













school students and undergraduates, and the education alternatives for employees. Different schools and centres for education in IT skills have appeared during the recent years. The shortages of specialists given the rapid growth has forced the companies to offer increasingly jobs to undergraduates and to commit to provide them with on-the-job training.

All good ICT industry results in Bulgaria are due to the high skill levels of the specialists employed in the ICT sector. More than 2/3 of the ICT specialists employed in various sectors of the economy are higher-education graduates. Almost all graduates in subjects within the ICT sphere find relevant employment with incomes far above the average. Generally, unemployment among young people with ICT skills is exceedingly low, at around 2%.

With regard to the distribution by gender, around 2/3 of the employees are male and 1/3 are female, with the share of women employed in Bulgaria's ICT sector being the highest in the European Union.

Also, this study showed the regional distribution of those employed in the "Creation and dissemination of information and creative products; Telecommunications" sector in Bulgaria. The overall increase in employment in this economic activity during the 2010-2017 period in all Bulgarian statistical regions was nearly 50%. This is, also, the growth rate of employees in the South-West region, where more than 80% of the country's ICT employees are concentrated.

Unlike most other industries scattered throughout the country, the broad ICT sector is highly concentrated in Sofia. The three mobile operators and most companies involved in software and network maintenance are registered in Sofia. Sofia is Bulgaria's undoubted ICT centre. A substantial growth in employment is present, with the total number of employees in the ICT sector having increased by more than 50% between 2011 and 2015. One in every 20 employees in Sofia is in a profession related to information technology.

Given the optimistic data about ICT employment in Sofia and in the South-western region, it should be noted that the negative demographic development of a significant number of Bulgarian municipalities impacts seriously their abilities to increase the number of employees in their territories. This impact may be mitigated or worsened by the state of the local economy. One other potential positive effect for higher ICT employment in some areas is the human capital. It is an indisputable fact that the areas with universities in Bulgaria provide substantially higher numbers of ICT related jobs.

The analysis of employment in the ICT field shows a constant upward trend of employment under labour agreement and an increase of employment by statistical region in Bulgaria. IT related initiatives are encouraged in Bulgaria, with efforts being made to shape an image of a country with competitive advantages in the future technological world.

ICT is a systematically relevant industry with ever increasing importance as a stand-alone sector and as a key factor in the development and growth of other sectors. The information and

communication technologies have given rise to significant changes in the methods of production and in the models of employment. ICT specialists influence the development, introduction and servicing of ICT in Bulgaria's individual economic sectors. This is why monitoring the development of employment of ICT specialists in individual countries and in the EU is highly significant.

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