

## **Ericsson Equal Opportunities European Award as an Inspiration of YU Gender ICT Activities**

Information technology can significantly contribute in building of more gender-sensitive society, with the advancement of women as a primary goal, that will lead towards the equal opportunities of women and men in accessing information and knowledge. Countries that will not get the ICT momentum will become permanently marginalized. Non-equal access to these technologies may further isolate women, especially in developing countries and poor communities, like most countries in SEE region, from economic, cultural and political opportunity.

During the past decade the political situation and the economy in the FR of Yugoslavia has been very difficult. The war resulted in an enormous brain drain followed by a lack of resources in every area. This was, and still is, a very hard period and particular for women who have been carrying a heavy burden, in their personal and family lives. Those facts will be emphasized in relation to Digital divide and access to information.

YU TFGI (Expert Group for the Gender Equality in Telecommunications funded by Ministry of Traffic and Telecommunications in Yugoslavia) and NGO "Equal Opportunities" are gathering ICT experts that are able to lead the development of ICT knowledge that will enable creation of equal opportunities in ICT use both for women and men.

ITU *Task Force on Gender Issues-TFGI* has been one of the initiators for the establishment of an institutional framework for national activities in gender mainstreaming in telecommunications in Yugoslavia. In fulfilling the mandate of the ITU Task Force on Gender Issues to encourage gender awareness in the national telecom sector. Due to the similarities in language and culture between Yugoslavia and surrounding countries (Bosnia and Herzegovina, Macedonia, Croatia), cross-boarder activities could be implemented, enabling the multiple use of the developed methods.

The framework of YU TFGI activities is planned in the following three areas:

- I. Telecommunications policy (guidelines for gender mainstreaming in restructuring processes, operator gender statistics, technical universities statistics)
- II. Telecommunications as a tool for women entrepreneurs (ICT introduction, ICT and new businesses, ICT in rural areas, partnership with private sector)
- III. Tele-medicine and tele-education (Projects with the private sector).

An active involvement of policy-makers & decision-makers helps to raise awareness and it is widely supported by the President of the Yugoslav Parliament, Prof. Micunovic and the Federal Ministry of Traffic and Telecommunications.

YU TFGI has initiated two projects within the framework of national TFGI:

- **"Info-communications in schools"** and
- **"Web site with YU Gender information"** involving Networks for women in telecommunications, Universities, the Ministry for Telecommunications and the operators; all important players in the Telecom sector.

The objective of the “**Info-Communications for schools**” project, is to obtain redundant computer equipment from the private sector and give them away to schools in rural areas where the teachers are women. This project has obtained support from the President of the Yugoslav Parliament, Prof. Micunovic and will seek to establish:

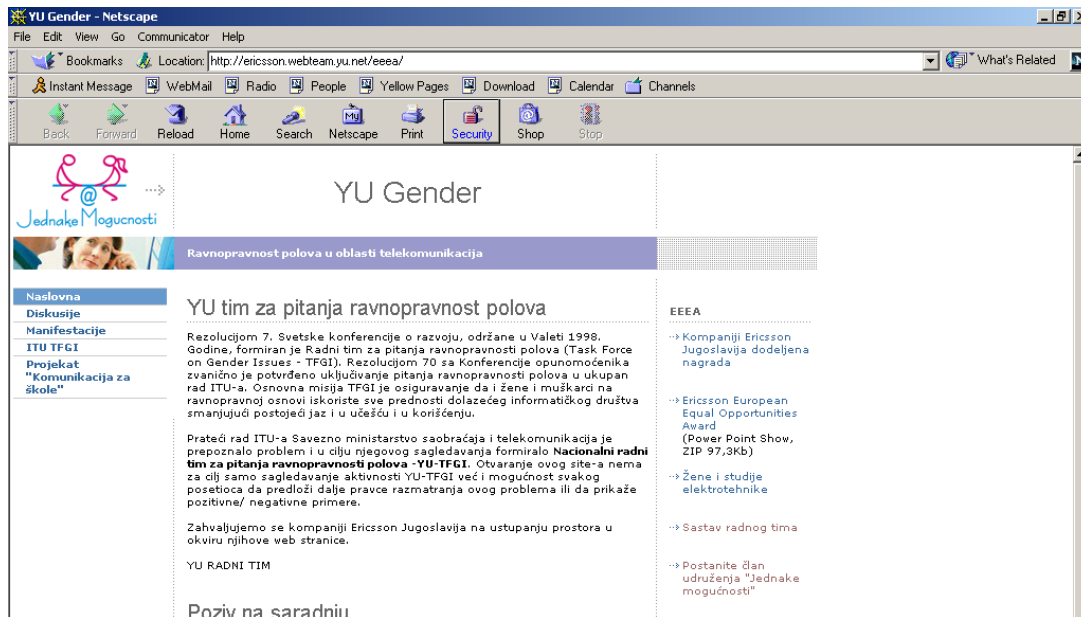
1. An Info-educational process in rural areas
2. A gathering place for rural women where they will get basic information, which will help them improve their lives and their small businesses.

The Project raised a number of related questions. It was obvious that collecting and donating computer equipment was just the beginning and a prerequisite for the introduction of new tools in the process of communication and learning. In order to be able to use computers, basic computer training is needed. As the target group is *women & children in rural areas* with no knowledge of new technologies, special programs and teaching methods must be developed.

In order to meet these training needs, YU TFGI is proposing an ICT women’s educational center.

### Web site with YU Gender information

<http://www.ericsson.co.yu/eeee> and [www.e-jednakost.org.yu](http://www.e-jednakost.org.yu)



In March 2002 Ericsson Awarded Ericsson Yugoslavia with EEEA for the following achievements:

**“Ericsson Yugoslavia has been awarded the Ericsson European Equal Opportunity Award 2001 for its proactive efforts to make Ericsson Yugoslavia an equal workplace achieving outstanding business results.**

**Ericsson Yugoslavia has an extensive and well thought equality strategy. The results of this have provided Ericsson Yugoslavia with splendid equal gender distribution all through the company, 42% of the employees are women and 46% of the line managers are women.**

**Ericsson Yugoslavia has also actively promoted equality outside Ericsson in the Yugoslavian university community, political arena and in different international and national symposiums which has positively strengthen the Ericsson brand.”**

*Equal opportunities is an important issue which we are trying to improve. This is a vital part of our work with diversity in the work force, as we are striving to become the Employer of Choice.*

In Jun 2002 the Award Ceremony was held in the Federal Parliament Building in Belgrade where Ericsson President and CEO Kurt Hellström and Britt Reigo, head of People and Culture, handed over the prize to Divna Vuckovic, Operations Director of Ericsson Yugoslavia.

The EEEA Ceremony attracted all important players in ICT sector who accepted the idea of Equal Opportunities and Gender Awareness as good practice example that can be copied in ICT companies in Yugoslavia and the whole region.

YU TFGI continued with the work on gender awareness and empowerment of women, but was not financially covered by the founder, Ministry of Traffic and Telecommunications.

To be able to raise funds for covering project costs, group of women experts in ICT **founded NGO “Jednake Mogućnosti/Equal Opportunities”** on 24<sup>th</sup> Jun 2002, with the main goal to facilitate equal access for both women and men in using modern information and communication technologies, through establishment of permanent mechanisms for bridging the digital divide and the gender divide, particularly in rural areas.

NGO objectives are:

- Creating training centers to train trainers for ICT in everyday work and life (e-WEC).
- Starting up the initiative for advancement applying ICT in everyday life and work for citizens specially women, providing support documentation for that purchase: analytic, project, and business documentation.
- Organizing printing of popular literature which will influence on citizens interest development, specially female population for conquers of knowledge from ICT area, which will improve their chances for employment even on positions where the condition is knowledge of up-to-date informatics, electronic technology, information processes and data transfer.
- Organizing training curriculums for courses, seminars, schools, lectures, workshops, exhibitions and other form of gathering, specially women,
- Organizing statistics by assembling, elaborating and analyzing data of gender participation in using of ICT (Data base on women ICT experts).
- Organizing collaboration with Universities, experts associations, organizations, non-governmental associations, ICT companies, due to create conditions for citizens knowledge advancement, specially women and their employment on positions where the education from ICT area is necessary.

Three projects are on NGO priority list:

**1. PROJECT “WOMEN’S EDUCATIONAL CENTER” (e-WEC)**

e-Women’s Educational Center – e-WEC will organize ICT training for women trainers and groups of women. It is proposed to develop this project in the two phases, having creation a movable center in Phase II, which will offer a possibility to have *training on site* in rural areas.

**2. ICT SUPPORT FOR PRIMARY HEALTH CARE SYSTEM**

The project has the goal to support the work and permanent education of female medical doctors in the primary health care and to inform patients in the primary health care, especially women.

**3. ROUND TABLE “GENDER AND WSIS”**

The project has the aim to promote UN activities on World Summit on Information Society – WSIS and evaluate the inclusion of gender perspective in national ICT policies. Involving UNDP and high state officials the Round Table should emphasize the gender divide in transition economies.