



Ministerial Roundtable: Advancing Women's Digital Opportunities

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10:00 - 11:30, Room XVII

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The Government of the Republic of Moldova attaches great importance both to women empowerment policies and the development of the ICT sector. In our view, these elements are not simply “part of the solution” to the challenges we face today but rather the prerequisites of any successful Government policy. For me, as a member of the International Gender Champions’ community, it is a topic of special interest.

The Republic of Moldova has a solid framework both regarding the promotion of gender equality and the ICT sector, the commitment of the Government for these sectors being reflected as well in the EU – Moldova Association Agreement and the national commitment to implement the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development.

Over the years, the Republic of Moldova has built a strong gender equality framework in line with the international standards, nevertheless there is still long way forward towards closing the gender gap.

For the past 5 years, the World Economic Forum’s Global Gender Gap Report has been ranking the country among the first 30 in the world, well above the global average, the score for economic participation and opportunity being even higher, placing the country on the 11th place out of the 144 countries included in the report.

In 2017 the Government adopted the Gender Equality Strategy and Plan of Action for the period 2017 – 2021. The Strategy presents a comprehensive analysis of the gender gap in the Republic of Moldova, reflecting in particular on the problems that the implementation of the Strategy should address, two of those being access opportunities on the job market and the gender pay gap and education.

The document identifies the lack of a gender sensitive education system as one of the main causes that leads to the creation of so called “masculine” or “feminine” professions, which explains in part the 12.4 % pay gap that persists in the Republic of Moldova.

One example of a “masculine” sector where women are underrepresented is the ICT, both at the level of education as well as well as in employment.

In this context, one of the objectives formulated in the Plan for the implementation of the strategy is to include a gender approach towards education, in particular with regard to career counselling with a view to promote a choice of profession based on personal skills and interests and not on the traditional gender defined jobs and sectors.

Likewise, when talking about the legal framework for the ICT sector, a series of programmatic documents have been adopted that reflect the Government's strong interest in the area. Here we should mention the Strategy "Digital Moldova 2020" adopted in 2013, followed in 2015 by the Strategy on Increasing Competitiveness of the Information Technology Industry, the 2016 Law on IT Parks that resulted in the opening of the first virtual information technology park "Moldova IT Park" and the establishment, in public-private partnership, of the Centre for Excellence in IT "Tekwill" and other measures designed to:

- Increase competitiveness of IT companies,
- Support small and medium-sized enterprises engaged in the IT industry;
- Attract foreign and domestic investments;
- Create jobs.

The Government of the Republic of Moldova has included gender mainstreaming in public policies as one of the key issues to be addressed by the Strategy on gender equality.

Despite the lack of gender mainstreaming in ICT related policy documents, women empowerment in the digital age is a recurring topic at the level of implementation, especially when we talk about education.

Over the past few years the Republic of Moldova has been actively participating in the ITU initiative "Girls in ICT" and the "Girls in ICT Day" that will be celebrated on 25 April. The activities will be organised by the platform "GirlsGoIT" together with public authorities, ICT business community, international partners and public authorities (Ministry of Economy and Infrastructure).

The platform "GirlsGoIT" was created in 2015 representing the result of a common endeavour between the government, the business community and the development partners: UN WOMEN Moldova, the e-Government Center that is part of the State Chancellery, the programme NOVATECA, the Moldovan Association of Information and Communications Technology Companies – ATIC and other international partners and representatives of the business community.

This project is a very good example of an impactful cooperation between international organisations, Government, donors, civil society and business.

The GirlsGoIT project offers a platform for girls to cultivate their interest in STEM and ICT in particular through such activities as GirlsGoIT boot camp, summer camp and annual forum.

Other initiatives include the Conference "Women in ICT" and the website "IT Career" put in place by the Moldovan Association of Information and Communications Technology Companies, Women in Tech implemented by TEKEDU.

To conclude, I would like to go back to the issue of education and how important it is to build an environment of equal opportunities, where girls and boys to choose their careers based on their interests and competencies not on gender stereotypes.

Secondly, allow me to reiterate the importance of gender mainstreaming in public policies that would foster affirmative action necessary for the advancement of women's digital opportunities.

Third, it is important to highlight the essential role that the ICT business community can play in empowering women and bridging the gender digital divide.

Finally, the ICT sector moves at an unprecedented speed, reshaping the future as we speak. In this sense it is a matter of fundamental rights for women to have a seat at table and to participate in these processes.