

# MAPPING OF GENDER IN ICT SPHERE IN MACEDONIA

Author:  
Kristina Hadzi-Vasileva

МЕТАМОРФОЗИС   
Фондација за интернет и општество



# CONTENTS

1.1. Introduction.....	5
1.2. Methodology.....	7
1.3. Findings of the Analysis .....	11
1.3.1. Background.....	13
1.3.2. Legal framework in Macedonia.....	14
1.3.3. Access (use of IT tools and media) .	15
1.3.4. Economy (educational and professional orientation towards IT).....	23
1.3.5. Expression (protection of human rights on social media, online media freedom of expression, online media privacy protection etc.).....	26
1.4. Conclusions and Recommendations.....	31
1.5. Limits of the assessment.....	37



# 1.1 INTRODUCTION

This mapping document of gender in IT sphere in Macedonia is developed within Metamorphosis' project "Promoting, Shaping and Upholding Internet Freedoms". Main objectives of the project are increasing the understanding of the current situation related to implementation of basic rights and freedoms on the internet in Macedonia, capacity building of NGOs and media, and facilitating sharing of knowledge and networking between the most relevant stakeholders, as basis for increased engagement of CSOs, media and citizens in shaping policies pertinent to internet freedoms.

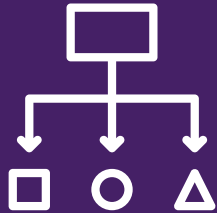
The project aims to contribute to increased understanding and support for rights-based universal access policies and programmes among civil society, human rights, women's rights and development practitioners by directly focusing on increasing multi-stakeholder networking, exchange of information and cooperation between the activists, experts, as well as public officials and civil servants in related areas.

For the most part practitioners in these areas pay little attention to the "online" aspect of the issues, even though increasing access to new technologies directly contributes to narrowing the gender gap and empowering of marginalized groups. Mainstreaming universal access issues within all human rights-related policymaking by raising awareness about the relevant aspects with clear implication in Macedonia as a model Western

Balkans country will enable using the project results, as well as established best practices, to replicate the results across the region.

The analysis will take into consideration the already existing data and/or studies and will be a mapping document which will guide future strategic approach of Metamorphosis in Macedonia towards developing approaches for support of women's participation in IT sphere. It will attempt to provide highlight into the current situation with gender issues and how ICT is used to promote gender equality and feminist issues as well as locate Metamorphosis' potential role in this sphere in the future.

# 1.2 METHODOLOGY







## 1.2 METHODOLOGY

The methodology used for this document is mostly based on desk review of relevant publications which consist of analyses, research papers and reports developed by Metamorphosis as well as other organisations in Macedonia. Strategies and plans at national level and relevant sectoral Laws which will allow for an improved assessment of the current context in which IT and gender intersect were also reviewed.

Desktop review also included research of online materials such as blogs, social media posts, statistical data etc.



## 1.3 FINDINGS OF THE ANALYSIS





## 1.3 FINDINGS OF THE ANALYSIS

### 1.3.1 BACKGROUND

The relationship between gender and information technology is not a key question within the gender equality discourse in Macedonia. Most of the public debate revolves around the topics of gender-based violence, economic empowerment of women as well as increasing political representation of women. In the past few years the issue of mainstreaming gender responsive budgeting in local and national policies has also gained momentum.

There are no publicly recognized organizations that specifically focus their work in gender and ICT yet some of the women's organizations do brush upon this issue. One of the reasons for this might be that the topic is also not of specific interest to any major community stakeholder that has the power to push for this agenda in the public conversation.

On the global scale, with the adoption of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, adopted by all United Nations Member States in 2015, ICT has an increased importance for fulfilling Goal no. 5: Gender Equality. As pointed out by UN Women Executive Director Phumzile Mlambo-Ngcuka: "ICTs offer vast potential for women and girls: from ending poverty, to improving education and health, to agricultural productivity, and creating decent jobs."<sup>1</sup> As a result, ITU<sup>2</sup> (the United Nations specialized agency for information and communication technologies – ICTs) and UN Women have launched a joint initiative under the name "EQUALS: The Global Partnership for Gender Equality in the Digital Age", dedicated to women and girls in technology with a vision of harnessing the power of modern information and communication technologies (ICTs) to accelerate global progress to bridge the gender digital divide.

...13

According to ITU data the proportion of men using the Internet is higher than

---

1 "Reshaping the future: Women, girls and tech for development", Phumzile Mlambo-  
Ngcuka, UN Under-Secretary-General and Executive Director, UN Women Emerging  
Trends | ICT4SDG | SDG5, February 9, 2018.ef

2 [www.itu.int](http://www.itu.int)

the proportion of women using the Internet in two-thirds of countries worldwide. There is a strong link between gender parity in the enrolment ratio in tertiary education and gender parity in Internet use. The only region where a higher percentage of women than men are using the Internet is the Americas, where countries also score high on gender parity in tertiary education. Also, the proportion of women using the Internet is 12% lower than the proportion of men using the Internet worldwide. While the gender gap has narrowed in most regions since 2013, it has widened in Africa. In least developed countries, only one out of seven women is using the Internet compared with one out of five men. Internet penetration in developing countries is 7% higher among men than women.<sup>3</sup>

Disparities in access, capacity to use and ways of engagement with ICTs between women and men also known as the gender digital divide, have also been on the EU policy agenda for quite some time. A study<sup>4</sup> prepared last year points out that ICTs need to be people-driven and not technology-driven. In this context decreasing the digital gender divide will take place if policies move beyond access and are included into decision-making and capacity building. This incorporates capacity building and training, removing legal or social barriers, enabling women and girls to have a role in the ICT planning, increasing access to and control of ICT resources.

### 1.3.2 LEGAL FRAMEWORK IN MACEDONIA

Two major laws in Macedonian are related to and impact the issues of gender and ICT. The Law on Equal Opportunities of Women and Men<sup>5</sup> determines the establishing of equal opportunities and treatment of women and men as well as measures for enabling this process. The legislation aims to establish the

3 <https://www.itu.int/en/ITU-D/Statistics/Documents/facts/ICTFactsFigures2017.pdf>

4 "The underlying causes of the digital gender gap and possible solutions for enhanced digital inclusion of women and girls", Directorate General For Internal Policies Policy Department C: Citizens' Rights And Constitutional Affairs, European Parliament's Policy Department for Citizens' Rights and Constitutional Affairs, PE 604.940, March 2018

5 Zakon za ednakvi moznosti na mazite i zenite, Sluzben vesnik na RM br. 6/2012; 166/2014.

equal opportunities of women and men in all spheres of society and places the responsibility for its achievement to all societal actors in the public and private sector. In that regard responsibilities are provisioned for the Parliament, the Government, Government Bodies, Local Government Units, Ombudsman, political parties. The media, through their program concepts, have the obligation to contribute to gender equality by taking care not to discriminate on this ground. In that context, the Broadcasting Council, now renamed to Audio-visual Media Services Agency, has the obligation to prepare annual analysis of gender issues in program content in media which is publicized and also submitted to Parliament.

The latest amendments to the Law on Audio and Audio-visual Media Services<sup>6</sup> clearly prohibit broadcasting of programs that encourage and spread discrimination based on gender identity, among other, and are also subject to fines. One must take into consideration the fact that this Law regulates the TV and radio as well as print media and does not deal with internet excluding also online versions of printed newspapers.

An important role related to ICT is provided by the Directorate for Personal Data Protection<sup>7</sup> which performs inspection over lawfulness of actions taken during the processing of personal data and their protection in the country. The Directorate can elaborate and adopt personal data protection by-laws, develop policies and guidelines and can undertake inspections in accordance with the Law on Personal Data Protection. The Directorate also has a role in assessing legality of personal data processing and can prohibit its further processing as well as lead offense procedures and act upon request of supervision bodies in the sphere of personal data protection. It also provide expert advice, opinions and capacity building on the topic.

...15

### 1.3.3 ACCESS (USE OF IT TOOLS AND MEDIA)

Access to IT and Internet as human right was first proposed at the United Nations by Special Rapporteur on the Promotion and Protection of the Right to Freedom of Opinion and Expression in 2011<sup>8</sup>.

6 Zakon za audio i audio-vizuelni medijski usluzi, Sluzben vesnik na RM br. 247/2018

7 <https://www.dzlp.mk/en/node/2043>

8 <https://feministinternet.org/en/principle/access>

New technologies in the information and communications arena, especially the Internet, have been seen as ushering in a new age. However, access to new ICTs is still a distant reality for a vast majority of people (countries of the South, rural populations) as a result of a number of barriers including the absence of basic infrastructure and lack of demonstrated benefit from ICTs to address grass-root community challenges. These barriers pose even greater problems for women, who are more likely to be illiterate, not know English or lack opportunities for access to training in computer skills. Although ICTs have brought employment gains for many women, patterns of gender segregation are being reproduced in the information economy where men hold the majority of high-skilled jobs, and women are concentrated in the low-skilled jobs. There is clearly a need to address the gender dimensions of the information society, particularly to integrate gender perspectives into national ICT policies and strategies and promote women's economic participation in the information economy. Engendering ICTs is not merely about greater use of ICTs by women. It is about transforming the ICT system to reflect gender needs<sup>9</sup>.

The analysis prepared by the Audio-visual Media Services Agency<sup>10</sup> indicates that women's access to traditional media (TV), which is most influential in Macedonia, is very limited. Statistical data about male and female interlocutors in the (daily) information shows, who appear in the capacity of experts on certain topics, present the picture about women and men's presence in the public discourse and in the decision-making processes in the social sphere.

The data presented for each of the years analysed clearly reveal gender asymmetry between the presence of women and men in the public sphere. In each of the years the presence of men as experts and interlocutors in the news is three times higher than that of women as experts or interlocutors on specific topics of interest. This phenomenon can be explained to a certain extent as being a result of the 'glass ceiling' in politics, because the

---

9 <https://eige.europa.eu>

10 "Gender on Television a Collection Of Annual Surveys on The Treatment of Gender Issues and the Way Women and Men are Depicted by The National TV Stations (2012 – 2016)", Marina Trajkova  
MA Emilija Petreska-Kamenjarova, Audio-visual Media Services Agency, 2017.



majority of functions and offices in the state are performed by men. Thus, for instance, the President of the State and the Prime Minister are men and currently (and this has been an ongoing trend) only 4 women out of 25 are ministers while majority of Parliament members are men. There are 6 women Mayors out of 82 and the situation with chairpersons of the political parties, directors and other high-ranking positions is similar. On the other hand, women are present in all the professions in the public sphere and are relevant sources of information and expertise. Consequently, the small number of women occupying decision-making positions should not be perceived as a sufficient excuse not to invest efforts in placing their knowledge within the focus. A trend of absence of female experiences and expertise has been noted even in cases when women related issues have been covered, such as right to abortion, family issues or information concerning female politicians. An illustrative example is related to amendments to the Law on termination of pregnancy which was treated in the media, with a couple exceptions, with low representation or even absence of female experiences, standpoints and needs, although these decisions directly affect women's health and condition.

Throughout the years media has covered a number of gender related events and topics in the news albeit not from a gender perspective depriving the opportunity for topics such as traditions, family and home to raise questions about gender roles in society or the identification of women with the home and the family. Patriarchal positioning of women in the home and the family is particularly evident when broadcasting matters dedicated to religious holidays, where women appear in the leading role making sure traditions are observed. Furthermore, in reports on female politicians' activities an absence of their statements and opinions is noticeable.

...17

News about medical achievements or opening of new wards in the clinics concerning women's reproductive health as well as medical cases in which women had suffered damage are not placed within the gender context. The approach to the topic of sexual abuse – of women mostly – is similar. Although this topic raises important gender issues in a most direct way, editors in most of the media outlets do not consider it necessary to provide additional elaboration of the topic. A deeper analysis of this topic would have offered

statistical data about the dimensions of this problem, the reasons behind it and the possible solutions. In addition, one TV station<sup>11</sup> even aired a sexist news item which focused on the changes to be introduced to medical staff uniforms, choosing to frame this topic within a sexist context.

Internet, on the other hand offers more open and free platforms to express diverse messages. A feminist internet starts with enabling more and diverse groups of women to enjoy universal, acceptable, affordable, unconditional, open, meaningful and equal access to the online content<sup>12</sup>.

In Macedonia, in the first quarter of 2017, 73.6% of the households had access to the Internet at home. Of the total number of Internet users in 2017, 49.4% were women and 50.6% men. Data by age groups show that the percentage of regular users is highest among individuals aged 15-24, where 95% of women and 100% of men at that age are regular users, while the smallest percentage of regular users is registered in the age group 55-74. According to education, the data show that the percentage of regular users is highest among the population with tertiary education, where 96% of women and 94% of men with tertiary education are regular users. The percentage of regular users is smallest in the population with primary education, where only 51% of women and 57% of men regularly use the Internet<sup>13</sup>.

Table 1 – Internet users by gender and age

age	15-24		25-54		55-74	
	Women	Men	Women	Men	Women	Men
Internet users	95	99	90	87	54	59
Regular users <sup>14</sup>	95	100	83	84	35	35

Around 70% of the Macedonians use Internet out of which around 40% use websites and portals for regular daily informing and the percentage is some-

11 Sitel TV, 2013, news item titled "Sexy nurses go into history! No more short skirts or low necklines."

12 <https://feministinternet.org/en/principle/access>

13 Women and Men in North Macedonia, State Statistical Office, 2019.

14 Regular users are the persons who use Internet every day or at least once a week in the last 3 months, i.e. in the first quarter of the year.

what higher for social media for the same purpose (43%-46%). There is no significant difference between sexes in this regard<sup>15</sup>.

Most popular social media tools are Facebook followed by Instagram and Twitter as well as You Tube. According to Facebook data there are around 1.200.000<sup>16</sup> users of the network in Macedonia of which 800.000 are adult users.

Table 2 – Facebook user estimates

Male	620.000	56.4%	660.000	55.0%
Female	470.000	42.7%	500.000	41.7%
Total	1.100.000		1.200.000	

In her, what is now considered classical essay, Dona Haraway<sup>17</sup> argues that when the delineation of the boundaries between human and machine takes place, gender categories will become obsolete thus promoting the utopian dream for a world without gender. This idea finds its essence in the post-modern interest to challenge essentialist and dualistic understandings of gender. Her triumphant exclamation ‘I would rather be a cyborg than a goddess’ urges towards gender-neutralizing rather than gives up the gender emphasizing icons.

...19

This theory later on gave basis to the development of queer theory<sup>18</sup> and many queer organizations and social groups embraced the Internet as a medium which neutralizes physical distinctions of gender, race, and sexual orientation. Liberal feminists whose main concepts are based on the significance of freedom of expression, embraced cyber culture as a new arena

15 "Istrazivanje za upotrebatu na medijima: medijumska pismenost i samoregulacijata kako uslovi za postignuvanje povisoki profesionalni standardi i demokracnost na medijima", Ana Blazeva, *Metamorfozis* 2017.

16 This data is based on Facebook estimated reach and can vary by the day, however percentages are more or less stable.

17 "A Manifesto for Cyborgs", Donna Haraway, 1985

18 *Cyberfeminism* Kira Hall Rutgers University, Camden, Susan C. Herring (ed.) *Computer-Mediated Communication* John Benjamins Publishing Company Amsterdam/ Philadelphia 1996 (Published as Vol. 39 of the series *PRAGMATICS AND BEYOND NEW SERIES*, ISSN 0922-842X)

for activism and rebellion which allowed infiltration in the male-dominated pro-computer subculture.

Yet, time and social media usage have come to show that gender is not erased in the virtual world, but very often intensified and Internet has been witness to modes of verbal violence that only rarely occur between strangers in the non-virtual world, where its employment in casual interaction would be perceived as the exception and not the rule.

Cyber feminism acknowledges differences in power between women and men in the digital discourses and sees e-media as encouraging women's participation in the field of information and communication technology.

The initial feminist idea strives to get women online. Websites of women's organizations, portals on feminist issues have sprung over the Net and women's participation has become easier (signing online petitions, raising issues etc.).

Early feminist activism depended on women getting together in person in kitchens, churches, in small groups sewing, cooking and knitting together. Later on they met in consciousness-raising groups that became the organizing cells for activism. Cyber feminism offers the possibility of working in ways feminists have often aspired to, but have sometimes had difficult achieving - inclusion, diversity, transparency, and open process which can lead to action and change. Women can use cyber feminism to communicate with each other and to connect over the issues that are closest to their hearts. They can reach beyond the boundaries of neighbourhoods to exchange information and experiences with their communities of interest. At the same time, they bring global resources to their local communities. There is much more that they can do with cyber feminism, such as influencing government, demanding accountability, promoting democratic participation<sup>19</sup>.

In the past years there have been a number of initiatives in Macedonia to bring feminist ideas and activities in the online sphere. Most of them are websites

---

19 cyberfeminism: changing gender inequality via information technology  
 Mulyaningrum, a.b. Mohd Yusof, Suraya Ahmad, Shahrin Sahib page 5 paper presented on : International Conference on Engineering & ICT (icei 2007), eqoutorial, Melaka, Malaysia

of existing CSOs and CSO Networks working on women's and gender issues. Equivalent to world trends, Macedonian CSO are evermore using digital tools in their communication. Around 60,3% of them have a website and around 80% use Facebook<sup>20</sup>. Since this is the most used social media in the country CSOs have rightly capitalised on this notion. From other social media, CSOs use Youtube (30,4%), Twitter (25,1%), LinkedIn (13%) and Instagram (7,7%)<sup>21</sup>.

Other online presence is established by informal groups of (mostly) women and located on social media such as Facebook. One such independent initiative is "Fight Like a Woman" (Bori se zenski!) committed to promotion of gender equality by encouraging debate on the Internet. They organize awareness-raising events in public spaces and promote other gender focused actions.

One of their actions has been organizing a mini marathon with the purpose of adding articles about notable women from Macedonia to Wikipedia in Macedonian to raise awareness about women's rights and gender equality.

The activists who were, as they put it, "defying oblivion", managed to create 40 articles during the short campaign, with short biographies of important women, from early 20th century feminists and human rights activists to World War 2 freedom fighters, contemporary academics and artists.

...21

Most of the members are also part of initially informal group Tiiiiit!nc. which has now become formal organization and which also conducts activities to actively engage and support the women rights activists and independent artists in advocating improvement of the women's rights in Macedonian society. They try to enable women to express their work and opinions to the wider public (and to the governmental bodies) by creating a non-exclusive space for constructive debate, creative exchange and networking opportunities. They work on promotion of all spectra of women's realities, urban, young, and marginalized, such as sex workers, lesbians, bisexual and transgender, ethnic and religious minorities and many other who cannot express themselves as part of the mainstream culture. Their efforts have mostly been focused organizing a feminist festival "Prvo pa žensko" (It's First and It's a Girl)

---

20 Povrzivanje so građjanite: digitalni komunikacii vo građjanskiot sektor vo Makedonija", Lejla Shaban i Monika Aksentievaska, Institut za komunikaciski studii.

21 Ibid.

and the realization of the activities of “Matka” (Womb/Uterus) platform who advocates for free access to safe and legal abortion.

In addition to this, together with other activists they organize the PichPrich event for women storytelling in the field of feminism and gender equality.

These platforms and informal groups are more or less fluid with same women activists moving from one to the other depending on the activities. They consist of young intellectual women who mainly represent the urban elite including sexual minorities.

Lately, other feministic platforms have sprung up (some supported by donors) such as Medusa.mk which is created for girls, women, gender and sexual minorities in order to write and read about problems they face on a daily basis regarding their choices, rights, bodies, stories...

The latest in these campaign has been Zeni.mk (Women.mk) a campaign on Facebook, Twitter and Instagram for promoting less known extraordinary women from Macedonia.

These and other activist were at the forefront of the local version of the #MeToo movement<sup>22</sup> called #СераКажувам/#TaniTregoj (“#ISpeakUpNow”) when a group of women from Macedonia started sharing their personal testimonies of sexual harassment by perpetrators in positions of power, on Facebook and Twitter. This incited ‘a snowball effect’ with hundreds of women joining the movement.

It was the first version of the campaign to have such a following. Consequently, the hashtag began to attract the attention of social media trolls and anonymous profiles were spamming the hashtag with a new form of manipulative tactics of ‘whataboutism’.

The trolling was met with outrage towards this new form of abuse and disrespect for the victims of sexual harassment by those who use the social network under their own names.

These feminist platform are a reflection of the already existing similar ones

---

<sup>22</sup> <https://globalvoices.org/2018/01/21/macedonia-has-its-own-metoo-movement-ispeakupnow-and-it-is-gaining-momentum/>

in the region and globally such as OneWorld<sup>23</sup> which aims to tackle and re-search the intersection between Internet Rights, Women Right and Sexualities based on their belief that technology has immense power in creating equal world, and even more so to empower girls and women around the world. They host and support the portal [zenskaposla.ba](http://zenskaposla.ba).

### 1.3.4 ECONOMY (EDUCATIONAL AND PROFESSIONAL ORIENTATION TOWARDS IT)

Gender identity is one of the strongest determinants in our society. As a result of the gender identity, people in society have certain gender roles, behaviors, values and actions, attributes, which the given society considers adequate for men and women. Our beliefs about how women and men are, how they typically differ according to their characteristics, skills and behavior are suspect to change depending on time, geography and culture. The concept of gender is not fixed, it is fluctuating and we are all included in this process of defining of or gender roles. Yet, gender stereotypes based on the pre-determined gender roles create what is adequate for males and females and often reflect in the choice of education and profession.

...23

Women's access to and choices about education and profession directly impact their position in society and opportunities for financial (economic) independence. Having in mind that IT related professions are currently one of the well-paid ones in the country it would be expected that girls have interest in information technology fields of study.

Yet, students from secondary schools in Skopje asked to self-evaluate their knowledge in English, Maths and IT showed statistically insignificant differences in grading in English and Maths while in IT boys self-evaluated much higher than girls. Girls tend to see information science in schools as less relevant to their every-day lives and less linked to their interests. It is considered that main source of interest for computers and internet is linked to video-games which girls play less<sup>24</sup>. This can be linked to the type of video

---

23 <http://oneworldplatform.net/en/>

24 Kratka analiza br.1: Inzenerki, programerki, informaticarki. Kako da se nadminat rodovite stereotipi za tehnickite i informaticckite profesii?, Ana Mickovska-Raleva, Kristijan Trajkovski, CIKP, 2017.

games created (mostly developed by men) and based largely on competition and destruction. Girls are motivated by different types of games based on completion and fantasy<sup>25</sup>.

Students had also difficulty to identify female role models in the scientific and IT sphere pointing out their upbringing which values traditional relations between women and men in society in which there are fewer women in higher positions in ICT.

Basically despite being aware of the impact of traditional division of roles on the choice of profession still boys and girls are limited by societal stereotypes in career choice. Girls acknowledge the expectations from society related to the home (to be mothers, to take care of children and the home) which limit them to engage in the way boys do professionally. According to these roles technology is a male thing and boys spend more time interacting with technology. Thus they end up being more skilled in technology and are more self-confident when faced with technical problems that require technical knowledge (such as programming)<sup>26</sup>.

Gender misbalance in the labor market has its roots in the choice of profession and type of education. Analyses confirm that an important factor for gender segregation when choosing professions is the stereotypes for "male" and "female" abilities which are developed through the process of gender socialization or acquiring the pre-determine gender roles<sup>27</sup>.

Over the years, the gender structure of female and male students in primary and lower secondary and in upper secondary education has remained the same. In upper secondary education, the female students are more interested in gymnasium education, while the male students prefer vocational education. Over the years, there has been an increase in the number of women enrolling at the faculties. Also, there are more women enrolling in the second and third cycle of studies and graduating from the first, second and third

---

25 "7 Things We Learned About Primary Gaming Motivations From Over 250,000 Gamers", Yee, Nick, Quantic Foundry, December 2016.

26 Kratka analiza br.1: Inzenerki, programerki, informaticarki. Kako da se nadminat rodovite stereotipi za tehnickite i informaticckite profesii? , Ana Mickovska-Raleva, Kristijan Trajkovski, CIKP, 2017

27 "Srednoskolcite i prirodnite nauki: Analiza na stavovite i percepciite od rodov aspect", CIKP, 2016.



cycles. The number of women enrolled and graduated from the first, second and third cycle is generally higher in social sciences, humanities and medical sciences, while for technical and technological sciences the number of women is lower in comparison with male students.<sup>28</sup>

Table 3 Number of graduated from undergraduate studies, by scientific field, number and sex distribution in North Macedonia, 2017

Graduated students	Women	Men	Women	Men
Total	4.731	3.347	59%	41%
Natural sciences and mathematics	219	137	38%	62%
Technical and technological sciences	519	643	45%	55%
Medical sciences	563	199	74%	26%
Biotechnical sciences	170	157	52%	48%
Social sciences	2.471	1.873	57%	43%
Humanities	789	338	70%	30%

...25

The number of female employees in Macedonian IT companies is quite low<sup>29</sup>. At the same time the number of female employees that leave the companies from this industry is far larger than the male employees.

The Council of Europe’s Recommendation on Gender Equality in the Audio-visual Media Sector, adopted in 2017, points out that one of the monitoring indicators of gender equality within the organizational structure of the audio-visual sector is the representation of each of the sexes in the ownership structure. The analysis of the Audio-visual Media Services Agency<sup>30</sup> indicates the existence of a “glass ceiling” due to the fact that women are

<sup>28</sup> Women and Men in North Macedonia, State Statistical Office, 2019

<sup>29</sup> “Work Force Demand Survey for the ICT Industry in Macedonia 2009 Including some comparisons to the First Workforce Demand Survey for the ICT Industry in Macedonia conducted in 2005”, SMMRI Skopje, ICT Chamber for commerce – MASIT, Skopje 2009.

<sup>30</sup> “Gender on Television a Collection Of Annual Surveys on The Treatment of Gender Issues and the Way Women and Men are Depicted by The National TV Stations (2012 – 2016)”, Marina Trajkova

MA Emilija Petreska-Kamenjarova, Audio-visual Media Services Agency, 2017.

scarcely represented at the higher decision-making and ownership levels. In the television industry in Macedonia, the ratio between employed men and women continuously reveals male domination, regardless of how much the number of employees in this sector has risen.

Thus, in 2012, there were 688 women as opposed to 1076 men while in 2016, there were 956 women and 1548 men. Men are present to a much higher extent in the ownership structure and among the management staff. They are more present at the editorial level as well – female editors outnumbered male editors by four in one of the years only, while in another, their number was virtually the same. Women are more numerous among the journalists, in the marketing field and among the other personnel, whereas they are far less represented as technical and production staff.

### 1.3.5 EXPRESSION (PROTECTION OF HUMAN RIGHTS ON SOCIAL MEDIA, ONLINE MEDIA FREEDOM OF EXPRESSION, ONLINE MEDIA PRIVACY PROTECTION ETC.)

One of the key matters arising from use of online and social media is the issue of human rights and privacy, its abuse and its protection. The latest changes to the Macedonian criminal code<sup>31</sup> proscribe one to five years prison sentence for spreading of hatred, discrimination or violence against any person or group based on any social division including gender or being part of a marginalized group via both on and off line media and means.

International documents<sup>32</sup> place respect of human rights at the core of dem-

<sup>31</sup> Krivicen zakonik, 2019.

<sup>32</sup> Universal Declaration of Human rights ([http://www.un.org/en/udhrbook/pdf/udhr\\_booklet\\_en\\_web.pdf](http://www.un.org/en/udhrbook/pdf/udhr_booklet_en_web.pdf)); International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (<https://www.ohchr.org/Documents/ProfessionalInterest/ccpr.pdf>); European Convention on Human rights [https://www.echr.coe.int/Documents/Convention\\_ENG.pdf](https://www.echr.coe.int/Documents/Convention_ENG.pdf)); Council of Europe Convention on preventing and combating violence against women and domestic violence - Istanbul Convention (<https://www.coe.int/en/web/conventions/full-list/-/conventions/rms/090000168008482e>)

ocratic advancement and indicate that these rights need to be secured both on and off-line. Macedonia as signatory to these documents is obliged to respect and act on them accordingly. It is still quite a challenge to find publicly available data regarding gender based cyber-harassment and violation of rights. Within the Ministry of interior there exists a sector for cybercrime where one can report such instances however this type of violations are not included in the regular annual reports placed on the website of the Ministry. It can be assumed that the submitted number of complaints for online violation of human rights are quite limited. Consequently the judiciary practise online human rights protection is still quite weak due to the low number of cases it deals with<sup>33</sup>.

In 2016 and 2017 due to the complex political situation in the country hate speech very often dominated the public space. Yet in 2017, a decrease was noted during the last month of the year as a result of the slowing down of the political crisis. Yet, what is of concern, is that two cases<sup>34</sup> were noted on social network and consisted of hate speech on grounds of sex and gender i.e. were sexist slurs against women. In the first case, the hate speech was a response to public statement given Prime Minister's wife during a panel at a public debate on the equality of women within the national campaign "16 Days of Activism against Gender Based Violence". In her statement, she pointed out that "a woman's place is not in the kitchen. No place is only for women and no place is only for men. We are all equal". Following the publishing of this statement on social media besides politically related comments numerous comments were posted with degrading, discriminatory and humiliating sexual offenses towards women, also calling for violence against women. The second case involved a post on the social media network Facebook, by a public figure and a music artist who, using hate speech, commented on art installation set up in Skopje under the name "Skopje red light district" on the International Day to Prevent Violence against Sex Workers. In her post she used offensive words towards sex workers as well as inappropriate ter-

...27

---

33 "Sostojbite povrzani so pravotona zastita na licnite podatoci", Elena Trifunovska published in "Slobodata na Internet vo Makedonija", izvestaj za 2017, Metamorphosis, 2017.

34 "Monthly report on the situation with the human rights in the Republic of Macedonia for December 2017", Helsinki Committee of Human Rights, December 2017.

minology and discriminatory content based on sex and gender, as well as social status. The comments also contained abusive and judgemental words about women. This spreading of hate speech towards a particular marginalized group in society contributes to the strengthening of prejudices and stereotypes that serve as a basis for intolerance and violence.

Other cases from previous years have included homophobic speech on social networks especially following the news of the recognition of the neutral gender in Germany, which included calls for burning and killing the people with different sexual orientation and gender identity. Such reactions are frequent, which shows that the Republic of Macedonia continues to be a homophobic society. The inaction of the media and Internet portals in removing comments with hate speech, which arise on their social network profiles, is worrying.

Another similar instance was when the issue of legalization of same-sex marriages was raised by an MP. His position, that same-sex marriages should be legalized in the Republic of Macedonia, was followed by numerous examples of hate speech on the social networks such as Facebook and Twitter.

On the other hand, CSOs and gender activists are using the Internet and especially the social media to expose gender negative practises in everyday life and gain supporters that through social media demand change. There are a number of such examples where for instance school text books presenting gender stereotyping have been withdrawn from use in school curricula due to social media pressure and activism. One such case resulted in a complaint submitted by the Network for Protection against Discrimination regarding the discriminatory contents in the "Civic Education" textbook for elementary school regarding a lesson on women's rights. The lesson moralized that the development of society depends on women who are respectable and healthy and only they can produce healthy offspring. Additionally, the text was accompanied by illustrations. In one, a woman in an apron is shown simultaneously cooking and standing in front of the computer, and in the other one, a woman is sitting with crossed legs and a magazine in her hand while a man is vacuuming the room. The illustrations have subtext with the following question: "Which one of these women has gained her rights?" which guides pupils to illogical and simplistic approach to the answer. Further in the same

book, the authors review women's roles in terms of Adam and Eve who lived in paradise, which violates the principle of secularity in education, since religious texts are presented as legitimate sources of information on women's rights. As a follow up the Ombudsman submitted a Recommendation to the Ministry of Education in which the existing violations were pointed out and gave specified actions which should be taken by the Ministry. The Ministry of Education and Science accepted the Ombudsman recommendations and decided to withdraw the textbook from the curriculum.

The situation is quite grave with marginalized groups (LGBT people, drug users, sex workers and people living with HIV) and how they are presented in both on and off line media.

In traditional media , the manner of reporting on members of vulnerable groups should be free from sensationalism, according to Journalist code of ethics<sup>35</sup> however practice shows that this approach is customary and inevitable whenever writing about them, only in very few instances the media is sensitive and socially inclusive of these vulnerable groups. Media does not cover issues pertaining to specific problems and needs that members of marginalized groups face and have to deal with.

...29

Most often media presents sex work and drug abusers as criminals despite the fact that neither prostitution nor drug abuse is a criminal act, but a violation against the public order and peace. A concerning factor is that the journalists rarely attempt to question the police reports in which drug users and sex workers are presented as criminals, even when seeking protection precisely by the police in cases when their rights are violated.

Seen from that angle, both types of media produce different perspectives. While traditional media is characterized by neutral-to-hostile stances (save for the comments, many of which grossly judge the media and society at large as conservative), new ones include the entire spectrum from affirmative to negationist behaviours.

Yet, social media despite creating a more pluralist space it is still not effec-

---

<sup>35</sup> According to Article 10 and 11 from the "Codex of Ethics of Journalists" journalists will respect diversity and will not create or process information that human rights and freedoms [znm.org.mk]

tive for raising visibility and countering stereotypes in demographic terms. The profile of the blogger itself is an isolated one: upper middle class, middle-to-large size urban denizens, with higher education. The crucial aid of the new media is the kind of symbolic capital of visibility<sup>36</sup>

---

<sup>36</sup> Media and Marginalized Communities Media discourses and discrimination against members of marginalized groups (drug users, sex workers, LGBT, people living with HIV), Chief Researcher: Zarko Trajanoski Collaborators: Irena Cvetkovic and Stanimir Panayotov, Coalition "Sexual and Health Rights of Marginalized Communities" Skopje 2011

# 1.4 CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS







## 1.4 CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

### Conclusions:

- Traditional media is closed to women's and gender issues. Social media provides a platform for larger engagement on these issues.
- The number of online feminist initiatives are quite limited (can be counted on one hand). This is both discouraging and provides an opportunity for opening new topics and initiatives.
- Patriarchal societal norms encourage boys towards ICT and lack of female role-models in this sphere additionally pushes women to lower paid jobs in the economy.
- Women's bodies and actions online are influenced by the politics of offline spaces, which reinforce power hierarchies at both material and symbolic levels.

...33

### Recommendations:

#### **1. Promote ICT as professional opportunities for girls and women.**

Provide spaces and opportunities for girls to interact with various ICTs in order to counteract gender stereotypes. Encourage girls to open up to the idea of ICT as professional orientation by providing role models from ICT sphere.

#### **2. In order to empower women, digital ICT programs must take into consideration barriers to women's access.**

There are many factors that impact how women interact through digital technologies starting from knowledge and skills how to use them, access and resources to psychological barriers regarding possible backlash and responses. These should be taken into account when setting up online digital platforms for women related issues.

### 3. Find ways to involve a wider array of women and in more significant ways.

Most of the women that are active and engaged in the existing online platforms come from the urban elite. Many women remain passive recipients of online information or use internet for entertainment rather than education. Efforts should be made to design approaches and choose topics that directly impact women's everyday life in order to attract them to channel their engagement online.

For example, an initiative in South Africa used an online platform to encourage girls to engage with policy-makers over public spaces where they felt safe.<sup>37</sup>

### 4. Support the creation of more online visibility for women advocates.

Donors, foundations and CSO Networks should make efforts to support activists (whether formal or informal groups) in promoting and establishing digital content focusing on gender activism.

### 5. Use ICT as facilitator for inclusion of women in decision-making for national and local politics and community-level decision making.

ICT can provide economic empowerment of women however that does not automatically translate into greater social or political power. Policies and programs concerning ICT need to incorporate gender concerns and also assess the impact of ICT on gender relations. Within the ICT sphere women have restricted ownership of and impact on the decision-making processes since they are underrepresented in both the private sector and government bodies which dominate this field.

### 6. Undertake a more detailed research on when and how digital ICTs contribute to women's mobilisation around particular issues that is effective in enabling them to project their views and interests in ways that influence decision-makers.<sup>38</sup>

---

37 "Voice and Agency : Empowering Women and Girls for Shared Prosperity", Klugman, Jeni; Hanmer, Lucia; Twigg, Sarah; Hasan, Tazeen; McCleary-Sills, Jennifer; Santamaria, Julieth. 2014. Washington, DC: World Bank Group. (<https://openknowledge.worldbank.org/handle/10986/19036>)

38 <https://www.ictworks.org/6-recommendations-for-supporting-women-and-girls-power-voice-and-influence-through-digital-icts/#.XIVj2ihKjIW>

As much as ICT can provide visibility and strengthen women led campaigns it also necessary to take into account the offline world and the powers and struggles in it which directly influence the online actions. It is important to build solidarity among different groups of women and other stakeholders to attain certain goals.

**7. Legal provisions and policies regulating ICT use need to be gender sensitive and provide protection of users from violence and harassment.**

Women's rights defenders face gender specific risks both online and offline. Misogynist hate speech, online harassment and threats are increasingly affecting individual and groups of women who use internet for political participation, freedom of speech and for access to information. Online gender-based violence must be tackled and women need access to tools for digital security to protect themselves. Specifically, definitions of crime must include cyber stalking, trolling, online sexual exploitation and other violations.

**8. To raise the quality of research into women's use of digital ICTs, sex-disaggregated data based on standardized indicators that relate to policy goals are needed.<sup>39</sup>**

...35

Lack of gender-disaggregated data is one of the major barriers for effective gender based policy development in the Macedonia. Developing standard indicators for ICT use and policy impact would improve measurement of change and impact in this area. Also more studies on ICT could be useful and they need to be more systematic, in order to provide a more detailed insight in when and how women use ICTs to increase their voice and influence.

---

<sup>39</sup> Ibid.



# 1.5 LIMITS OF THE ASSESSMENT





## 1.5 LIMITS OF THE ASSESSMENT

With this assessment I have attempted to provide insight into the general state of affairs related to gender and ICT and overview of practices on the Internet which impact the wellbeing of women and men, boys and girls and to understand the specific local manifestations of these practices, their use and their effects.

This work is in no way attempting to stand for an in-depth analysis nor is it based on quantitative representative data hence conclusions are indicative and enable coming to general conclusions regarding the issue.

Despite all limitations, I expect that the analysis will contribute to raising awareness about this issue and inspire further research in the area, as well as consequent actions. It is expected that the findings and the recommendations provided above will become part of a more strategic framework that will guide interventions to the field.

