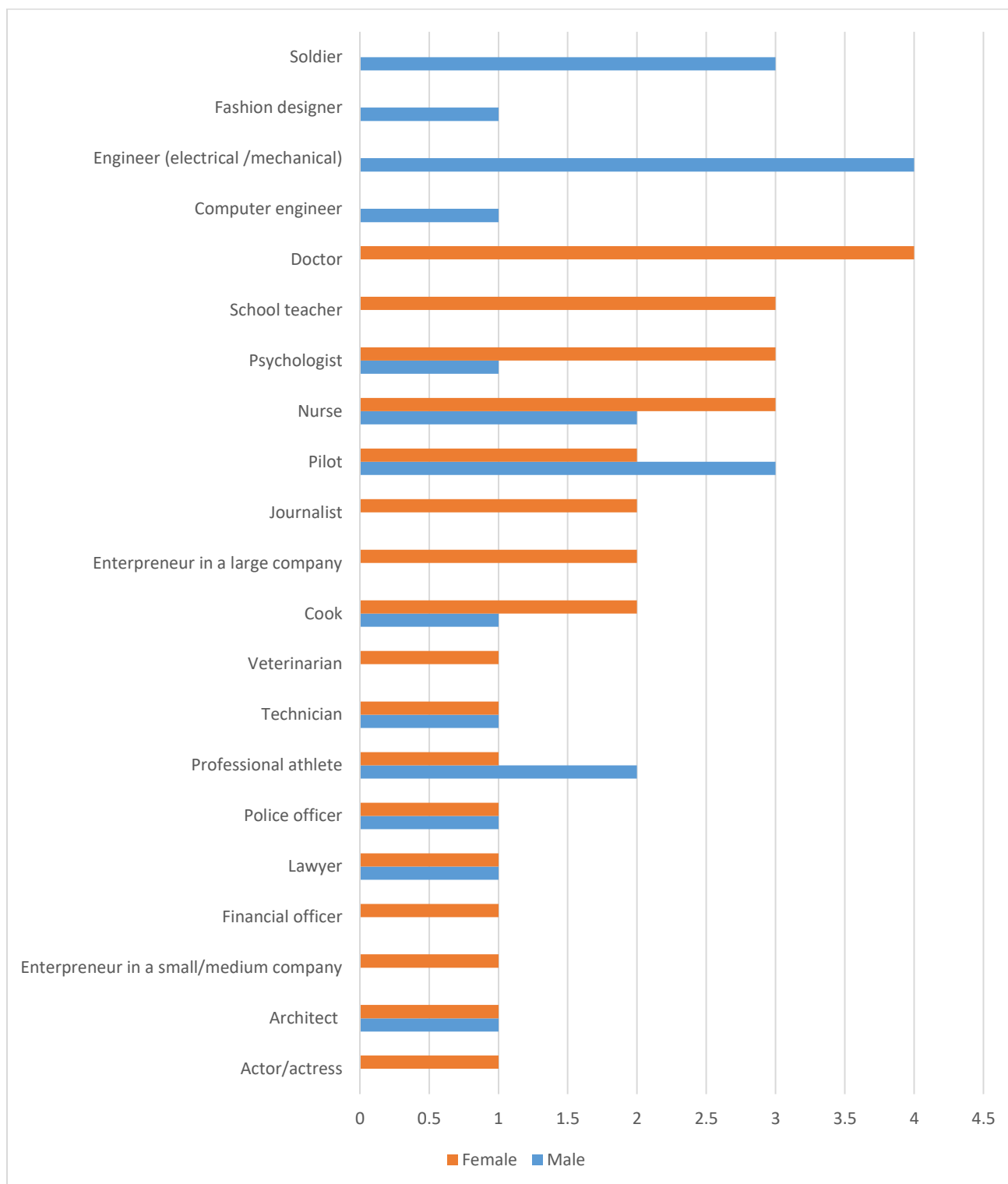
The following subsections analyse the interview responses of the five young women and four young men in relation to occupational gender stereotypes, to gender stereotyped attributes, to gender, self-identity, and the future, and to (anti-)heroes/heroines and role models.

#### **1.1.1. Gender stereotypes applied to descriptions of occupations**

When interviewees were asked to choose their favourite occupations from a list of fifty, their choices differed between males and females. On one hand, female interviewees were more likely than males to choose occupations involving people and care, such as jobs in the education and health sectors. More specifically, four of the five young women who were interviewed chose doctor and three chose each of pre-primary or primary school teacher, psychologist, flight attendant, nurse, and veterinarian. On the other hand, the young men tended to choose occupations involving technology, engineering, and technical skills. All four males who were interviewed chose either electrical engineer, mechanical engineer, or both, while three of the four chose pilot and fireman. Chart 1 shows all the choices of favourite occupations by gender.

As the chart indicates, there were cases where participants chose occupations that are not stereotypically associated with their gender; some examples not shown here are the young woman who chose sailor and the young man who chose childminder. However, when asked how they imagined themselves at forty years old, all interviewees made choices that are stereotypically associated with their own gender and are currently dominated by that gender in the workplace. Thus, the five female interviewees chose in turn these jobs: psychologist, occupational therapist, confectioner, teacher, and secretary. By contrast, the four males chose professions involving a trade or manual labour, specifically businessman/farmer, fireman, plumber, trainer, and game developer. It is notable that male interviewees named occupations that are typically compensated more highly than those chosen by the females.

Chart 1. Choices of favourite occupations by gender



When interviewees were asked to describe the occupations that they liked, the main stereotypes which emerged were the following.

a. The **education sector** is more appropriate for women

Four interviewees (Antonis the pragmatist, Joanna the sporty one, Marina the booklover, and Eva the optimist) expressed the view that childminding and teaching are more appropriate occupations for women, as they have the “maternal instinct” and a naturally more sensitive approach to children.

A man cannot be a **childminder**. Men can't. Even though men can be good with children, women were born with it, as they have the ability to give birth. I can't tell exactly how a man would differ from a woman in feeding a baby. The mindset of each person is very important too. But childminding is absolutely a female profession.

Antonis, 22 years old, in his final year of VET, CY

I think women might be better **childminders** because we have a special way of approaching babies, as we can become mothers at some point in our lives... There are more women **childminders**. This is due to the fact that mothers are role models for women. This is what we mean by “maternal instinct”. OK, you could tell me that fathers have it too, but I don't think it's the same. A man certainly could work in this field, but the maternal instinct, i.e. the fact that women can get pregnant, is an advantage.

Joanna the sporty one, 22, NEET, involved in a youth programme, CY

[Regarding **kindergarten teachers**] If someone knows how to handle children, I don't think it makes any difference whether they are a man or a woman. Sex makes no difference to doing their job correctly. Of course, we as women have a more sensitive approach to children.

Eva the optimist, 22, NEET, not involved in a youth programme, CY

All interviewees tried to be politically correct in their responses, although in the end they all expressed more than one stereotypical assumption regarding at least one profession. As illustrated by the excerpts above, interviewees would say something like “men can do it too but women can do it better”. The stereotypical assumption that occupations involving people and care are an extension of the motherhood role is at the root of horizontal gender segregation. According to recent data from the Statistical Service of Cyprus (2017), women are indeed overrepresented in the sectors of education and health.

b. Customer service jobs are more appropriate for attractive women

Three interviewees (Aris the philosopher, Anna the go-getter, and Angelos the gamer) said that women are considered more appropriate for jobs that involve customer service, such as **saleswoman**, **flight attendant**, and **YouTuber**. Good-looking women attract customers, as Aris explained:

On the topic of kiosks, they choose **saleswomen**. If I put a woman behind the cash register and she's all made up, the clientele will increase. They [kiosk owners] are only thinking of themselves and their own profit.

Aris, 27 years

Anna the go-getter said that there are more women flight attendants because they are better turned out and more confident in their appearance.

A female **flight attendant** is always well turned out and dressed up, always smiling and in a good mood, basically always dressed the same... First off, I think there are more female than male flight attendants, I don't know why. If I stop to think, I really don't know why, shouldn't men also feel self-confident? In their appearance?

Anna the go-getter, 17, in her final year of secondary school, CY

Angelos the gamer said that fashion bloggers and other YouTubers attract women viewers who like to look at their bodies and sexy outfits. However, according to him, games companies encourage their promoters on YouTube to wear modest outfits because they do not want to attract customers through sexy women.

Hmm... Yes! It makes a huge difference! [**Blogger/YouTuber** is] the only sector where I can say women get more attention than men. If a pretty women dresses in a sexier manner—how can I put it?—She'll get more attention. Imagine there was a woman playing a game wearing a tracksuit, but in a very provocative way, she would get more views because of that, not because of the game she was playing. So what happens? Companies come and tell you "If you're going to promote my game, you can't wear those clothes. You have to wear these instead and be modest". Maybe it's just the girls who show off their lives that come out wearing crazy underwear, to show their bodies and get more attention that way. If you compare this to men, men won't follow other men and start looking at them. But women, who think about these things more than men, they will follow another woman to see what she's wearing and that sort of thing. Especially if they are the same body type.

That's how I see it. A man would never look at another man and say "He's good looking and we are of similar body types so I will watch him and see what clothes he wears".

Angelos the gamer, 26, in his final year of university CY

c. Some occupations demand **physical strength**, which is attributed to men

Maria the family lover and Costas the conservative mentioned jobs such as taxi driver and footballer which they saw as more appropriate for men because they demand physical strength. According to Maria, taxi drivers should be men because they are stronger and more able to deal with difficult situations.

I think that this line of work [**taxi driver**] is chosen by men because men tend to be more dynamic. You need physical strength for this job. Women are physically weaker and that's why they don't tend to drive taxis. You have to deal with different situations. OK, I'm not saying there is violence or anything, just that it's a tougher job.

Maria the family lover, 28 years old, in her final year of VET, CY

Costas the conservative thought that female athletes should go in for sports that demand flexibility rather than strength, which according to him is attributed to men.

For sure there are sports which are more... say **football**, it's a more male sport. There are others like aerobics and gymnastics which require more flexibility, and even up to the level of the Olympics, it's always women who stand out in them.

Costas the conservative, 17, in his final year of secondary school, CY

d. Some jobs suit women better and others suit men

There were cases where interviewees argued that some jobs such as administrative roles suit women better while others suit men, then when they were asked to explain why, it appeared that they took this gender difference for granted without being able to account for it. Antonis the pragmatist, for example, said that women would make better secretaries, while men were better suited for the army.

I think the job of **secretary** suits women better. Women make better secretaries than men. A man would not do the same job. It is not a very manly occupation, you know? A male secretary would not think exactly like a female one. It is the same of course with male occupations; a woman would not think like a man. This is what I believe. Occupations

are differently suited... OK, a woman in the **army** couldn't get into a tank. What could a woman do in the military? What if she got a gun? She's not going to be given ammunition. She'll be put somewhere safe, which is the best place for women. So it's the men who end up in the tanks, holding guns, handling ammunition.

Antonis the pragmatist, 22 years old, in his final year of VET, CY

Similarly, Costas the conservative appeared to take for granted that there are some things that women can do better than men, such as household chores.

There are certain things that are harder for a man to do, such as cooking and household chores. It's a matter of routine, really.

Costas the conservative, 17, in his final year of secondary school, CY

e. Other occupations: game developer, lawyer, sailor

Angelos the gamer expressed the opinion that male game developers are more creative and can go beyond their initial design, whereas women will only do the basics.

There is a small difference between the male and female **game developer**. The woman will aim for the goal she set for herself. For example, if she needs to make a model helicopter, it will take off. The woman will make it fly. The man, on the other hand, will make it fly, but he'll also put a camera on it, something extra. Women and men see things differently. I don't want to put women down, but I've just noticed that men will go further, whereas a woman will go as far as the goal, no more and no less.

Angelos the gamer, 26, in his final year of university, CY

Marina the booklover thought that women would be better lawyers because they have a more sensitive attitude towards their clients, who might be victims of crime.

I believe women are by nature more sensitive than men. Even if they try to repress this aspect, it will still emerge somehow. Therefore, women **lawyers** have more empathy; it is easier for them to put themselves in other people's shoes. Also, if a woman has a client who is a victim, she is more likely to be calm and gentle with them.

Marina the booklover, 28, in her final year of university, CY

She also thought that women's sensitive and social 'nature' would make them less enthusiastic sailors.

I don't think a woman would enjoy being a **sailor** as much as a man would. I think that women are more social and more sensitive on many, many issues. If a woman choses to be a sailor, it would most probably be out of need, whereas a man could easily say "OK, I will do it for 10 years".

Marina the booklover, 28, in her final year of university, CY

There were some cases where interviewees said that gender made no difference to the way people carry out their occupational tasks. However, as we have seen above, there was a tendency to attribute different strengths to men and women as a basis for the belief that some occupations are more appropriate for women and others for men. The fact that all interviewees mentioned at least one occupation as being more appropriate for men or women shows that despite their efforts to be politically correct, they all made stereotypical assumptions about men's and women's abilities as well as the abilities required for certain occupations. The problem with this approach is that it discourages both males and females from choosing a career path that is outside the gender norms. Stereotypical assumptions about what suits women and men are based on the false belief that each gender is a homogeneous category.

### 1.1.2. Gender-stereotyped attributes

During the interviews, most of the traits that were associated with the various occupations were gendered. Table 6 lists all of the attributes that were stereotypically linked to one gender or the other in any of the nine individual interviews. We noted that interviewees assigned more attributes to women and that some female attributes were mentioned more frequently. For example, the maternal instinct was dominant, as six of the nine interviewees mentioned it at least once. Four interviewees also each identified patience and sensitivity as female attributes. The only two traits that were associated with both men and women were tenderness and dynamism. As Table 6 shows, there were also opposing pairs of traits, such as patience for women and impatience for men, one task at a time for men and multitasking for women, decisiveness for men and indecisiveness for women.

**Table 6. Main personal traits by gender**

Male traits	Female traits
Introversion (hiding their feelings)	Maternal instinct x6
Impatience	Patience x4
Hard work	Sensitivity x4
Confidence	Weakness / less physical strength x3
One task at a time	Multitasking x3
Spontaneity	Organisation x2
Imagination / inspiration	Beauty x2
Decisiveness	Indecisiveness
Open-mindedness	Cleverness



Teamwork / collaboration	Love
Physical strength	Politeness
Supportiveness	Anxiousness
Strictness	Confidence
Adventurousness	Approachability
	Sociability
	Slyness
	Empathy
	Calmness
	Fairness
	Activeness
	Provocativeness / sexiness
	Attention to detail

**Table 7. Personal traits by gender and occupation**

<b>Trait</b>	<b>Related Gender</b>	<b>Occupation</b>
Confidence	F	Lawyer
Introversion/hiding their feelings	M	Lawyer, Hairdresser
Sensitivity/ Empathy	F	Lawyer; Psychologist; Director; Teacher/Kindergarten Teacher; Doctor
Beauty/Vanity	F	Air hostess
Calmness	F	Lawyer; Psychologist
Fairness	F	Lawyer
Politeness	F	Air hostess; Hairdresser; Pilot
Strictness	M	Babysitter
Sociability	F	Hairdresser
Approachability	F	Air hostess; Hairdresser
Confidence	M	Pilot; Doctor; Plumber; Farmer
Decisiveness	M	Pilot
Anxiousness	F	Pilot
Indecisiveness	F	Pilot
Patience	F	Social worker; Babysitter
Physical strength	M	Footballer; Soldier; Taxi/ bus driver; Baker; Policeman
Weakness/Less physical strength	F	Footballer; Soldier; Policeman
Hard-working	M	Game designer; Plumber; Sailor
Maternal instinct	F	Babysitter; Lawyer; Psychologist; Teacher/Kindergarten teacher
Love	F	Babysitter; Teacher/Kindergarten teacher

Cleverness	F	Lawyer
Attention to detail	F	Plumber; Game designers
Multitasking	F	Secretary
One task at a time	M	Secretary
Organisation	F	Secretary
Adventurousness/Spontaneity	M	Sailors
Teamwork/collaboration	M	Sailors
Slyness	F	Architect
Imagination/Inspiration	M	Game designer
Provocativeness/ Sexiness	F	YouTuber/Blogger; Secretary; Cashier;
Open-mindedness/Willingness to learn	M	Plumber; Game designer; Mechanical engineer
Activeness	F	Architect

### 1.1.3. Gender, self-identity and the future

Gender stereotypes about men and women as described above appear to have influenced the career choices of the interviewees. There was a clear gender difference in the jobs that interviewees saw themselves doing in the future. For their part, the young women expressed an interest in socially rewarding jobs, working with people, and helping others, as Table 7 shows.

**Table 8. How interviewees imagined themselves at forty years old**

No.	Name	Nickname	Sex	Age	Education or occupation status	How they picture themselves at 40
1	Marina	The booklover	F	26	In final year of tertiary education	She wants to be a <u>psychologist</u> working for an NGO in Athens. She wants to have a boyfriend but she does not want to get married or have children.
2	Angelos	The gamer	M	26	In final year of secondary education	He wants to be a successful <u>game designer</u> . He does not want to get married or have children.
3	Anna	The go-getter	F	17	In final year of secondary education	She wants to be a successful <u>occupational therapist</u> and PhD graduate. She does not want to get married or have children.
4	Costas	The conservative	M	17	In last year of secondary education	He wants to be a <u>farmer</u> , to build a house next to the farm, and to raise a family.
5	Joanna	The sporty one	F	22	NEET involved in a youth programme	She wants to be a <u>secretary</u> in a steady job, married with two children.
6	Maria	The family lover	F	28	In final year of VET with work experience	She wants to be a <u>small business owner</u> . She and her sister dream of owning a small confectionary business. She wants to marry and have a big family.
7	Antonis	The pragmatist	M	22	In final year of VET with work experience	He wants to have his own <u>plumbing</u> business. He wants to get married and have children.
8	Aris	The philosopher	M	27	NEET, involved in a youth guarantee programme	He wants to be a <u>trainer</u> , married with children.
9	Eva	The optimist	F	22	NEET, not involved in any programme	She wants to be a <u>secretary</u> . She is already married with a daughter.

Cyprus seems to be a family-oriented society on this evidence, as six of the nine interviewees envisioned themselves being married, having children and living in Cyprus in the future. Some interviewees also praised themselves for not “dreaming big”; all they wanted was a simple life with a full-time job and a family.

When I’m 40, I imagine myself being a teacher in a school and having my own family. Dedicating my time to my kids, driving them to their after-school classes etc. That’s what I think I will be. A teacher in a school with my own family. This is all I want.

Maria the family lover, 28, in her final year of VET, CY

Of course I will have children when I am 40. Even now that I am 27 I would love to have children.

Aris the philosopher, 27, NEET, involved in the Youth Guarantee Programme, CY

Only two young women, the go-getter and the booklover, and one man, the gamer, did not speak of having children in the future. The main reason for not dreaming of starting a family was that they would rather focus on their careers. All three said they would not mind having a partner as long as she/he did not want children.

I would like to get a PhD before I get to 40. I would like to get my bachelor's in occupational therapy, then some years of work experience and on to an MA and a PhD in the field. I imagine living alone in a house. Alone, because I believe that if you are an occupational therapist and a doctor in general you will not pay the required attention to your family, and your family will complain. If you really want it, you can make it of course, but because I do not want it I want to leave this behind. I am not dying to have a family. It would be better if I were dedicated to my job and tried to be the best! I would like to have this reputation.

Anna the go-getter, 17, in her final year of secondary school, CY

No, I do not see myself with children. I cannot imagine myself having children! There are time restrictions: you can either have the one, career, or the other, children. You can dedicate more time to one or the other... If I have a job that fascinates me, I will not even have time for a girlfriend!

Angelos the gamer, 26, in his final year of university, CY

From the analysis of the one-to-one interviews it appears that the young women were more concerned with work-life balance. There were some female interviewees who thought that having a large business would affect the hours they could spend with their families, so they expressed a preference to focus on family and have a smaller business that would demand less of their time.

I would like to have a small business because family is very important to me. I will be devoting myself to my family. You need to spend more time at work in large enterprises, as there are more issues to deal with. I believe it is easier to reconcile work and family life when working in a small business.

Maria the family lover, 28, in her final year of VET, CY

Obviously, I would like to have a job. Me and my sister have a dream of opening a confectionery shop. Having our own small-to-medium sized business would be ideal. Of course we will have one or two children each. We (me and my fiancé) will have our own house. We are living with my mum and dad at the moment. I would like the new house to be close to my mum's [laughs]. I dream of being like the average Cypriot woman. I am not dreaming of being a career woman or anything like that. I am down to earth so I just need the basics.

Joanna the sporty one, 22, NEET, involved in a youth programme, CY

By contrast, male interviewees were less likely to think of work and family as opposing ambitions or paths for the future.

I would like to be a fireman in order to have a secure job. Then I will start up a farm with animals and animal feed. I want a house in the village because I can't stand the city. I would rather have a house close to my farm. I will definitely have a family with children. I believe that I will stay as I am right now. I will hang out with my friends. I won't be going home to bed by 11 o'clock every night!

Costas the conservative, 17, in his final year of secondary school, CY

I will definitely be working ... I want to get married and have children. When you are 40, it's natural to have children. I want to have a good wife, to be married with children but still travel as I do now. I do not want to change my personality. I want to stay as I am now. I won't change. I am not a person who changes. I am not two-faced. I will sound the same as I do now when I'm 40.

Antonis the pragmatist, 22 years old, in his final year of VET, CY

The following excerpts illustrate the young women's awareness that in the future they would be taking on multiple roles, at work and at home.

I'll wake up with the alarm, rush my kids to school or perhaps to their grandmother or grandfather. Then I'll go to class, my husband to his job. We'll finish at lunchtime and eat together at home, then dedicate the time to taking care of housework or activities with the kids... all sorts of things, but mainly activities with the kids. I wouldn't want them stuck in

front of a screen. It's good to make the time to be with your kids, your family.

Maria the family lover, 28, in her final year of VET, CY

I'll wake up in the morning, take my kids to school. Then I'll go to work, finish work, go home, pick up my kids from my mum's, do their homework with them and spend some time with my husband too...

Joanna the sporty one, 22, NEET, involved in a youth programme, CY

The fact that male interviewees did not think that paternity would force them to change their lifestyle is reflective of the findings of a recent study conducted by MIGS (2017), in which fathers were ranked fourth in childcare provision in Cyprus, after the child's mother, the grandparents and the nursery.

#### 1.1.4 Heroes/heroines (role models) and anti-heroes/heroines

When asked to talk about their heroes, heroines and role models, interviewees referred to family members, professionals they knew, celebrities and comic book characters. More specifically, three interviewees mentioned **parents and other family members** as the people whom they looked up to. Joanna admired her mothers' ability to multitask.

My parents have always been my heroes. My mum has always been a goddess! She will go to work, clean the house, exercise, go to the hairdresser... a little bit of everything and she does it all. Sometimes I wonder how she makes time for everything.

Joanna the sporty one, 22, NEET, involved in a youth programme, CY

Anna the go-getter admired her cousin, a nurse, who was able to help people in need.

I consider my cousin to be my role model. She is a nurse and she is the only nurse in the family. In my family there were many incidents when someone was injured or in need. She would be the first to rush and help, as she would be the only one who knew what to do. I want to be like her. I want to know what to do, how to help someone immediately.

Anna the go-getter, 17, in her final year of secondary school, CY

Marina the booklover said that her father was her role model, as he had decided to study law as a mature student, and that she had been carried away by her father's passion. She then realised that law was not the right choice for her, so she decided during her first year at university to change her major to psychology.

Look, studying law was my first choice, but it wasn't really my heart's desire, more like a logical choice. My dad was also studying law at the same time. He started studying the subject at the age of 45. When I saw a man of his age, with his work etc. studying a topic with such passion, it made me excited, because it's a beautiful thing to see someone so passionate at that age. I liked law in general so I made it my first choice. Same with studying it in Thessaloniki.

Marina the booklover, 28, in her final year of university, CY

Costas the conservative stated that his role model was a **professional whom he knew**, while Aris the philosopher mentioned **celebrities** as his role models and named a well-known athlete who was also a humanitarian.

Paul Walker, because he was both a good athlete and a humanitarian. He cared about people's health. He ran events promoting children's rights. He went to Africa to take care of poor children.

Aris the philosopher, 27, NEET, CY

When asked about role models, Angelos the gamer mentioned **comic characters**.

There's Patrick from the comics. He has no superpowers but he makes a difference in people's lives. Do I have a person who is a hero in my life? I would rather focus on myself and not put anyone else on a pedestal. I don't want to make anyone else my aim. I don't want to be like anyone else. I want to get to where I want to go and set myself apart.

Angelos the gamer, 26, in his final year of university, CY

When asked about anti-heroes/heroines, three of the nine interviewees (Angelos the gamer, Anna the go-getter, and Marina the booklover) mentioned **people who are irresponsible and do not do their jobs properly**.

I could never be a fashion designer. I am not good at it. My anti-heroes are certain doctors who do not care about their patients. For example, my aunt went to an orthopaedic surgeon. She informed him that she was allergic to anti-inflammatory medicine and he gave her an anti-inflammatory cream. She had an allergic reaction right after she used the

cream. I would never want to be someone like him. And this is after she told him she was allergic. Why did he do that?

Anna the go-getter, 17, in her final year of secondary school, CY

Anti-hero/heroine... I cannot describe this with words. I think, let's say, people who are ungrateful, who do not work and steal the work of others. People who make others do things that were actually their responsibility and do not even say thank you. These are the people I would never want to be like, I do not want to end up being like them at my work. And I've met many people like this... friends, colleagues, clients, relatives... they are everywhere.

Marina the booklover, 28, in her final year of university

Three interviewees, Costas the conservative, Maria the family lover, and Joanna the sporty one, cited **people who do not spend enough time with their families** as their anti-heroes/heroines.

I could never be a singer because they mainly work at night. I don't think they have time for their families. Singers go on concert tours, where they travel around the country. They can have a family, sure, but it is difficult for them to be present and supportive.

Maria the family lover, 28, in her final year of VET, CY

I wouldn't want to be a career woman. It's not nice, because if you're all work, work, work, at some point in the future you will end up alone. Of course, people like that have developed that lifestyle.

Joanna the sporty one, 22, NEET, involved in a youth programme, CY

Aris the philosopher, who named as his hero an athlete involved in charity work, stated that his anti-heroes were celebrities who by contrast do not use their fame to do good.

Justin Bieber. It's not that I dislike his character, rather that I have never seen him on a mission to help children and I always see his music videos full of material goods, releasing songs and clips. I don't know what drives them. As a pop music icon, being very famous can be a problem. It's not a privilege to be the focus when you know you're not a good influence on others and everyone is looking to have a piece of you. Such anti-role models are everywhere.

Aris the philosopher, 27, NEET, CY



Two interviewees said that they had no anti-heroes/heroines because they did not want to be judgmental of other people and their choices. Maria the family lover said that her anti-heroines were girls who dressed inappropriately and sexily.

The young people who were interviewed within the framework of this study thus recognised certain influences on them and expressed their admiration for family members, celebrities, professionals they knew, and comic characters. It was beyond the scope of the current research to examine in depth how and to what extent their role models affected their personal choices. However, we may assume that role models with whom the interviewees had close contact, such as family members and professionals they knew in person, would have a more direct influence on their long-term goals than people whom they did not know personally, such as celebrities. For example, Joanna named her multitasking mother as her role model, while Anna admired her cousin the nurse for helping people in need. Anna herself dreamt of becoming an occupational therapist so that she could help people too. Aris, by contrast, expressed admiration for celebrities who are involved in charity but did not say at any point in the interview that he was interested in being involved in charity himself.

#### **1.1.5. Some curiosities, strange and unexpected things**

It was surprising to hear a woman as young as Anna talk about the history of women fighting for their rights and how this might make them better lawyers. What was most surprising was that a seventeen-year-old girl was aware of feminist struggles. Also unexpected was the way that she linked these to practising the law.

I believe that many women are defence lawyers because they have a history of fighting for their rights. So this probably makes them more competent when fighting for other people's rights as lawyers. More so than men, who have always had their privileges.

Anna the go-getter, 17, in her final year of secondary school, CY

Another unexpected finding was that Eva the optimist said that women directors have a more sensitive approach to female employees and their rights.

A female company director might be more sensitive to women's issues, and so would handle them from her perspective and manage things more smoothly. Take maternity. Now that I'm going through that stage of my life, I can see that in a work environment, another woman is more likely to understand me, so I'm more likely to confide in another woman.

Eva the optimist, 22, NEET, not involved in a youth programme, CY

Antonis the pragmatist said that he did not want to join a female-dominated profession, for fear that other people would bully him. He said that he would never bully anyone because of their occupation and would never put himself in such a vulnerable position.

I would never have an occupation around Modern Greek. Get it away from me! Especially as an author. No chance. Stylist? No way. Not because I make fun of them, but rather I can see others making fun of them and I wouldn't want to be in that position. That I'm a sissy boy, etc. What I want is a steady job.

Antonis the pragmatist, 22 years old, in his final year of VET

What all three excerpts above have in common is that the interviewees had a critical eye on the social reality around them. It was interesting and unexpected to hear a young girl talking about the feminist struggles and a twenty-two-year-old woman discussing how women can be more sensitive to women's rights when they are in positions of power. This may be a sign that gender issues and feminist struggles are part of public discourse, even if they were not deeply analysed by the interviewees. Antonis observed the difficulties and the social stigma faced by men who do not work in male-dominated roles, although this may have been an externalisation of his own stereotypes.

### **1.1.6 Some innovative perspectives**

It was interesting to see the young interviewees taking a critical approach to dominant gender stereotypes that affect educational and occupational choices. Anna the go-getter believed that everyone should choose what they love in order to reach their full potential.

Women and men have an equal likelihood of being good hairdressers. There is a social stereotype about male hairdressers. Some people say they are gay. I don't understand how these people think. For God's sake, that's rubbish! People who become or want to become hairdressers love the job. I believe that everyone should choose to do what they love, no matter what their gender is.

Anna the go-getter, 17, in her final year of secondary school, CY

Costas the conservative and Aris the philosopher also took a critical approach to gender stereotypes which hold women and men back from choices that are not traditionally associated with their gender.

Men sometimes tell women that football is for men. Why? Don't women have legs or hands? Skills cannot be segregated by gender. You cannot

say some skills are for women and some are for men. Don't put labels on like that.

Aris the philosopher, 27, NEET, CY

It doesn't matter if a fashion designer is a man or a woman. To be fair, it's considered woman's work, but there are a lot of people who are open-minded and consider it a good choice. There are people who think that a man's job should be construction worker, mechanic...

Costas the conservative, 17, in his final year of secondary school, CY

Although the examples above indicate some resistance to gender stereotypes and the ways in which they affect career choices, it is worth mentioning that all three interviewees expressed conflicting ideas at other points during their interviews, as discussed in the following section. This inconsistency suggests not that the youngsters were driven to make their liberal comments above by the adoption of gender equality as one of their core values, but rather that they were trying to be politically correct. It is interesting that each of the three quotations is from the beginning of an interview. As the interviewees became more familiar with the researcher, they were more likely to express stereotypical ideas.

## **1.2. Contradictions and inconsistencies within interviews**

All nine interviewees made conflicting remarks regarding gender stereotypes. In each interview there was at least one statement rejecting gender stereotypes and at least one normalising them. Below are two particularly characteristic examples, taken from the interviews with Antonis and Maria.

I'm not someone who puts women down. We're all the same. If a man wants to do something a woman does, he can, and vice versa. If you want it, you can make it happen. You can't differentiate. If a dynamic woman wants to become a pilot, I think the challenge would be to keep a cool head, to be calm. In case of trouble, I think a man has a better chance of handling it well. If a woman is dynamic, if she can control the plane and she feels responsible like, "I will take them up", "I will land them"... I don't know why women would not choose this career. Wouldn't they like it as a job? Maybe they can't keep their cool or are wary of something going

wrong and they won't be able to handle it? I don't know how women look at it.

Q: You say you feel women can't keep their cool. Do you really believe this and have you seen it happen around you?

A: It's something that I saw during a driving incident [laughs]. It's usually women who have car accidents. I'm not saying men are more careful. Men with their temper and the way they speed, things happen. But I don't know. They don't have... Maybe not all women. There are a lot of women who are much better than men. I don't know what to say.

Antonis the pragmatist, 22 years old, in his final year of VET

I believe that there are more women childminders because they have the maternal instinct. You can say that fathers have it too, but it is not the same. A man can definitely work as a childminder but women have better instincts about children, as they can get pregnant. I think the ability to be pregnant makes the difference between male and female childminders. Of course, if a man likes children he could choose this job. OK, I believe that if a man chooses to be a childminder it means that he has all the necessary skills such as patience, let's say. I don't know if gender makes any difference to be honest. It [a male childminder] may just sound funny to us. However, I think a father would do too, because he changes diapers, feeds his babies and everything. Men could be childminders but maybe it is society that says that this job is only for women. But if a man says "I will do it", society might not accept it, as there are social beliefs that link this work with motherhood. This is what people think. I do not underestimate the paternal instinct, it is the same as the maternal instinct. However, I believe that people have in their minds that this job is only for women.

Maria the family lover, 28, in her final year of VET, CY

As already mentioned, contradictions concerning gender stereotypes were present in all of the interviews that were conducted in the framework of this research. On one hand, people were critical of the existence of gender stereotypes, pointing out how harmful they can be. On the other hand, they would unconsciously reproduce gender stereotypes. The existence of such contradictions may be an indicator of how political correctness teaches people what to say but not what to believe.

## 2. School-to-work transition: Key actors' perspectives

This second section of the data analysis presents the results of two focus group sessions with educators (one with teachers in secondary education and one with careers advisors in schools) and those of a third focus group of labour-market-oriented careers officers and advisors.

### 2.1 Focus groups: Secondary school teachers and careers advisors

#### 2.1.1. Young adults' attitudes

Primarily, key secondary school actors admitted that the gendered socialisation of boys and girls, which reflects traditionally held gender stereotypes, greatly influences study and career choices.

A teenager who visits your office for career counselling is already influenced and shaped by the toys he or she has played with in kindergarten. There were dolls for girls, little cars and tools for boys. Being very much influenced by social norms, a teenager will not challenge what he or she has learned throughout the years. A boy will say, for example, "I will become a mechanic or an electrical engineer because this is what I have learned to do in playtime over the years".

Man A, School advisor, PU, CY

We observe that boys are drawn more to practical fields and girls are drawn more to theoretical fields.

Man B, School advisor, PU, CY

In addition, participants observed that boys and girls attending career guidance sessions were reluctant to choose a field of study that is not stereotypically associated with their gender.

If you suggest that a girl should follow a male-dominated career path or the other way round to a boy (a female-dominated field), they will say "What? I'm not doing that!" I mean, there is a lot of resistance.

Man A, School advisor, PU, CY

Furthermore, interviewees observed that women are not drawn to practical fields of study such as engineering, because they believe that these fields demand the kind of physical strength that is usually attributed to men.

Teenagers make the assumption that you have to be dextrous in order to be an electrician or an engineer. You need to be strong or able to lift heavy weights.

Woman A, Teacher, PU, CY

Some key actors in schools agreed that physical strength is a characteristic usually attributed to men and therefore that women cannot enter male-dominated occupations that demand physical strength.

For example, if my daughter came to me saying she wanted to become a mechanic, I would tell her no, not only for social reasons, but also because some jobs need physical strength.

Man C, Teacher, PU, CY

One teacher argued that physical strength is no longer a key issue, due to increased mechanisation. However, the socially constructed barriers to women who want to enter male-dominated fields remain in place.

There are machines that do most things nowadays. But I still wouldn't allow my daughter to become an electrician, because this is not yet socially accepted. In any case, I would discourage her because I wouldn't want her to go through the physical strain either.

Man D, Teacher, PU, CY

Teachers observed that gender segregation and gender stereotypes are dominant in every aspect of school life.

Unfortunately, gender segregation remains intense. The general attitude is "We are the men and you are the women", as if they were different species. Boys do not treat girls right. There is no respect.

Man C, Teacher, PU, CY

Boys and girls gain popularity in school for different reasons. Girls for being pretty and thin. Boys for being strong and portraying an image of the bad boy. There was once this girl at our school who was head girl and very dynamic. She was popular in a male-dominated school, studying a male-dominated field. She was so dynamic that boys started seeing her as one of the guys, as if they were unable to see that she was a girl.

Woman A, Teacher, PU, CY

With all of the above in mind, school advisors and teachers simultaneously made some conflicting observations, insisting that things are changing for the better and that boys and girls are not so concerned with gender stereotypes when they make career and academic choices. Some careers advisors felt so strongly about this that they even challenged data on gender segregation in education and employment.

Actually, gender segregation does not exist anymore. Look at what's happening in the army. It's become full of women, who performed better than men in shooting this year. It has also been proven that men are better cooks than women [laughs].

Man D, Teacher, PU, CY

When school careers advisors were asked to interpret data on the over-representation of males in technical high schools, they rationalised the absence of female students by pointing out that these schools tend to have a bad reputation regarding discipline.

Regarding technical schools, there are other issues behind this. There are some misconceptions, for example that it's mainly misfits and troublemakers who go to these schools. So when a girl thinks about attending a technical school, the school environment, even on an open day, will make her reconsider. Therefore, I would not say that there is intense gender segregation in educational choices, there is not. [Other women agree.]

Woman C, School advisor , PU, CY

According to most interviewees, the economic crisis has forced young people to look at a wider array of choices. Young people are now mainly interested in choosing fields of study and/or employment that will provide them with stable and well-paid jobs.

Gender segregation [in choices] is decreasing year on year. Especially now with the economic crisis, the crisis! Gender segregation no longer exists. The mentality has changed. All they care about is finding a job! [Others murmur in agreement.]

Woman, school careers advisor, PU, CY

### **2.1.2. Role models**

Focus group participants made a number of points regarding the role of parents. First, parents were said to play the most influential role in their children's study and career choices.

What I've noticed is that families influence [career choices] a lot. Not just the parents, I would say the grandparents as well.

Woman C, School advisor, PU, CY

Second, parents tend to intervene in school career counselling sessions, projecting their own preferences on the choices made by their children.

Some parents expect you [the school careers advisor] to change their kid's mind. For example, if their daughter wants to become a civil engineer, they'll say "I told her to choose law or literature and she wants to get a job in a male-dominated sector". Or other cases where someone's son is not interested in a stereotypically gendered choice, let's say he wants to become a dancer and you have to work with the parents to tell them that this is OK.

Woman B, School advisor, PU, CY

Third, parents sometimes actively discourage children who want to follow in their footsteps.

There was a mum who was an architect. Her daughter wanted to be an architect too. She [the mother] insisted that based on her experience, it was very difficult for a woman to work in a male-dominated sector. She said "Builders don't listen to me, contractors don't listen to me, they underestimate me because I am a woman, therefore I need to work two or three times harder than a man. I do not want my daughter to go through this." And I [the advisor] was like "You know these are stereotypes" and she said "No, this is my lived experience. Forget theory, come and work with builders and you will see!"

Woman B, School advisor, PU, CY

### **2.1.3. Vocation or employment**

According to the focus group interviewees, the economic crisis had forced young people to look for financially secure jobs and to be less concerned with whether the job would fit with the stereotypical notions about their gender. Interviewees thought that this was normal considering today's economy.

The main goal that young people have is to find a secure job with a good salary.

Woman C, School advisor, PU, CY

Gender is not an issue that comes up in careers advice sessions with young people. What comes up is what are they going to do? Will they be



able to find a job? Whether a position is more appropriate for girls or boys is not an issue that comes up as a priority.

Man A, School advisor, PU, CY

Especially following the economic crisis, they have stopped caring about whether an occupation is boyish or girlish. They just care about finding a job. No, we do not often hear [gender concerns], at least in my experience. [Others agree]

Woman C, School advisor, PU, CY

#### **2.1.4. Professional updating**

As noted above, teachers and school advisors gave contradictory responses on the impact of gender stereotypes on study and career choices.

Further to this, those delivering professional careers advice in schools overwhelmingly rejected the gender-sensitive approach to counselling students. Some said that this was because they disagreed with it in principle, while others felt that it was a luxury they could not afford in their time-pressured schedules.

[Applying gender-sensitive counselling] is another form of stereotyping. Empathy and accepting others' choices are the core conditions of counselling. Accepting people as they are is how counselling works.

Woman B, School advisor, PU, CY

In a training session we attended, we were encouraged to talk about role models, for example, to talk about a girl who is a good car mechanic aged 19, to speak positively about the way she made it to her position etc, but I think that such methods are not part of the counselling procedure and can be skipped. Listen, it cannot be a primary concern whether or not a kid makes a choice that is influenced by gender stereotypes.

Woman B, School advisor, PU, CY

Others said that they would want to apply gender-sensitive counselling but that they did not have the time. This holds especially true in public schools, where advisors might meet each student only once.

If someone knows what they want to study, you just give them the relevant information and move on to the next person. This is not right of course, but you do not normally challenge their choice. You might give advice, but I don't think it needs to be from a gender stereotyping

perspective. It's not a good thing, obviously, but you don't have the luxury of time.

Man B, School advisor, PU, CY

Some teachers complained about school advisors failing to provide young people with adequate information on study options, which they felt led to gender segregation in education and an under-representation of girls in technical schools.

School advisors have to give young people their real options, not the ones they believe that boys and girls should follow. They have to make young people believe that they can choose whatever they want, no matter what their gender. They should make choices about their future that are based on the skills they have or could develop. Unfortunately, it does not work like that.

Man E, Teacher, PU, CY

#### **2.1.5. Work-life balance**

Interviewees expressed the belief that issues of work-life balance do not tend to concern young people. "They are too young to think of a family", as Woman A told us. Girls' parents think of work-life balance issues more than girls themselves when they talk about job expectations. Concerns about work-life balance were entirely absent from advice sessions with boys.

The attitudes of parents with regard to traditionally male-dominated fields, or rather the attitude of the pater familias, as the decision-maker for the whole family, seem to be the critical factor in defining a woman's place in society, in her role... in her family, etc.

Woman D, Teacher, PU, CY

Interestingly, interviewees mentioned that working towards certain prestigious careers seemed to trump the work-life balance issue.

In medicine, for example, parents will be like "Oh, my daughter wants to become a doctor. It doesn't matter if she has to work long hours".

Woman C, School advisor, PU, CY

Yeah, we've seen way more girls going for medical school lately.

Woman B, School advisor, PU, CY

Although teachers and career counsellors thought that young people were not concerned with work-life balance, our research data presented in the previous section indicates the opposite.

Young people, especially girls, identified work-life balance as one of their criteria when making career choices.

### **2.1.6. Empowering**

Some interviewees observed that girls showed more advanced decision-making capabilities.

I think that girls tend to be more decisive than boys.

Woman A, Teacher, PU, CY

Girls are indeed more decisive. Boys do not know what they want.

Man C, Teacher, PU, CY

Additionally, school advisors saw girls as keeping a more open mind during counselling sessions.

Girls are by nature more open-minded. They are more likely to open up to a school advisor, especially if they trust them. Teenage boys tend to buy into the stereotype that you have to be strong and deal with things on your own, so they might not get into as many details in discussion. Girls, on the other hand, due to being more emotional and more likely to use the right side of their brain, are more likely to open up.

Woman D, School advisor, PU, CY

It was observed that girls are not equally empowered in the school environment, as there is a negative expectation on them with regard to leadership roles. Teachers explained that a boy with leadership skills will gain popularity in school, whereas a girl who has similar skills will be accused of being a tomboy.

Teachers also observed that headmistresses have a different management style to their male counterparts. Headmistresses were described as more analytical, more by-the-book and better at administrative tasks.

You can go into more detail with a headmistress. A headmaster will say a couple of things and be done with the matter. A woman, however, who has perhaps had to work hard in her lifetime to prove that she deserved her position of authority, can be stricter than a man.

Woman A, Teacher, PU, CY

## **2.2. Focus group: Labour-market-oriented careers advisors**

### **2.2.1. Young adults' attitudes**

The labour-market-oriented careers advisors noted that young adults' stereotypes were reflected in the narrow range of choice that they imposed upon themselves. They might not

explicitly attribute their rejection of a career path to its incompatibility with their gender, but at the point of decision-making, they would gravitate towards occupations that have traditionally been favoured by others of their gender.

When they look for something that would suit them, very rarely do they frame the discussion in terms of wanting to go into a sector according to what is more suitable for their gender. They don't talk about that.

Woman C, career counsellor, PR, CY

They don't consciously choose an occupation where there are more men or women; however, they are subconsciously affected by this consideration and reject jobs out of hand because they think they are better suited to men or to women, as the case may be.

Woman A, career counsellor, PR, CY

Careers advisors noted the existence of a belief in a link between people's sexual orientation and their career choices.

Occupations such as hair stylist, nurse, or teacher have been somewhat linked to sexual orientation, I daresay. This makes men reluctant to choose these careers.

Woman A, career counsellor, PR, CY

Some careers advisors maintained that today's youth did not make stereotypical choices, but instead based their choices on their particular skills and interests, in relation to available occupational opportunities, as described in subsection 2.2.3.

### **2.2.2. Employers' attitudes**

Careers advisors reported that employers often expressed a gender preference when recruiting.

Employers themselves who are looking to hire new staff have in mind the ideal candidate, and a preferred gender is often included in their criteria, even for jobs where the rationale behind such a preference is not at all apparent. To say that such and such a position is better suited to a man or a woman is clearly a biased judgment.

Woman B, Career counsellor, PU, CY

However, participants also felt that it was often not clear why employers gravitated towards one gender over another in jobseekers. Furthermore, while as mentioned above employers often appeared to know which gender they would prefer, they would usually not express this preference openly, not least because to do so would be illegal in Cyprus.

Employers won't argue their case as to why they will reject [a woman] if they are looking for a man to do the job.

Woman A, career counsellor, PR, CY

In cases where the preferred gender of the job applicant was openly specified by the employer, public sector careers advisors were able to intervene, bringing up current legislation which forbids gender discrimination in employment.

I think that the law is a powerful tool. I can't imagine being without it, but thankfully we can use it to avoid gender discrimination. Once, an employer was looking for a civil engineer and specified that the candidate should be male. I had to give him a call and let him know, no, that's not allowed...

Woman B, Career counsellor, PU, CY

What was clear to the focus group members was a tendency for employers to look for women to fill low-level jobs and men to fill the higher-level ones. This held true both in recruitment and in policy on promoting existing staff.

The positions they prefer to give to men tend to be higher level and the positions they prefer to give to women are at a lower level.

Woman C, Career counsellor, PU, CY

They [employers] don't even admit that they look to put men in leadership positions, to give them more money, something you see very often, that men have a better probability of getting a rise. You notice that women, despite applying, are often sidelined, only rarely making their way up. This is something you really notice, but there is no conversation around it.

Woman C, Career counsellor, PU, CY

In some cases, employers avoided hiring women for fear that they would become pregnant.

Some employers don't want to hire a woman, as she might get pregnant and leave her job...

Woman A, career counsellor, PU, CY

Some unemployed jobseekers have told us that during interviews they were asked if they had children, which is illegal. It may be a topic that comes up with an employer, but you can't force him/her not to take it into consideration. This is despite the fact that we should have a culture

in which these issues are none of the employer's business, something he doesn't judge you on, doesn't even bring up!

Woman C, career counsellor, PU, CY

### **2.2.3. Vocation or employment**

According to every careers advisor who took part in this research, boys and girls alike were looking for an occupation which would give them a steady job and financial security.

Both genders go for jobs that are secure, and the same applies across the board in terms of remuneration as well.

Woman A, career counsellor, PU, CY

According to the careers advisors, it seems that young people are making their choices on a progressively less stereotypical basis. This is partially due to the economic crisis, which has forced young people to look for financially secure jobs and to be less concerned whether any particular job fits with the stereotypical notions around their gender.

Their concerns have changed. Their main concern is to find a job. I think many things will change because of the crisis, and gender stereotypes are amongst them.

Woman C, Career counsellor, PU, CY

If a position is a secure one, like a government job, the feeling of "Ah! I am a man, this isn't a good fit for me" is not a consideration and the same goes for women. Other things count for more. The need for security, a good work schedule, these things can change someone's mindset when they are jobhunting.

Woman B, Career counsellor, PU, CY

Another factor raised was that certain occupations which were once female-dominated may no longer be as attractive to young women entering the job market, due to the progressive erosion of the associated benefits.

Especially after the crisis, eh... one of the stereotypes being that girls should be teachers, finishing work at midday and having two months of summer holidays and spending time with their kids. These have disappeared with the crisis, given the long list of applicants waiting for government posts and the difficulty of finding a position, a job.

Woman D, career counsellor, PU, CY

Career counsellor A believed that the criteria for choosing a career depended more on each person's character and socio-economic background than on their gender.

Individuals given to volunteering or with a financially secure background don't focus so much on remuneration. I daresay that the individuals who have grown up feeling that money was always an issue will want a job that finally gives them some financial security, to be an independent person, whether they are a boy or girl. I haven't seen a marked difference between genders in this sense.

Woman D, career counsellor, PU, CY

#### **2.2.4. Professional updating**

According to the careers advisors in the third focus group, young people's further education tends to be segregated by gender.

Well, there are a lot of stereotypes...., the most visible of which say "These professions are for men, these are for women". This is reflected in higher education. You won't see a lot of boys studying to become kindergarten teachers, or girls going into the navy. You'd read it in the papers if a girl became a naval captain.

Man A, career counsellor, PU, CY

You'll find a few girls trained in graphic arts, a few designers, silversmiths or goldsmiths, but you won't find girls training to be car mechanics or electrical engineers.

Woman C, Career counsellor, PU, CY

Some participants mentioned that part of the counselling process is to create a challenge around professional choices. Challenging is a standard method used in counselling, not necessarily to apply a targeted gender perspective. That being said, some careers advisors asserted that this method can make an impact by prompting clients to question their own perceived gender stereotypes. Thus, advisors said that challenging clients on their choices was a way to get them to reconsider whether their decisions were in fact based on their capabilities or on stereotypes attributed to their gender.

My role is to create challenges, but to do so carefully so that I'm not directing, because an advisor cannot put forward their own opinions. But if I see that someone very much wants to follow a certain path but is affected by their own stereotypes, I will put it on the table as a challenge. "What is it that stops you wanting to pursue this career path?" "I might

not get any job opportunities after I finish studying. Why, would they choose a woman?"

Woman A, career counsellor, PU, CY

### 2.2.5. Work-life balance

Careers advisors expressed the view that having a good work-life balance was a far greater concern for women than for men. Indeed, the ease with which a career can coexist with the ability to have a family can be the crucial criterion for a woman choosing her future occupation.

There is certainly a difference! Especially for women with young children, who often have to partially sacrifice their options for a more flexible work schedule... They usually choose schedules that fit around their kids' school times or after-school private lessons. So yes, I think that without realising it, part of a woman's career is sacrificed. She needs to get off work at the right time. She can't take that job in [another town] because she won't make it back in time for the kids, whereas it's not as much of an issue for a man. He can make his choices without the same concerns. Few men come to me with such issues or feeling troubled by these issues, unlike women, who often do.

Woman B, Career counsellor, PU, CY

I've heard two or three boys say "I'd like a family someday", without considering that such a step would be a factor in their choices. They simply view it as something that will complete their life. At the same time, I don't think boys base their career choices on how much time it would allow them to spend with their families. Usually, it's the girls who end up working triple shifts. The first shift is their duty as mothers, and then double work shifts, while men think it's OK for the mother to take more responsibility for the kids, to arrange her schedule accordingly, while he thinks, "I'm the man of the house, I have a full schedule, I work overtime, but that's it".

Woman A, career counsellor

Some careers advisors noted that women's relatively greater concern with achieving work-life balance had to do with the gender pay gap and the stereotype of the man as breadwinner.

Through our conversations, I have seen that male clients don't think, "I will have a family, I will need to see my kids, so I should make a choice which will accommodate my role as a father". Instead, what is more of a



concern for them is making money. This is the achievement that is prioritised.

Woman A, career counsellor, PU, CY

It has to do with the gender pay gap, because the fact of the matter is that a working man will make a better wage, whereas women will make the bigger sacrifices.

Woman B, Career counsellor, PU, CY

#### **2.2.6. Empowering**

Careers advisors saw women as less empowered than men in aspiring to hold leadership positions or to start up their own businesses.

Women don't often see self-employment or starting up a business as a viable choice. I don't know why it seems daunting to a girl or woman to create something big for herself. It's only ever in an "OK, me plus one other person" scenario. An example would be to open a small teaching institute... they wouldn't think of big business. We usually get queries about big plans by men.

Woman B, career counsellor, PU, CY

### **2.3 Summary**

Key secondary school and labour market actors were inconsistent and sometimes contradictory in their observations about the role of gender stereotypes in students' academic and career choices. While there was an across-the-board recognition of the persistence of gender stereotypes and a resulting gender segregation, there was at the same time a paradoxical tendency to minimise the issue, treating it as something outside their remit of responsibility and not of particular importance. The overall assumption was that gender stereotypes were diminishing and that segregation would take care of itself.

### **3. Comparative analysis of young people's and key actors' perspectives**

This section compares the perspectives of the young participants with those of the key adult actors on two major issues, namely those factors which appeared to influence their respective gender stereotypes and the strategies that each group used to explain or externalise these stereotypes and the consequent gender segregation in education and employment. Tables 8 and 9 list and illustrate the influencing factors as represented by the interview and focus group responses of the young people and key adults respectively, then Tables 10 and 11 do the same for the explaining and externalising strategies.

**Table 9. Factors influencing stereotypes among young people**

<b>Social structures (references to society, family, labour market, social norms, values, etc.)</b>
<p><i>Men are expected to be the providers of their families. Although there are some men who would want to spend more time with their families, they do not do so, because they need to work long hours in large enterprises in order to get promoted and earn more money to support their families.</i></p> <p><i>Maria the family lover, 28 years old, in her final year of VET, CY</i></p>
<p><i>OK, a woman in the army couldn't get into a tank. What could a woman do in the military? What if she got a gun? She's not going to be given ammunition. She'll be put somewhere safe, which is the best place for women. So it's the men who end up in the tanks, holding guns, handling ammunition.</i></p> <p><i>Antonis the pragmatist, 22 years old, in his final year of VET, CY</i></p>
<p><i>They do not give as many technical responsibilities to women sailors as they give to men sailors. Women mostly work on administrative tasks.</i></p> <p><i>Marina the booklover, 28, in her final year of university, CY</i></p>
<b>References to interactions among individuals</b>
<p><i>Women are more attached to their babies. This is why it is more difficult for them to work abroad.</i></p> <p><i>Maria the family lover, 28 years old, in her final year of VET, CY</i></p>
<p><i>Women pay more attention to detail. They think harder than men before doing something. I see this with my girlfriends. For example, one girlfriend asks me "What colour shall I do my nails?" I tell her green. She comes the next day with orange nails. I ask her "What happened?" She goes "I thought about it, changed my mind ten times, asked eight friends and I ended up with orange".</i></p> <p><i>Angelos the gamer, 26, in his final year of university, CY</i></p>
<p><i>I have noticed that sexily dressed women YouTubers have more views on YouTube.</i></p> <p><i>Angelos the gamer, 26, in his final year of university CY</i></p>
<p><i>My mum has always been a goddess! She will go to work, clean the house, exercise, go to the hairdresser... a little bit of everything and she does it all. Sometimes I wonder how she makes time for everything.</i></p> <p><i>Joanna the sporty one, 22, NEET, involved in a youth programme, CY</i></p>
<p><i>When I decided to become an occupational therapist I went to see a careers advisor at the university. He said "Are you sure you are not too sensitive? You need to know how to control your emotions. There will be difficult cases." He also said "You need to be willing to have work as your first priority and then family." He wanted to make me change my mind but he didn't [Laughs]. He suggested I should become a speech therapist instead but I'm not interested in language. I am interested in the human body.</i></p> <p><i>Anna the go-getter, 17, in her final year of secondary school, CY</i></p>
<b>Individual perspectives (references to their own thinking)</b>
<p><i>I think that this line of work [taxi driver] is chosen by men because men tend to be more dynamic. You need physical strength for this job. Women are physically weaker, and that's why they don't tend to drive taxis. You have to deal with different situations. OK, I'm not saying there is violence or anything, just that it's a tougher job.</i></p> <p><i>Maria the family lover, 28 years old, in her final year of VET, CY</i></p>
<p><i>My first priority is my family and then work. This is why I would like to either become a teacher or a confectioner. In both cases you have plenty of time to spend with your family. For example, if you become a confectioner you can work when the kids are sleeping.</i></p>

<p><i>Maria the family lover, 28 years old, in her final year of VET, CY</i></p> <p><i>I think that women have issues with their self-image and confidence. This is why they are so concerned about their appearance.</i></p>
<p><i>Anna the go-getter, 17, in her final year of secondary school, CY</i></p> <p><i>I wouldn't want to be a career woman. It's not nice, because if you're all work, work, work, at some point in the future you will end up alone. Of course, people like that have developed that lifestyle.</i></p>
<p><i>Joanna the sporty one, 22, NEET, involved in a youth programme, CY</i></p> <p><i>I believe that women can multitask and are cleverer and cannier than men.</i></p>
<p><i>Aris the philosopher, 27, NEET, CY</i></p> <p><i>If a dynamic woman wants to become a pilot, I think the challenge would be to keep a cool head, to be calm. In case of trouble, I think a man has a better chance of handling it well. If a woman is dynamic, if she can control the plane and she feels responsible, like "I will take them up", "I will land them"... I don't know why women would not choose this profession. Wouldn't they like it as a job? Maybe they can't keep their cool or are wary of something going wrong and they won't be able to handle it? I don't know how women look at it.</i></p> <p><i>Q: You say you feel women can't keep their cool. Do you really believe this and have you seen it happen around you?</i></p> <p><i>A: It's something that I saw during a driving incident [laughs]. It's usually women who have car accidents. I'm not saying men are more careful. Men with their temper and the way they speed, things happen. But I don't know. They don't have... Maybe not all women. There are a lot of women who are much better than men. I don't know what to say.</i></p>
<p><i>Antonis the pragmatist, 22 years old, in his final year of VET</i></p> <p><i>I think the job of secretary suits women better. Women make better secretaries than men. A man would not do the same job. It is not a very manly occupation, you know? A male secretary would not think exactly like a female one. It is the same of course with male professions; a woman would not think like a man. This is what I believe. Professions are differently suited... OK, a woman in the army couldn't get into a tank. What could a woman do in the military? What if she got a gun? She's not going to be given ammunition. She'll be put somewhere safe, which is the best place for women. So it's the men who end up in the tanks, holding guns, handling ammunition.</i></p>
<p><i>Antonis the pragmatist, 22 years old, in his final year of VET, CY</i></p> <p><i>I believe that women are more sensitive, more social and more tender than men. I cannot explain why, but they are.</i></p>
<p><i>Marina the booklover, 28, in her final year of university, CY</i></p>

**Table 10. Factors influencing stereotypes among key adults**

<b>Social structures (references to society, family, labour market, social norms, values, etc.)</b>	
<i>Sometimes parents want us to change their children's minds. For example, there was this mother who said to me "Please help me change my daughter's mind. She wants to become a civil engineer". There are also cases where a boy wants to enter a female-dominated field such as dance. You then have to tell his parents that this is OK. It is very difficult to deal with these cases.</i>	<i>W. career counsellor, PU, CY</i>
<i>Now with the economic crisis [...] gender segregation no longer exists. The mentality has changed. All they care about is finding a job! [Others murmur in agreement].</i>	<i>W. career counsellor, PU, CY</i>
<i>Parents' mentality plays a vast role in young people's choices. For example, if a dad is conservative and dominant he might have some beliefs about the role of women in the family that might affect his children's choices.</i>	<i>W. school advisor, PU, CY</i>
<i>To my great surprise there was a mother who supported her daughter who wanted to become a winemaker.</i>	<i>W. career counsellor, PU, CY</i>
<b>References to interactions among individuals</b>	
<i>There was a mum who was an architect. Her daughter wanted to be an architect too. She was insisting that, based on her experience, it is very difficult for a woman to be in a male-dominated sector. She said "Builders don't listen to me, contractors don't listen to me, they underestimate me because I am a woman, therefore I need to work two or three times harder than a man. I do not want my daughter to go through this". And I was like "You know these are stereotypes." And she said "No, this is my lived experience. Forget theory, come and work with builders and you will see."</i>	<i>W. School advisor, PU, CY</i>
<i>There were cases where parents have not allowed their daughters to study abroad because they believed they were not strong enough to take care of themselves and be safe, whereas parents believe that boys are stronger and can make it abroad.</i>	<i>W. School advisor, PU CY</i>
<i>Our perceptions affect young people's choices.</i>	<i>W. School advisor, PU, CY</i>
<i>There is a taboo around those who choose technical schools. There is a belief that students who choose technical schools are badly behaved. Girls see this when they visit these schools during their open days so they choose not to go there.</i>	<i>W. School advisor, PU, CY</i>
<b>Individual perspectives (references to their own thinking)</b>	
<i>I think that girls are by nature more expressive than boys. It is more likely for a girl than a boy to open up to a career counsellor and discuss the options.</i>	<i>W. career counsellor, PU, CY</i>
<i>Yes, I have seen that girls are more expressive. They share their emotions, unlike boys, who do not talk about how they feel.</i>	

<i>M. career counsellor, PU, CY</i>
<i>There are machines that do most things nowadays. But I still wouldn't allow my daughter to become an electrician, because this is not yet socially accepted. In any case, I would discourage her because I wouldn't want her to go through the physical strain either.</i>
<i>M. Teacher, PU, CY</i>

**Table 11. Strategies to explain/externalise stereotyping among young people**

<b>Strategies to justify stereotyping</b>
<i>A man could definitely become a childminder, but women make better childminders. Women have the instinct of understanding babies because they get pregnant anyway. This is what makes the difference.</i>
<i>Maria the family lover, 28 years old, in her final year of VET, CY</i>
<i>I think women might be better childminders because we have a special way of approaching babies, as we can become mothers at some point in our lives... There are more women childminders. This is due to the fact that mothers are role models for women. This is what we mean by 'maternal instinct'. OK, you could tell me that fathers have it too but I don't think it's the same. Sure, a man could work in this field, but the maternal instinct, i.e. the fact that women can get pregnant, is an advantage.</i>
<i>Joanna the sporty one, 22, NEET, involved in a youth programme, CY</i>
<i>Women make better hairdressers because we are women. We have a lot in common. We talk a lot about hair, shopping, clothes, our babies, about men...</i>
<i>Joanna the sporty one, 22, NEET, involved in a youth programme, CY</i>
<b>Strategies to externalise stereotyping</b>
<i>There is no chance I would be a stylist! No way! I do not make fun of them but I see that other people do and I wouldn't want to be in their place. I wouldn't want people to believe I am gay. All I ever wanted was a steady job.</i>
<i>Antonis the pragmatist, 22 years old, in his final year of VET</i>
<i>A man could be a childminder. It sounds funny to us. This is because society says that this job is for women only. If a man said "I'm going to be a childminder", society might not accept him. I think that people think that mothers are more appropriate for this job... People believe in the maternal instinct.</i>
<i>Maria the family lover, 28 years old, in her final year of VET, CY</i>
<i>There is a social stereotype about male hairdressers. Some people say they are gay. I don't understand how these people think. For God's sake, that's rubbish!</i>
<i>Anna the go-getter, 17, in her final year of secondary school, CY</i>
<i>In the past there were women working on farms, but not anymore. People think it's not nice to see a woman working on a farm. Although this is not reasonable, people make it look reasonable.</i>
<i>Costas, the conservative, 17, in his final year of secondary school, CY</i>
<i>People trust women childminders more than men because they say they are more patient than men, who might be unwittingly violent with kids.</i>
<i>Aris the philosopher, 27, NEET, CY</i>

Strategies to tackle stereotyping
<p><i>I don't believe that it makes any difference if the doctor is a man or a woman. As long as you study something, you are capable of working in that field.</i></p> <p><i>Maria the family lover, 28 years old, in her final year of VET, CY</i></p>
<p><i>I believe that many women are defence lawyers because they have a history of fighting for their rights. So this probably makes them more competent when fighting for other people's rights as lawyers. More so than men, who have always had their privileges.</i></p> <p><i>Anna the go-getter, 17, in her final year of secondary school, CY</i></p>
<p><i>Men are not expected to be in touch with their feelings. Men who study psychology are forced to get in touch with their feelings...</i></p> <p><i>Marina the booklover, 28, in her final year of university, CY</i></p>

**Table 12. Strategies to explain/externalise stereotyping among adults**

Strategies to justify stereotyping
<p><i>There are machines that do most things nowadays. But I still wouldn't allow my daughter to become an electrician, because this is not yet socially accepted. In any case, I would discourage her because I wouldn't want her to go through the physical strain either.</i></p> <p><i>M. Teacher, PU, CY</i></p>
<p><i>If someone knows what they want to study, you just give them the relevant information and move on to the next person. This is not right of course, but you do not normally challenge their choice. You might give advice, but I don't think it needs to be from a gender stereotyping perspective. It's not a good thing, obviously, but you don't have the luxury of time.</i></p> <p><i>M. School advisor, PU, CY</i></p>
<p><i>There is not much that you can do at that age. At this age they are already socialised. Primary education needs to tackle gender stereotypes.</i></p> <p><i>W. Careers advisor, PU, CY</i></p>
Strategies to externalise stereotyping
<p><i>If my daughter came to me saying she wanted to become a mechanic, I would tell her no, because of social reasons....</i></p> <p><i>M. Teacher, PU, CY</i></p>
Strategies to tackle stereotyping
<p><i>We approach boys and girls during school breaks and we try to persuade them to stop stereotyping. We talk to them a lot. We try to argue against gender stereotypes... For example, there are some boys who call girls sluts. We approach them and we tell them that this is not appropriate. Also, they cannot prove that these girls are sluts, so they shouldn't call them that.</i></p> <p><i>W. teacher, PU, CY</i></p>
<p><i>Information is a way to tackle gender segregation. For example, the subject of agronomy in our schools used to be male dominated. It is not anymore, because we informed people of what agronomy is. Once we did that we had more gender-balanced classes. Unfortunately, the information students get about their options is not sufficient. Teachers and career counsellors should work towards this direction.</i></p> <p><i>W. teacher, PU, CY</i></p>



*Teachers in technical schools should go and visit young people in transition periods and let them know what STEM classes are about. There are a lot of misconceptions about what we do in technical schools. People think that there is no theory and this is not true.*

*M. teacher, PU, CY*

*Success stories help a lot. I use the example of successful men who work in female-dominated fields and vice versa.*

*W. Career counsellor, CY*

Regarding the motivation behind choosing a career, there was a difference between what young people said about themselves and what key stakeholders said about young people. In the discussions of the career counsellors' focus group, there was a dominant idea among participants that young people base their choices on what would give them more job opportunities. Most counsellors in that group asserted that gender segregation no longer existed, because the economic crisis had forced young people to consider a wider array of choices. According to this view, young people are now mainly interested in choosing fields of study and/or employment that they believe will provide them stable and well-paid jobs. However, analysis of what young people actually said during their one-to-one interviews revealed only one male interviewee who raised issues of employability and stability in the workplace. All other interviewees focused either on how interesting they found their chosen career or on work-life balance issues.

Young people, especially girls, identified work-life balance as one of their criteria for choosing their future career path, whereas teachers reported observing that young people were not concerned with work-life balance because they were too young to worry about this.

## Conclusion

The results of this research show that young people reinforce the gender stereotypes which create gender segregation in education and employment. When asked to choose their favourite occupations, some named options that are not typically associated with their gender. However, when asked to imagine themselves in the future, all nine participants chose jobs that are dominated by their gender. There were cases where interviewees gave politically correct answers, reflecting the increased prominence of gender equality issues in public discourse. Our analysis of the data reveals that although most of the interviewees resisted gender stereotypes at some point, they did not do so consistently. It is important to point out that they tended to challenge gender stereotypes at the beginning of their interviews, then, as they became more familiar with the researcher, they were more likely to express stereotypical ideas. Therefore, we can assume that ideas which challenge gender stereotypes are linked to political correctness and social acceptability. In other words, interviewees tended to tell us what they thought we wanted to hear.

The interviews with young people show that when talking about their future, young women were more concerned than their male counterparts with work-life balance. Some male interviewees

suggested that nothing would change when they had a family, whereas females focused on the multiple roles they would have to play at the age of forty.

Although gender stereotypes seemed to be dominant among the young interviewees, teachers were inconsistent and sometimes contradictory in their observations about the role of gender stereotypes in students' academic and career choices. There was an across-the-board recognition of the persistence of gender stereotypes and a resulting gender segregation. There was also a paradoxical tendency to minimise the issue, treating it as something outside their remit of responsibility and not of particular importance. More specifically, career counsellors in schools overwhelmingly rejected the gender-sensitive approach when counselling students, because they disagreed in principle or did not have the time to apply it. Teachers complained about school advisors failing to provide young people with adequate information on study options, which they felt led to gender segregation in education and an under-representation of girls in technical schools.

The results of this research have shown that there is a need for systematic training of teachers on gender equality. The existence of both overt and more subtle stereotypes among young people also shows the need for a more systematic approach to working for gender equality. Although there was evidence of sporadic actions to tackle gender stereotypes in schools, it seems that they were not successful in changing the mentalities and behaviours of young people. Change is possible only with political will and long-term budgeted action plans for interventions in the education system in order to change not only the discourse but also the behaviours of young people and educators.



## 1. Protocol for qualitative semi-structured in-depth interviews with young people

Issue	Questions	Tips
<b>Part I</b>		
Project presentation	Here we should present our project as a research project about European youngsters' future.	<i>The idea is not to reveal the real objective of the research action, to avoid the "socially desirable effect".</i>
<b>Part II</b>		
What do you do in your free time? Hobbies, favourite electronic games, sports	<i>Before entering the core of the interview it is useful to create a good relationship with the interviewee, to allow them to present themselves and to find out more about them.</i>	
<b>Part III</b>		
Choosing their ten favourite jobs	<p>-We present a list of jobs and professions with 50 options and we ask the youngster to choose ten*.</p> <p>-Each country prepares its own list with a variety of profiles diversified around the following variables: high/low skills; manual/intellectual; does/does not require a degree; traditional/new (digital age) jobs; self-employed/employee; and with different levels of gender bias. Take into account that the interviewer will select four from the ten chosen by the interviewee and they should include the most heterogeneous profiles.</p>	<p>*We are trying to provide you with a common list, from a European database. You are free to adapt the list to your national context.</p> <p><i>Each interviewee underlines ten occupations from the long list.</i></p> <p><i>Warning: Always value their choices positively.</i></p>

Part IV: Imagine		
Imagine yourself at 40 years old	<p><b>Imagine you are 40 years old. What is your life like now?</b></p> <p><b>Supporting questions:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>-Describe yourself at 40. What do you do?</li> <li>-Do you work?</li> <li>-Do you live alone?</li> <li>-Where do you live?</li> <li>-What is your work and family life balance like?</li> <li>-What do you do in your free time?</li> <li>-If you were offered a job that you really liked, but abroad, would you accept it? Why?</li> <li>- If your partner received a nice offer abroad, what would your reaction be?</li> </ul>	<p><i>Caution: Avoid questions like "Imagine you are your parents' age", or "Think about a 40-year-old person."</i></p> <p><i>If they do not mention work-family balance, we explicitly ask about it.</i></p>
Trajectory	<p><b>-Imagine that you are 40 years old now.</b> Tell me what your life has been up to now in order for you to become the 40- year-old person you just described.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>-What did you study?</li> <li>-Has somebody guided your trajectory in some way? (friends, role models, references, comic characters, YouTubers...)</li> <li>-Who were your heroes/heroines?</li> <li>-And your anti-role models? That is, people you would not want to be like.</li> </ul>	
Describing four jobs/ professions	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>-Ask them to describe each of the four options we have selected (from their ten).</li> <li>-Example of support questions to obtain a detailed description: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>-<b>What is</b> (e.g.) an architect?</li> </ul> </li> <li>Does anything change if the XXXX (profession/job selected) is a <b>woman or a man</b>?</li> <li>-<b>What</b> does a XXXX do?</li> <li>-<b>What kind of people</b> choose that job/profession?</li> <li>-Are they <b>special</b> in any way?</li> <li>-How do you imagine the <b>work environment</b> of a XXXX?</li> <li>-<b>What</b> is a <b>successful</b> architect/XXXX like?</li> <li>-What do you think someone <b>needs to do</b> to be a successful XXXX?</li> <li>-What's the social image of the job/profession?</li> <li>-How well accepted is this job?</li> </ul>	<p><i>Choose yourself, from the interviewee's ten options, the four most gender stereotyped and furthest from their profile. If their selection is not clearly gender stereotyped, you can choose some that are quite remote in gender terms. 'Architect' is only an example. You should replace "XXXX" with the job/profession selected. This means you should use your</i></p>

		<i>own examples, i.e. the four professions or jobs selected from the young person's list of 10.</i>
Describing your real options	<p><b>OPTION A</b> (not yet in the workforce)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>-Is there any job not on the list that you would like to do?</li> <li>-Do you like any of these jobs?</li> </ul> <p>For each one they choose, you can ask:</p> <p><b>Description:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>-<b>What is</b> (e.g.) an architect?</li> <li>Does anything change if the XXXX is a <b>woman or a man</b>?</li> <li>-<b>What</b> does a XXXX do?</li> <li>-<b>What kind of people</b> choose that job/profession?</li> <li>-Are they <b>special</b> in any way?</li> <li>- How do you imagine the <b>work environment</b> of a XXXX?</li> <li>-<b>What</b> is a <b>successful</b> architect/XXXX like?</li> <li>-What do you think someone <b>needs to do</b> to be a successful XXXX?</li> <li>-What's the social image of the profession?</li> <li>-How well accepted is this job?</li> <li>-<b>Balance:</b> Advantages, drawbacks</li> <li>-<b>Path:</b> How would you end up in that job/profession?</li> </ul> <p><b>OPTION B</b> (already in the workforce)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>-What job did you choose?</li> <li>-Could you <b>describe</b> it?</li> <li>-<b>What is</b> (e.g.) an architect?</li> <li>Does anything change if the XXXX is a <b>woman or a man</b>?</li> <li>-<b>What</b> does a XXXX do?</li> <li>-<b>What kind of people</b> choose that profession?</li> <li>-Are they <b>special</b> in any way?</li> <li>- How do you imagine the <b>work environment</b> of a XXXX?</li> <li>-<b>What</b> is a <b>successful</b> architect/XXXX like?</li> <li>-What do you think someone <b>needs to do</b> to be a successful XXXX?</li> <li>-What's the social image of the profession?</li> <li>-How well accepted is this job?</li> <li>-Other job characteristics:</li> </ul> <p>Requirements, worker profile, etc.  Work environment, recruitment process.  When you chose XXXX, did you have any other option? If yes, explain why you chose XXXX. Is it important to have a job in this period of your life? Why?</p>	<p><i>Here you have two options depending on the interviewee profile.</i></p> <p><i>If an issue has already been dealt with at the previous stage, there's no need to ask.</i></p>

## 2. Focus group guide: labour-market-oriented careers advisors

Issue	Questions	Tips
INITIAL STIMULUS	What do these data tell you?	<i>We present data about horizontal gender segregation in the female labour market</i>
HORIZONTAL GENDER SEGREGATION	Have you thought of broadening users' professional scope and breaking gender barriers?  What broadening strategies have you applied, or could be applied?	
YOUNG ADULTS' ATTITUDES	-What are the (conventionalist, sexist, biased) most common attitudes of boys and girls who attend orientation sessions? -How do they react to the strategies mentioned above?	
EMPLOYERS' ATTITUDES	-How do employers act about hiring boys or girls in sectors where this is not common? -What reasons do they give? Do you have any strategy to influence them?	<i>Explore the employers' justifications of their segregated recruitment.</i>
VOCATION OR EMPLOYMENT	-What is the youngsters' main goal when looking for a job? a) a job they like to do; b) a job that earns them money? (Look for gender differences). -What is your opinion about this issue?	<i>Here we need to explore both young users' and careers advisors' opinions.</i>
PROFESSIONAL UPDATING	- Do you find that the education demanded by young people or suggested by you as an advisor is gender-stereotyped or neutral? -Could you provide us with some examples?	
WORK-LIFE BALANCE	Do boys and girls consider work-life balance problems when they talk about their occupational expectations?	
EMPOWERING	-Do boys and girls feel equally empowered? -Do they present the same decision capability? -Do you observe gender differences in leadership, entrepreneurship or management style between boys and girls?	

### 3. Sociodemographic form (interviewees)

*At the end of the interview the interviewee should fill this form in*

Interview number:

Age:	Occupation	
Educational year:		
Brothers and sisters, what place s/he occupies among them:		
Parents	Mother	Father
Educational level		
Job position		

#### 4. Sociodemographic form (focus group participants)

*At the end of the focus group meeting the participants were asked to fill this form in*

Focus group:
Age:
Sex:
Institutional affiliation:
Years in the job:

## 5. Sociodemographic form (interviewees)

*At the end of the interview the interviewees were asked to fill this form in*

Interview number:

Age:	Occupation	
Educational year:		
Brothers and sisters, what place s/he occupies among them:		
Parents	Mother	Father
Educational level		
Job position		

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