



3D Printing | Augmented Virtual Reality | Artificial Intelligence | Robotics



Girls in ICT Day 2018 celebration in Europe region

**Co-organized by ITU & European Commission
28 April 2018, Sofia, Bulgaria**

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1. Introduction

International Girls in ICT Day, an initiative backed by all ITU Member States in ITU Plenipotentiary Resolution 70 (Rev. Busan, 2014), aims to create a global environment that empowers and encourages girls and young women to consider careers in the growing field of ICTs, enabling both girls and technology companies to reap the benefits of greater female participation in the ICT sector. To date, over 300,000 girls and young women have taken part in more than 9,000 celebrations of International Girls in ICT Day in 166 countries worldwide. At these events, girls and young women have had the opportunity to experience technology first-hand in workshops, meet role models and learn about the wide range of educational and professional opportunities the sector offers.

The joint ITU and European Commission celebration of Girls in ICT Day 2018 took place on 28 April 2018 in Sofia, Bulgaria, coinciding with the Bulgarian Presidency of the Council of the European Union. The event was hosted by the University of National and World Economy in collaboration with the Ministry of Transport, Information Technology and Communications and Communications Regulation Commission of the Republic of Bulgaria. Event organization was also facilitated by EduTechFlag, Digital Europe, Digital National Alliance, Bulgarian Centre of Women in Technology, Coding Girls and Scientific Research Center for Business Competencies Development – Innovations and Competitiveness (u2b).

Bulgaria has one of the highest shares of female participation in the ICT sector in Europe. The occasion hence also served as an opportunity to discuss the reasons behind achieving higher share of female ICT specialists and identify Bulgarian best practices to be shared among other European countries. The event included two streams of program running in parallel, namely Role Model panel discussion targeted for the general audience and especially for the students of UNWE and other Universities in Sofia, and workshops organized for 60 local school girls between the ages 12-15. Altogether the event had over 250 attendees, including students, representatives of government, private sector, civil society, and Academia.



2. Opening Ceremony

The Opening Ceremony began with welcoming remarks by the Host, Prof. D.Sc. Statty Vasilev Stattev, Rector of the University of National and World Economy. This was followed by a video message of H.E. Ms Iliana Iotova, Vice-President of the Republic of Bulgaria, who underlined the vast benefits offered by the digital economy.

“Today, it is a great occasion to talk about how important it is to involve more women in the digital economy and society, including more girls and young people. Digitalization is not just a male world and telecommunications are not a trademark for men. The more young people realize their dreams, the stronger Europe will be. Hence politicians and businesses have to also take responsibility, ensuring young people are encouraged and empowered to take advantage of these opportunities. “

The opening remarks of Mr Houlin Zhao, Secretary General of International Telecommunication Union highlighted how the event as part of Girls in ICT Day celebrations was a part of global movement aiming to draw attention to the crucial importance of ICT skills in today's world across occupations.

“With our co-organizer, European Commission, we want this event to inspire young girls here in Bulgaria to learn more about the amazing opportunities and careers offered by ICTs”, he highlighted. “To them I say: take full advantage of the different workshops; get to know the mentors who have come here to meet you today. Thousands of girls like you across Europe and the world have had the chance to take part in these exciting events. As you think about your future, remember that digital skills are no longer just an advantage but an essential skill in the digital era.”

Ms Mariya Gabriel, Commissioner of Digital Economy and Society of European Commission addressed the situation at the European level.

"Women and girls' participation in ICT and the digital sectors is crucial for ensuring that we build an all-inclusive Digital Europe. Today, the numbers are alarming: only 13% of all Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics (STEM) graduates in the EU are women", she underlined. "On the occasion of the International Girls in ICT Day, we can engage to collectively create the conditions that will inspire and motivate girls to pursue STEM and ICT studies and careers."



3. Role Model Panel Discussion

The panel discussion focused on the policy-level actions required to bridge the gender digital divide and achieve Sustainable Development Goal 5 “Achieve gender equality and empower all women and girls”. The discussion concentrated on the situation at the international, regional and national levels paying attention not only to the role of the public sector but also to industry and civil society in building equal opportunities for girls in the digital era.

The panel discussion began by a presentation of 9-year-old role model Ms Tayra Ridvaeva, who shared with the audience about her passion for technology and coding and projects through which she is using ICT to create positive impact. H.E. Mr Ivan Dimov, Deputy Minister of Education and Science addressed the importance to attract young women in the field of ICTs through various measures and shared the experience of Bulgaria in this regard. H.E. Ms Zornitsa Roussinova, Deputy Minister of Labour and Social Policy shared the policy-perspective for promoting gender-equal ICT sector. Speaking from the European perspective, Hon. Mr Andrey Novakov, Member of European Parliament underlined the crucial importance of promoting flourishing ICT ecosystem that includes equal participation of women.

Ms Sasha Bezuhanova, Founder and Chairperson, The Bulgarian Centre of Women in Technology (BCWT) addressed the role of civil society in working together with the public sector, Academia and private sector for creating meaningful opportunities for girls and young women in the field of ICTs. Ms Monika Kovachka-Dimitrova, Chief Project Manager and CSR Lead of SAP Labs Bulgaria shared about her own experience as a woman in an ICT company and delivered an inspiring message for the young women in the audience to believe in their skills and not let prejudice stop them from giving ICTs a chance. Ms Nelly Ilieva, Sales Director of Dell EMC Bulgaria highlighted how gender equality is important from the perspective of private sector also due to the business benefits it brings. Mr George Alexandrov, Managing Director of Oracle Bulgaria talked about the importance of digital education and multi-stakeholder approach for addressing this. Prof. Dr. Kamelia Georgieva Stefanova, Dean of Faculty of Applied Informatics and Statistics of UNWE underlined how the digital transformation is cross-cutting all sectors of the economy and hence, the higher education has to tackle this challenge to prepare students for the new situation in the labour market.



4. Workshop Sessions for Girls

60 school girls aged between 12 – 15 were invited to the event from the towns of Varshetz, Kyustendil and Panagyurishte. The programme for girls consisted of three different ICT workshops and speed mentoring. Furthermore, all girls had the chance to test a demo of Virtual Reality. In the workshops, the girls received materials to continue their exercises at home.

Workshop 1 was organized by EduTechFlag and gave the participants a chance to create their own products through a set of ICT tools. The girls could create digital interactive animations about their favourite subjects at school, make a mobile app that can be used in a school environment, create digital visualizations by using WordClouds and make their own QR codes for a special message to their classmates to inspire them about ICTs.

Workshop 2 was run by Coding Girls and introduced the girls to the first steps in programming with MIT Scratch. Through the fun exercise, girls could learn the basic logic of coding and create their own interactive animation through simple programming. Simultaneously, they learned about developing a logical and problem-solving mindset.



Workshop 3 in Robotics was held by Technokrati and facilitated by Bulgarian Centre of Women in Technology. The workshop included development of theoretical and practical skills related to topics such as mechanics, sensors, construction and block programming of a custom robot. Understanding how robots work and understanding that they are just a tool that we control was a key base in communicating and introducing robotics to the girls.

Speed-mentoring workshop aimed at combatting prejudice girls might have about working in ICT-related jobs. As girls look at their career choices, they need real role models they can aspire to – simply put, *'if you can see it, you can be it'*. In the speed-mentoring, the girls met with female professionals from technology companies, SAP and VMWare, as well as civil society initiatives Coding Girls, Rails Girls and Coder Dojo. The mentors shared about their everyday work, why they find ICTs fascinating and also discussed new exciting technological developments such as Artificial Intelligence and 3D printing.

During the coffee break, the distinguished guests, speakers, audience of the panel discussion and media representatives had the chance to visit the workshops to learn about the activities.



5. Closing Ceremony

In the closing ceremony, the content of the workshops was introduced by Ms Milena Krumova, Founder and Manager of EduTechFlag and girls from each workshop shared about their experience with the audience and showed what they had learned.

Afterwards each school girl who participated in the event received a certificate of participation. The event ended with a tombola as prizes were awarded for the lucky girls to take home with.





Girls in ICT Day 2018
Europe Event Co-Organized by ITU & EC
University of National and World Economy, Sofia, Bulgaria
[ul. "8-mi dekemvri", 1700 Studentski Kompleks]
Saturday 28 April 2018
AGENDA

14:00 – 14:30 **Welcome Refreshments**

14:30 – 15:00 **Opening Ceremony *[Plenary]***

Welcome by Host: Prof. D.Sc. Statty Vasilev Stattev, Rector of the University of National and World Economy
Message by H.E. Ms Iliana Iotova, Vice-President, Republic of Bulgaria

- Mr. Houlin Zhao, Secretary General, International Telecommunication Union
- Ms. Mariya Gabriel, Commissioner, Digital Economy and Society, European Commission

15:00 – 16:00 **Role Model Panel Discussion *[Stream One]***

[Policy level discussion on Sustainable Development Goal 5 “Achieve gender equality and empower all women and girls” and actions at International, Regional and Country level encompassing the role of Industry and Civil Society in building equal opportunities for Girls. The discussions and possible future actions will be captured in an outcome report.]

Setting the Context and Moderation by Mr. Jaroslaw Ponder, Head of ITU Office for Europe

- H.E. Ms. Zornitsa Roussinova, Deputy Minister of Labour and Social Policy
- H.E. Mr. Ivan Dimov, Deputy Minister of Education and Science
- Hon. Mr. Andrey Novakov, Member of European Parliament
- Ms. Tayra Ridvaeva, Young Girls in ICT Role Model
- Ms. Sasha Bezuhanova, Founder and Chairperson, The Bulgarian Centre of Women in Technology (BCWT), Founder and Chairperson at MOVE.BG
- Ms. Monika Kovachka-Dimitrova Chief Project Manager, CSR Lead, SAP Labs Bulgaria
- Ms. Nelly Ilieva, Sales Director, Dell EMC Bulgaria
- Mr. George Alexandrov, Managing Director, Oracle Bulgaria
- Prof. Dr. Kamelia Georgieva Stefanova, Dean of Faculty of Applied Informatics and Statistics, University of National and World Economy

16:00 – 16:45 **Visit to the Workshops, Press Statements and Coffee Break**

15:00 – 16:45 **Workshop Sessions for Girls *[Stream Two for Girls 12-15 Years]***

[Girls from three schools in different Bulgarian towns are invited to discover ICTs first hand through a set of educative and fun hands-on workshops. In addition, they will meet inspiring local role models in a speed mentoring session.]

- First steps in programming with MIT Scratch by Coding Girls
- Developing mobile apps - Inspirations for girls' digital skills development by EduTechFlag
- Experiencing robotics and virtual reality by Technokrati and BCWT
- Speed mentoring by
 - SAP
 - DELL
 - VMWare
 - Coding Girls
 - Rails Girls Sofia
 - Coder Dojo Sofia

16:45 – 17:20 Presentation of Participation Certificates to Girls *[Plenary]*
[Each Girl receives a participation certificate]

17:20 – 17:30 Closing ceremony *[Plenary]*
