BRIDGING THE GENDER DIGITAL DIVIDE

A Report on Gender and ICT in Central and Eastern Europe and the Commonwealth of Independent States

Central and Eastern Europe Office

Regional Bureau for Europe and the Commonwealth of Independent States

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Foreword

In Central and Eastern Europe (CEE) and the Commonwealth of Independent States (CIS), as in other regions, Information and Communication Technologies (ICTs) are increasingly recognized as a powerful instrument for reducing poverty, promoting good governance, and facilitating sustainable human development. This report represents a joint effort by UNDP and UNIFEM to draw attention to the less known, yet equally powerful, potential of ICTs as a vehicle for advancing gender equality. The report however emphasizes that this potential cannot be realized if ICT policies and tools are gender blind and if ICT as a growing sector in our modern world remains pervasively male-dominated.

The Fourth World Conference on Women (Beijing, 1995), its follow-up five-year review in 2000, and other global forums, including most recently the 2003 World Summit on Information Society (WSIS), affirm that despite significant regional variation, ICT development affects women and men differently, and that in all regions, women face fundamental barriers to benefiting from ICTs as well as to influencing ICT development policies.

This report highlights imbalances between women's and men's access to and participation in ICTs and asserts that more needs to be done to ensure that women equally enjoy the benefits arising from the global knowledge-based economy at all levels of ICT policy and practice. Integration of gender perspectives within ICT for Development (ICTD) calls for increased political commitment by policy-makers and practitioners accompanied by dedicated measures and resources. As promising new areas such as e-governance, e-learning or e-commerce increasingly entrench these emerging technologies, it is crucial that policy directions and processes are effectively planned from the outset, and that proper linkages are established not only between gender and ICTs, but also across these other sectors – for which specific gender mainstreaming requirements must be accommodated.

Over the past decade, the gender and ICT advocacy movement has seen growth at a global level. In the CEE/CIS it has remained in its infancy, with diffusion of its ideas still characteristically *ad hoc* and fragmented. Gender and ICT advocacy networks, where such exist, are weak and confined to the fringes of a women's movement that is preoccupied and overburdened by other burning priorities. Yet as this report emphasizes, if appropriately harnessed, ICTs stand to meaningfully contribute to and mutually reinforce the advancement of effective, more expeditious solutions to gender inequalities and women's rights violations, including problems such as gender-based violence or the unequal participation of women in political as well as in economic spheres.

UNDP plays an important role in the CEE/CIS region in supporting ICTD use through diverse regional and country-based initiatives. In line with its corporate

commitments and strategies, UNDP has aimed to mainstream gender across its ICTD interventions. The commissioning of this report indeed constitutes part of an effort to critically review UNDP's own work with a view to deepening its knowledge of the gender dimensions of ICTs and further refining and strengthening its strategies and programmes. The partnership with UNIFEM, a UN agency devoted to the advancement of gender equality and tasked with supporting the UN system in mainstreaming gender within UN policies and programmes, has ensured that the preparation of this report draws on the best available specialized expertise on gender and ICT both globally and within the CEE/CIS region.

The report is not exhaustive nor does it pretend to offer comprehensive in-depth analysis of the complex issues. In compiling the report, the authors were constrained by a scarcity of gender-disaggregated data as well as by the limited relevant experience or examples of good practice in the region. Yet in drawing attention to these very obstacles, and in formulating questions that call for further research, the report aims to spur wider debate and to mobilize increased attention as well as support for further action in this area.

Overcoming the 'gender digital divide' will require policy changes for both ICTD and gender – and their intersection. Concerted efforts by governments, civil society, including women's organizations and gender and ICT advocacy groups, as well as the international development community will be necessary to ensure productive participation in policy processes. As the first its kind, compiling a substantial body of information and commentary on gender equality in the information society in the CEE/CIS region, including references to other resources, relevant web sites and contacts, UNDP and UNIFEM hope this report will both provide practical guidance as well as inspire innovative action by stakeholders across the region.

Acknowledgements

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Acronyms

APC-WNSP	Association for Progressive Communications – Women's Networking Support Programme
AWID	Association for Women's Rights in Development
B.a.B.e	Be active, Be emancipated
CEDAW	Convention on the Elimination of all forms of Discrimination Against Women
CEE	Central and Eastern Europe
CIDA	Canadian International Development Agency
CIS	Commonwealth of Independent States
CSW	Commission on the Status of Women
DEVNET	Development Network International
DG	Directorate General
DOT-COM	Digital Opportunity through Technology and Communication
EC	European Commission
ECDR	E-Commerce and Development Report (UNCTAD)
EGM	Expert Group Meeting
ENAWA	European and North American Women Action
ESIS	European Survey of Information Society
EU	European Union
FAO	Food and Agriculture Organization (UN)
FP	Framework Programme (EU)
FP6	Sixth Framework Programme (EU)
GAC	Global Advisory Committee
GAINS	Gender Awareness Information and Networking System (INSTRAW)
GEYN CEECIS	Gender Youth Network in Central and Eastern Europe and the Commonwealth of Independent States

Hivos	The Humanist Institute for Development Cooperation (Netherlands)
IANWGE	Inter-Agency Network on Women and Gender Equality (UN)
ICT	information and communication technology
ICTD	information and communication technology for development
IFIP	International Federation for Information Processing
IIAV	International Information Centre & Archive for the Women's Movement (Netherlands)
INSTRAW	International Research and Training Institute for the Advancement of Women (UN)
IOM	International Organisation for Migration
ISPA	Instrument for Structural Policies for Pre-Accession (EU)
ISPO	Information Society Promotion Office (EC)
IST	information society technologies (EU terminology for ICT)
IT	information technology
ITDG	Information Technology, Transnational Democracy and Gender
ITU	International Telecommunication Union
ITU-D	International Telecommunication Union – Development Sector
JWDF	Japanese Women in Development Fund
LDC	least developed countries
MDG	Millennium Development Goal (UN)
NEPAD	New Partnership for Africa's Development
NEWW	Network of East-West Women
NGO	non-governmental organization
NICTS	National ICT Strategy project (UNDP Azerbaijan)
NSO	National Statistical Office
OECD	Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development

OSI	Open Society Institute
PC3	Public Computer and Communication Centre (USAID, Bulgaria)
RBEC	Regional Bureau for Europe and the Commonwealth of Independent States (UNDP)
RCF	Regional Cooperation Framework
RITI	Romania Information Technology Initiative
SAPARD	Special Accession Programme for Agriculture and Rural Development (EU)
SEAGA	Socio-Economic and Gender Analysis Programme (FAO)
SEE	South Eastern Europe
SIDA	Swedish International Development Agency
SMEs	small and medium-sized enterprises
TFGI	Task Force on Gender Issues (ITU, precursor to WGGI)
TOKTEN	Transfer of Knowledge Through Expatriate Nationals (UNDP and IOM programme)
UDHR	Universal Declaration of Human Rights
UN	United Nations
UNAIDS	Joint United Nations Programme on HIV/AIDS
UNCTAD	United Nations Conference on Trade and Development
UNDAW	United Nations Division for the Advancement of Women
UNDP	United Nations Development Programme
UNECE	United Nations Economic Commission for Europe
UNESCAP	United Nations Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific
UNESCO	United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization
UNFIP	United Nations Fund for International Partnerships
UNFPA	United Nations Population Fund

UN ICT Task Force	United Nations Information and Communication Technology Task Force
UN ICT Task Force EuCAs	United Nations Information and Communication Technology Task Force Europe and Central Asia Regional Network
UNIFEM	United Nations Development Fund for Women
UNV	United Nations Volunteers
USAID	United States Agency for International Development
WGGI	Working Group on Gender Issues (ITU)
WID	Women in Development (USAID)
WINNER	Women Into the New Network for Entrepreneurial Reinforcement
WITFOR	World Information Technology Forum
WNSP	Women's Networking Support Programme (APC)
WSIS	World Summit on the Information Society

Executive Summary

This report reviews key gender and information and communication technology (ICT) initiatives implemented by the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP). The gender dimensions of key ICT initiatives within the Central and Eastern Europe and the Commonwealth of Independent States (CEE/CIS) region undertaken by other United Nations (UN) agencies are also examined, as well as those of other stakeholders including regional actors such as the European Union (EU), national governments, non-governmental organizations (NGOs), bilateral and multilateral donors, and corporations.

Information about gender and ICTs within the region remains limited and existing data are fragmented and scattered. While this report does not generate comprehensive in-depth gender analysis, it does for the first time, map the situation of gender and ICTs in the region, pulling together all key information, identifying trends, gaps, as well as some good practices, and offering conclusions, recommendations and references to resources. This report intends to serve as an information resource and an overview of the situation of women in ICTs in CEE/CIS for policy-makers, ICT governmental bodies, institutional mechanisms for the advancement of women, civil society organizations, the media, gender and ICT researchers, educators, and ICT programme and project creators.

The development of ICTs in the CEE/CIS, and the degree to which gender dimensions have been integrated within such processes needs to be examined in context of the common legacy of communism as well as the considerable subregional diversities and specificities, and variations associated with women's particular vulnerabilities, related to levels socio-economic development, impact of conflict, intersection with other vulnerabilities (e.g. members of disadvantaged ethnic minorities), and so forth.

Against the backdrop of globalisation, it is also important to be aware of the pernicious and misogynist uses of ICTs, including trafficking in human beings, pornography, and mobilization of support for terrorism. The use of ICTs for criminal purposes is often accompanied by investment of resources in innovation and efficiency that often outmatch resources allocated to development of ICTs as a tool for empowerment and progress.

This report focuses particularly on the integration of gender in relation to issues – such as access and control, education, training and skills development – which work towards achieving equal benefits from ICTs and their use to enhance opportunities for human development.

Most countries in the region have developed or are in the process of developing National Action Plans for Information Society Policies, which are paramount for guiding national ICT for development (ICTD) processes. These plans, however,

largely exclude a gender perspective. Women in the CEE/CIS region have generally been preoccupied with traditional topics related to women's rights such as domestic violence, trafficking, gender equality legislation, reproductive health, etc. Awareness of information society policies or the relevance of gender to ICTs remains limited and, in comparison with other regions, advocates from the CEE/CIS have not been engaged in global gender and ICT networks. Consequently, sensitisation to the importance of integrating gender within ICT policies faces challenges.

Lack of data is a fundamental constraint for evaluating the gender impact of ICTs and women's position in the ICT sector within CEE/CIS. Research on women's ICT use and access is primarily produced by private actors for internal purposes and driven by profit motives. Much of the available data on ICTs are not disaggregated by sex. The limited data available invariably are inconsistent or otherwise inadequate for shedding light on women's true situation in relation to the ICT sector and its development. In this regard, the recent initiative by the UNECE Statistical Division to assess the status of ICT and gender statistics is an important contribution towards beginning to address this gap, and it is hoped that the assessment results will serve as a starting point for National Statistics Offices to improve data collection and to develop gender-sensitive data and indicators for this area.

This report references UN-led inter-governmental processes that have been instrumental for increasing awareness around the relevance of ICTD to the gender equality agenda, beginning with the Fourth UN World Conference on Women (Beijing, 1995), to the World Summit for the Information Society (WSIS, December 2003). In mobilising around these processes, women were also introduced to ICTs as a tool for advocacy for women's rights. The five-year review process of the Beijing outcomes (Geneva, 2000) constituted a breakthrough for women from the CEE/CIS in terms of increasing their participation in ICT-focused networks and projects. Most recently, the WSIS process provided an opportunity for insisting on the critical relevance of gender to ICT development in the region. UNECE, UNDP and UNIFEM in cooperation with ITU were successful in mainstreaming gender into the regional preparatory process, ensuring that the final declaration included the following strong statement:

> Governments and other stakeholders should provide the necessary conditions to ensure women's equal access to information and knowledge as well as ensuring their equal role as producers and decision-makers in all aspects related to the shaping of IT policies and frameworks.

A number of trends are identified specific to CEE/CIS, and others highlighted, which are global but are nevertheless of special importance for the region. These include:

- women are underrepresented at all levels of ICT initiatives in CEE/CIS and the integration of gender and/or women-specific issues is limited;

- CEE/CIS is largely absent from global gender and ICT debates and forums;

- gender equality advocates are uninformed about the importance and relevance of ICTD to the gender equality agenda;

- access and training opportunities to acquire basic skills are insufficient for advancing women's equal access and participation in the ICT sector;

- increasing women's involvement in developing online content that responds to their needs and priorities deserves increased attention;

- young women have greater opportunities to participate in ICT activities and environments, than do older women who deserve further encouragement and support;

- a critical starting point for achieving gender balance in the ICT sector is tertiary level education.

These findings concur with the eEurope+ progress report, which observed:

The eEurope+ 2003 benchmark survey did not reveal that there is any marked gender divide amongst the Internet users surveyed. Of these saying they used the Internet, 47% were women and 53% were men. This does not seem to indicate that there is a real gender divide as far as using the Internet is concerned.

The survey did however reveal a very marked gender divide in the area of ICT-related education. The percentage of males and females in ICT-related tertiary level education is 87% and 13% respectively.

With such a significant inequality, consideration could be given to undertaking a targeted action to promote, and encourage women to consider, careers in ICT and related areas.[1]

This report makes a number of recommendations for actions and measures to be undertaken by the UN, governments and donors, which will help strengthen the integration of gender into ICT initiatives and projects within the CEE/CIS region. These include:

- increased support for gender and ICT advocates from the region to advance gender mainstreaming within ICT policies and programmes;

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[1] eEurope+, eEurope+ 2001–2003 Final Project Report, p 23 (2004).

- support for stronger involvement of women and women's organizations from the region in the WSIS process leading to the Tunis Summit in 2005;

- further research to determine the status of women in the ICT sector and the gender impact of ICT policy development;

- specific measures to strengthen gender within ICT projects at various phases, including planning, implementation and evaluation; and

- capacity building for ICT project personnel on gender and its relevance to ICTs.

Background and Context

The United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) is dedicated to promoting the use of Information and Communication Technologies (ICTs)[2] for development. UNDP focuses on supporting countries to:

(i) Formulate and implement national ICT strategies that are responsive to development imperatives and social equity;

(ii) Develop partnerships to support capacity development; and

(iii) Integrate an ICT for gender focus in poverty reduction and e-governance issues.

UNDP believes that unless gender issues are fully integrated into policy analyses and programme design, women and men will not benefit equally from ICTs and their application.

In Central and Eastern Europe and the Commonwealth of Independent States (CEE/CIS), UNDP has supported and implemented a variety of projects covering various dimensions of ICTs and their impact on different social groups. In the context of developing regional gender and ICT strategies in the CEE/CIS, the UNDP Regional Centre in Bratislava has sought to review the organization's own efforts in the area of gender and ICTs, as well as the overall situation of gender and ICTs within the region.

CEE/CIS, like many other regions of the world, is seeing rapid developments in the ICT domain that are reshaping all spheres of societal life. However, within the CEE/CIS region, information and knowledge regarding the gender dimensions of these processes is neither cohesive nor organized. Analysis and understanding of the consequences and differentiated impacts of the spread of ICTs upon women and men in the region remain limited. Consequently, compared with other regions, advocacy or action to mainstream gender within the ICT sector has progressed at a slower pace.

This report addresses the lack of information on gender aspects of ICTs in the CEE/CIS region and is offered as a single resource containing all key information relating to gender and ICTs in the region. Furthermore, it aims to identify the degree to which different stakeholders operating in the region are successfully integrating gender concerns within their various ICT programmes and projects. This report systematically maps relevant initiatives, describes challenges that

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[2] In this report, as is common for other gender and ICT literature, ICTs are understood to include computers, communication technologies (with its full range including radio, television, video, telephone, fax, mobile telephony, and Internet), networking and data processing capabilities, and software.

CEE/CIS women face with regard to ICTs, and identifies potential opportunities for UNDP and its partners to ensure that ICT work in the region equally benefits women and men. The report covers key gender and ICT initiatives implemented by UNDP Regional Bureau for Europe and the Commonwealth of Independent States (RBEC) Regional Centre and Country Offices, other United Nations (UN) agencies, European Union (EU), national governments, non-governmental organizations (NGOs), bilateral donors, and corporations. Within activities undertaken by these stakeholders, gender-differentiated priorities, needs and capacities are outlined.

It is beyond the scope of this paper to provide an analysis of all aspects of ICTs in relation to differentiated levels of women's rights and their position within societies across the entire CEE/CIS region. However, where appropriate, the context is described and references to further resources on ICTs and/or gender in CEE/CIS are provided.

This report assumes its readers have some knowledge of gender theory and women's rights issues, or will seek recourse to relevant resources for further familiarity with these areas. Although designed for use by UNDP, this report also intends to serve as a foundation for a variety of actors interested in gender and ICT issues.

Regional diversity in CEE/CIS

A review and analysis of gender and ICTs must take into account the common socio-political legacy of the region. The communist era shaped specific development trends for both gender and ICTs, and their intersection. It is equally important to emphasize that the CEE/CIS region is heterogeneous and diverse in terms of its cultural roots, levels of economic development, life-styles and standards of living, degree of political stability as well as the functioning of democratic institutions.

In this vein, it is important to distinguish between CEE countries that are either new members of the EU community or are at various stages of negotiation towards EU accession, and former Soviet countries of the CIS. Differences between subregions can also be noted. For example, in the Balkans and the Caucasus, post-conflict reconciliation and reconstruction have been dominant factors shaping development processes.

Within the subregions, as well, there are often vast differences between countries. For example, within the Baltic States, regarded as a uniform subregion, Estonia is currently considered to be the most successful in its ICT

policy development as a result of consistent policy implementation beginning in the mid-1990s.[3] Neither does commonality of language necessarily imply a similar level of progress. In Belarus, Ukraine and Russia, where the majority speak Russian, there are significant economic, political and socio-cultural variations.

Across the region, critical differences are evident between urban and rural areas due to historical factors. In the context of the communist legacy and the transition to a market economy, rural areas in the CEE/CIS face very specific challenges. In other regions, development efforts have, in many ways, been able to build on pre-existing social and cultural values. In the CEE/CIS, indigenous values were uprooted under communist rule and replaced with other models. Today, in the post-Soviet era, these models are considered obsolete but have yet to be replaced with viable alternatives. Within many countries, areas that are distant from the capital, where inefficient industries have recently been closed, are experiencing soaring unemployment rates and are consequently suffering economic depression, remaining marginalized and underserved.

Divisions within countries can also be seen in terms of differentiation of class, income levels, and social groupings (including ethnic and national minorities). These country and subregional specifics have varied impacts on the development of ICTs, as well as on gender relations and the position of women.

Methodology

This report was compiled based on existing research and studies of key gender and ICT initiatives in the region. Information collection involved a review of major regional reports and papers produced by UN agencies and other stakeholders, Internet searches, review of online materials and websites, targeted information requests by email and post, and interviews with key informants by telephone. Relevant literature was reviewed in English, Russian, Czech, Slovak, German and Polish (plus summaries in Serbo-Croatian). Information was also obtained via the authors' participation in regional networks, and individual contacts and knowledge bases.

The assessment of UNDP gender and ICT initiatives is based on a questionnaire survey (see Annex B). Gender Focal Points in all 25 UNDP CEE/CIS Country Offices were contacted by email and asked to complete the questionnaire. Additional follow-up with representatives to provide further detail was performed via email or telephone interviews.

[3] With UNDP assistance.

The information and discussion of ICT data availability and reliability is based on the work and findings of UNECE and finalised in consultation with the UNECE Senior Social Affaires Officer and Statistical Office representatives.

While this report aims to be as comprehensive as possible it cannot claim to be exhaustive of all activities relevant to ICTs and/or gender. The inclusion of information in this report is based on available and reliable, publicly accessible electronic documents. It cannot fully prove and assess the complete veracity of information given in publicly accessible electronic documents. It is highly recommended that this material is supplemented by further dedicated, in-depth research.

Information on gender and ICTs in CEE/CIS is fragmented and there exists no centrally located, primary resource. This report, therefore, depended on secondary resources and involved much more material than can be mentioned in this final version. It was necessary to review a variety of materials produced by UN agencies, EU governments, NGOs, donors, and corporations, many of which did not yield information of relevance to this report and thus were omitted.

Gender and ICT issues in CEE/CIS

A long tradition of women working outside the home exists within most CEE/CIS countries. In some economies, there are fourth or fifth generations of women active in the labour market. Historically, women have achieved high levels of education and constituted a large percentage of technical workers, engineers and scientists. However, this fact does not necessarily imply gender equality, an advanced position of women in society – or indeed, participation in the emerging information society. Despite women's full-time labour commitment, traditional gender role arrangements are still very much entrenched. Women are still those who bear domestic and family duties, look after children, the ill and elderly in addition to their paid work outside of the home or activities that earn money to provide for the family.

The equal rights of women and men were conferred by the socialist states, but have not been fully debated between men and women. The modern form of a so-called 'women's movement' was evidenced in CEE/CIS only after the fall of the Iron Curtain in 1989 with the re-emergence of civil society. For many CEE countries, as well as parts of Russia and some post-soviet republics, the tradition of women's movements was present in the 19th and early 20th centuries. This, however, was violently disrupted by the communist regime and is only now being arduously re-established. Consequently, the region suffers a lack of capacity for gender equality work. Until recently, women's organizations often worked with little support from the public and state institutions or even other civil society organizations. They faced bias, media anxiety and lack of funding. However, with the assistance of international organizations, and state commitments to women's rights and equal opportunities, such as the Beijing Platform for Action and the Convention on the Elimination of all forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW), improvement has been seen in many countries.

For CEE, much positive change has been derived via the EU enlargement process, which introduced certain opportunities (as described in the EU section, below). Nevertheless, as elsewhere in the world, women's and gender issues remain mostly at the bottom of policy agendas. In comparison to other regions, in advancing their rights and position, women in CEE/CIS remain disadvantaged by the interrupted process during the establishment of women's movements; resistance towards collective action resulting from the forced collectivistic approach to all social activities under socialism; lack of feminist critical thinking (and its missing opinion leaders and role models) that would have evolved within academia (gender and women studies) and infiltrated into public debates. Thus, relative to other regions, limited space has been given, and attention paid, to developing positions and opinions on how ICTs shape women's lives and where points of intervention for women could be for CEE/CIS.

As noted, the specific conditions that women live under vary from country to country. In order to assess the overall situation, and the potential of ICTs for the advancement of women's position and for becoming a tool for gender equality in the particular region of CEE/CIS, it is important to acquire a certain level of understanding regarding gender as an analytical category and its meaning in the regional context.

In CEE/CIS, levels of ICT penetration and use vary according to already mentioned patterns, particularly economic development. According to the International Telecommunication Union's *World Telecommunication Development Report*[4] and other sources (the EU, the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development [OECD]) a number of CEE countries show a much higher than expected level of telecommunications development. High teledensity[5] affords a basis for progress in introducing more advanced ICTs and making these accessible to citizens. Networks in these countries were largely constructed during an era in which their nominal GDP per capita was much higher than at present and, in some cases, the countries have been able to increase teledensity despite declining GDP during the past few years.

The Central European countries, followed by Eastern Europe, the Balkans and the Baltic States, are generally in a better position in terms of ICT development and potential for future growth. These countries have already undergone the process of privatising their telecommunications sectors and allowing competition, while CIS countries have not yet embraced reform. While most of the CEE has evidenced progress in ICT development, Central Asian and Caucuses countries experienced either decline or stagnation, which is explained by the prevailing socio-economic instability following the collapse of the former Soviet Union.

During the last few years, most CEE as well as some CIS governments have focused on pursuing economic strategies that seek to promote a more attractive environment for the ICT industry, including encouraging foreign investment. Results of these efforts are different for each country. In some parts of the region these efforts have resulted in both positive influences on employment possibilities such as increased employment opportunities for IT specialists,[6] as well as negative influences such as low qualified jobs in hardware assembly manufacturing or IT companies' call centres often being staffed by highly skilled workers.

Some of the potential for ICT development in CEE/CIS generally, and for women in particular, has been lost due to unplanned market liberalization and economic

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[4] International Telecommunication Union (ITU), *World Telecommunication Development Report: Reinventing Telecoms* (Geneva: ITU, 2002).

[5] Teledensity is the sum of fixed lines and mobile subscribers per 100 inhabitants (ITU, op cit.).

[6] For example, the recent DHL investment to build an IT-support centre in the Czech Republic.

restructuring. Before 1989, when the economy and trade was realised within the rubric of artificially constructed and maintained socialist markets, some countries served the socialist block as the producers and main suppliers of electronic and communication equipment. Production activities were accompanied by functioning research institutes, specialised technical programmes at universities, provision of human resources and technology for plants producing computers, computer parts and other IT devices. During this time of 'glorious' development within the then Soviet block, women in these countries (such as Bulgaria) accounted for about 20 percent of students in ICT-related studies at universities and specialists in research or production.[7]

With the fall of the Iron Curtain and the transition from a centrally planned to a market economy, as well as globalizing forces, CEE/CIS countries lost their specialization in ICTs. The main institutes were no longer supported and failed to function, production closed down and thousands of electronic and communication engineers, both men and women, lost their jobs. ICT as a subject of study lost its attractiveness to the younger generation as it became difficult to find a job with an engineering diploma, especially for women. The number of girls currently enrolling in ICT-related subjects in higher education is not higher than 25 years ago, and is in fact declining.[8]

The course of ICT development is not only shaped by market forces but also by policies, many of which fail to integrate gender. Most CEE and some CIS countries have adopted or are in the process of drafting National Action Plans for Information Policy. These documents are often based on the principles promoted by the EU in its eEurope plan for the information society. These national plans set the direction, speed and priority areas for the process of implementing ICTs into all parts of society (corporate, private, social, educational, public administration, telecommunications regulations, and foreign investment). However, gender considerations are not integrated into these documents, and neither women nor advocates for gender equality are active in the processes of determining national ICT policies in CEE/CIS. This does not imply that such intervention is not necessary. Rather, it indicates that women and their organizations are not familiar with information society policies and debates, and have not started analysing the consequences and impact of ICTs on gender relations and women's lives, and therefore have not made ICTs a priority for their actions. For CEE/CIS the successful incorporation of gender into ICTs is hampered by the lack of a driving force – advocacy actions arising from a strong women's movement – which would stimulate more research and lead to

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[7] See APC-WNSP Gender and ICTs Evaluation Project, Report from Central and Eastern Europe <www.apcwomen.org/gem/>.
[8] See National Contact Center for Women in Science <www.zenyaveda.cz/>.

increased interest in gender by institutions responsible for ICT policies, and in ICTs by the state machineries for gender equality.

Compared with other regions, CEE/CIS women advocates have not been as involved in gender and ICT networks. Such networks tend to be global, and are particularly strong in some parts of Asia and Africa.[9] The overall approach in gender and ICT work for social justice involves an understanding of power relations in society,[10] in that ICTs can be used to either exacerbate or transform unequal power relations. ICTs alone cannot create gender equality or end poverty, but they can be tools for social action and positive social change. What needs to be acknowledged is that ICTs have great potential to enhance individual careers of women, because high demand for ICT skills creates opportunities for all individuals, regardless of gender, race, creed, and so forth. The basic question asked by gender advocates and echoed in their research is: Are ICTs contributing to gender equality and women's empowerment?

When discussing ICTs in the context of gender, it is always necessary (and often forgotten) to consider both the pluses and minuses of technological advancement. The potential benefits of women's access to and use of new ICTs are enormous, however, there is also a widening digital gender divide. With the widening of any digital divide, societies risk facing more of the negative aspects associated with ICT expansion. This occurs when those who have access to information and resources wield power over those who do not have access. By way of example, Internet uses that are specifically harmful to women

> *Are ICTs contributing to gender equality and women's empowerment?*

include the commercial exploitation of women and children, the replication and reproduction of stereotypical and violent images of women, the facilitation of trafficking for sexual exploitation. Other pernicious uses affecting not only women include trafficking of peoples generally, the perpetuation of racist and hate crimes and activities, viruses, spam, hacking, fraud, 'high-tech' crimes such as identity theft, money laundering, and so forth.

Counter-balancing positive aspects of Internet use for women include the most powerful characteristic of the possibility to create private, online spaces where people can share sensitive and personal information, exchange experiences, build solidarity, facilitate networking, develop campaigns and lobby more effectively, and where individuals are safe from harassment, enjoy freedom of

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[9] See Natasha Primo, 'Gender issues in the information society' (UNESCO, 2003).
[10] See APC-WNSP <www.apcwomen.org>.

expression and privacy of communication, and are protected from electronic surveillance and monitoring.

These positive aspects become jeopardised, for example, in the post 9/11 context, in which women's concerns are used as justification for state and law enforcement initiatives aimed at regulating and controlling the Internet. Fuelled by the media, a climate of fear and uncertainty prevails threatening the democratising and empowering potential of the Internet. Women need to be informed on the subject of these conditions and policy implications in order for their concerns to not be misused or misrepresented. There is a need for awareness and discussion concerning new and proposed legislation and restrictions on ICT privacy. These measures will not prevent crime or stop violence against women unless root causes are also systemically addressed, and otherwise may work to further entrench these conditions for women. Currently women are significantly excluded from most processes (technical, content and policy) that claim to represent their concerns.

The women's movement globally was one of the first to create and manage its own online spaces. However, despite early adoption, the ICT issues identified during the late 1990s still remain critical for most women in the world, including in the CEE/CIS region. These include:

Access and control in which access is defined as the opportunity to make use of ICTs (technology, knowledge, information), and control is the power to decide how ICTs are used and who has access to them. Moreover, know-how, affordability, development impact and evaluation, and rights in the workplace belong in this category of issues;

Education, training and skill development are critical to ICT interventions. In this thematic area the following issues are important: gender-sensitive training; focus on finding, managing, producing and disseminating information; developing policies and strategies for effective interventions; illiteracy; language;

Industry and labour – including tele-work, home-based work, health and environmental concerns, and the wage gap. Topics for this category include: gender segregation of labour, particularly evident for the ICT sector; the increase in women's work in the ICT sector, primarily data processing and component processing; and cheap labour in unprotected, unregulated free trade zones;

Content and language concerns are based on the fact that women's viewpoints, knowledge and interests are not adequately represented. Propagation of gender stereotypes persists in online content. The English language dominates;

Privacy and security involves the need to secure online spaces; international sharing of experiences of oppression; abuse of women's rights; violence against women; trafficking; threats to a basic rights framework; government justification (e.g., 'the war against terrorism'); and the creation of safe spaces, free from state censorship, monitoring and surveillance;

Trafficking, pornography and censorship is a group of issues highlighting the use of ICTs for propagation of violence against women, trafficking and pornography. Further, rather than addressing their root causes, new forms of censorship are introduced in which states define and counter 'harmful' and 'illegal' content by instituting practices such as content rating and filtering, as well as the monitoring of online activities of individuals;

Power and decision-making are areas in which women remain underrepresented at all levels. Women do not have access to controlling resources in ICTs, and the bias of these being purely 'technical' areas (typically the domain of male experts) prevails. Space for civil society viewpoints is limited, and control over deregulation and privatisation of telecommunication industry processes is compounded;

Putting ICTs to strategic use means attracting attention to issues of concern to women, reinforcing solidarity campaigns, enhancing traditional women's networking activities, defending the rights of women to participate equally in civil and public life, and tackling marginalization and exclusion;

The right to communicate[11] implies that advocacy for a new ICT environment must fully integrate gender concerns and women's advancement. Moreover, the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR) recognises the right to information as a fundamental human right. It is equally important to advocate for the right to communicate as a fundamental human right. The Internet and ICTs can be used to strengthen diversity and to provide a platform for a multitude of voices, a pluralism of ideas and opinions and a place for cross-cultural exchange. This can only be true if civil society strategies have a voice in all policy formations, which aim to regulate and govern the control and ownership of the Internet. Central to this strategy must be an agenda that strives for women's equality, empowerment, advancement and gender justice.

All of these issues are relevant to the CEE/CIS context, although the specific areas of concern for women in ICTs have not yet been sufficiently discussed, investigated and demonstrated by practice and subsequent research. Thus it is difficult to evaluate to what extent the specific needs of women from CEE/CIS are reflected in international agendas. CEE/CIS is missing from most of the documents concerning these issues. For example, in the extensive overview of good practices from all world regions, the United Nations Division for the Advancement of Women (UNDAW)[12] report, 'Information and Communication Technologies and their impact on and use as an instrument for the advancement and empowerment of women', makes no mention of any example

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[11] For example, see <www.apcwomen.org/gem/Gender_ICT/index.htm#right>.

[12] UNDAW, 'Information and communication technologies and their impact on and use as an instrument for the advancement and empowerment of women', Final Report of the Expert Group Meeting, Seoul, Republic of Korea, 11-14 November 2002 (UNDAW, 2002).

from CEE or CIS. Only two percent of those participating in this conference were women from CEE/CIS.

Minimal space was also dedicated to CEE/CIS in the background document on gender issues for the World Summit in Information Society (WSIS) process produced by the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO),[13] as well as numerous other examples. Similar to the low representation in literature, CEE/CIS women are underrepresented in most ICT and gender-related events at the international level. In the context of the UN, for example, CEE/CIS lacked any mention in the recent (2003) Commission on the Status of Women (CSW) dedicated to gender and ICTs, or the WSIS process.

At a global level, the Fourth UN World Conference on Women in Beijing in 1995 is "generally regarded as a watershed in understanding of information technology as powerful tool that women could use for mobilization, information exchange, and empowerment."[14] The virtual network created around the conference became a catalyst for ICTs to become recognized in women's empowerment agendas. This conference was the first international event in which women from the new democracies of CEE/CIS could participate. There were already NGOs established that were able to send a limited number of their representatives to Beijing. Between the Beijing conference and its review in 2000, awareness of gender and ICTs issues rapidly developed. The review of the Platform for Action (Beijing+5, June 2000) already acknowledges ICTs as one of the major challenges to be addressed in promoting women's advancement. The CEE/CIS presence in the Beijng+5 process was much stronger than five years previously, especially thanks to the activities of particularly devoted networks such as the Karat Coalition of women's NGOs,[15] and support from the United Nations Economic Commission for Europe (UNECE), United Nations Development Fund for Women (UNIFEM) and key regional donors such as the Open Society Institute (OSI). Due to the region's greater visibility during the preparatory process,[16] some global networks sought CEE/CIS representatives to take part in their Beijng+5 activities. In this way, CEE/CIS became represented in ICT-focused networks around the process, such as Women Action.[17]

Shortly after Beijing+5, UNIFEM signed a 'Memorandum of Understanding to collaborate on developing gender-responsive approaches to telecommunications and ICT policy development' (July 2000). This document, together with others,

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[13] See Primo, op cit.

[14] Ibid.

[15] See the Beijing+5 section of the Karat Coalition website <www.karat.org>.

[16] Reflected also in international media such as *The New York Times*, e.g., Alison Smale, 'The World; After the Fall, Traffic In Flesh, Not Dreams', *The New York Times*, Section 4, Page 6; Week In Review (11 June 2000).

[17] <www.womenaction.org>

such as the recommendations of the Women's Forum of the Global Knowledge conference (March 2000), sent signals to CEE/CIS civil society and donors about the relevance of ICT to women's advancement agendas. Because of this, the first programmes and initiatives addressing some of the gender and ICT issues in context of the specific conditions of the CEE/CIS region can be seen in some countries. This report provides an overview of these projects and thus intends to bridge the information gap about gender and ICTs activities in this region.

United Nations Development Programme

This chapter assesses UNDP gender and ICT initiatives and is based on a questionnaire survey (see Annex B). Description and analyses of other stakeholders working in this area (other UN agencies, governments, donors, NGOs, corporations, etc.) can be found in Annex A.

GENDER AND ICT POLICIES

UNDP is a key regional actor for promoting ICTs within CEE/CIS. The regional ICT programme area is rooted in the information and communication technology for development (ICTD) concept, framed by internationally recognised policy documents: the G8 Okinawa Charter on Global Information Society,[18] the Digital Opportunity Initiative report,[19] UNDP's 'ICTD Essentials',[20] and most importantly the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs).[21] UNDP is an active member of the Information and Communication Technologies Task Force as well as the Task Force on Gender and ICTs.

UNDP works across five complementary ICT areas:

- **Access** – expanding ICT infrastructure and networks, promoting public access, especially in rural and remote areas;

- **Content and applications** – local content generation;

- **Polices and strategies** – developing national ICTD strategies, e-governance training and research, facilitating formulation of regional priorities in relation to WSIS;

- **Capacity building** – supporting regional, subregional and inter-country cooperation on knowledge transfer and good practices;

- **Partnerships** – with the private sector and telecommunications industry;

- **ICT applications** – for the advancement of specific practice areas, including gender, crises prevention and recovery, democratic governance, education, energy and environment, health, HIV/AIDS and MDGs.

UNDP Regional Bureau for Europe and the CIS, the Regional Centre located in Bratislava, and UNDP Country Offices in 25 countries across the region are

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[18] <www.dotforce.org/reports/it1.html>

[19] <www.opt-init.org/framework.html>

[20] <www.undp.sk/uploads/ICTD%20essentials.pdf>

[21] <www.un.org/millenniumgoals/>

engaged in development activities within the CEE/CIS region.[22] Most ongoing UNDP-supported ICT projects and activities are implemented in three subregions: South-Eastern Europe, the Commonwealth of Independent States and the Baltic States. However, UNDP also promotes sharing of East-East knowledge and good practices between the EU accession countries and the rest of the region, examples of which can be found in Estonia, Hungary, Slovenia and Poland.

The framework for UNDP regional work in the area of gender and ICT is defined by three documents developed by RBEC: 'ICT for Development Policy Statement: Europe and the CIS', 'Regional Cooperation Framework (RCF) for Europe and the CIS, 2002–2005', and the gender strategy for the region (2003).[23]

UNDP's 'ICT for Development Policy Statement' developed in March 2003, highlights linkages between ICTD activities and gender:

> Gender dimensions will be a major concern of all ICTD-related activities, particularly as far as the access to ICT networks, training and information resources is concerned. This concern will be addressed through ensuring that a gender dimension is properly reflected in all key ICTD-related activities and publications. All attempts will be to mainstream gender equality and empowerment of women into ICTD activities.

The gender strategy reflects regional priorities and provides guidelines for addressing gender issues in each UNDP thematic programme. The strategy document highlights the need to identify regionally specific gender and ICT issues and to build internal capacity to address them. The strategy is complemented by methodological tools developed by UNDP RBEC, such as *Gender Mainstreaming in Practice: A Handbook*,[24] which has been translated into several regional languages. The RCF does not entail a direct linkage between ICT and gender strategies, but recognises ICT as a tool for development and emphasises the need to further develop gender-for-development analytical tools and support gender-related data collection.

KEY PROJECTS IN CEE/CIS

To collect information on specific UNDP activities at national and local levels, a questionnaire survey was conducted in October 2003 (see Annex B). Gender Focal Points in all UNDP Country Offices in the region were contacted and asked to complete the questionnaire and follow-up was conducted with selected representatives via email or phone interviews. The questions were aimed at identifying ICTD priorities and gender mainstreaming practices within ICTD

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[22] <www.ecissurf.org/index.cfm?module=database&page=Countries>

[23] <www.undp.sk/index.cfm?module=RSC&page=w&s=ICT_Home>

[24] UNDP, *Gender Mainstreaming in Practice: A Handbook* (UNDP RBEC, Bratislava 2002).

projects that UNDP Country Offices had implemented or supported in the past, were conducting at present, or which were in planning stages. A total of 14 completed questionnaires were received.

Survey findings for UNDP Country Offices

For ICTD activities, most of the UNDP Country Offices address these main priorities:

- Policies and strategies: many Country Offices are facilitating the process of formulating the national ICT strategies;
- Capacity building;
- Access;
- Partnership building.

For a majority of the projects, gender perspectives were not concertedly considered at design and planning stages. Only one project was women-specific in its goals. The main target groups for projects are:

- Governments, municipalities, and other public institutions (such as libraries, universities, schools);
- NGOs;
- People living in rural and isolated areas;
- Youth.

According to the survey's findings, gender and women-focused projects were clustered into the following thematic groups:

Increasing women's access to training and work opportunities

The Country Offices support a variety of training programmes, focusing on Internet use and basic computer literacy through a developed network of public and community Internet access centres. Women constitute an important beneficiary group for projects in Albania (Public Access Centres in the pilot regions of Albania)[25] and Bulgaria (Community Development and Participation through the Chitalishte Network).[26] On the whole, however, no special measures are undertaken to target women, and correspondingly figures on the number of women participants do not exist.

In Romania, UNDP supports 12 Computer Clubs for Children, established to serve some 1500 beneficiaries. These are disadvantaged children from

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[25] <www.regions.org.al>
[26] <www.chitalishte.bg>

orphanages or low-income families, who cannot afford a computer at home and who have limited opportunities to obtain ICT knowledge and skills. Although no special measures were taken to attract girls to the club, they constitute approximately 60-65 percent of the visitors; and one computer club is housed in a girls' school. A high proportion of female trainers (around 75 percent) is an important factor for influencing the number of girls who attend.

Women in remote and rural areas

UNDP has placed a focus on supporting ICT development in less dynamic territories, which experience social isolation related to their limited connectivity and infrastructure, and access to training. In Tajikistan, UNDP, together with the Government of Tajikistan, promotes computer literacy for young women from remote areas. Through the Learning Centre in Dushanbe, a scholarship programme supports ICT development for 120 young women who are studying at ten higher education institutions in various fields, including medicine, agriculture, foreign languages and pedagogy. The programme contributes to the participants' academic achievement and studies as well as providing ICT foundations for their future professional careers.

In Uzbekistan, the new Business Unit's Initiatives will pilot two ICT business units in two rural provinces. The initiative targets small and micro-level women-entrepreneurs from rural areas for assistance in accessing ICT tools and acquiring new skills.

'Information and Communications Technology Assistance for Macedonian Municipalities and Sustainable Development',[27] is an ICT initiative with a municipal-level focus for strengthening participatory, people-centred governance by promoting access to ICTs in municipalities and enhancing the electronic exchange of information and experience among local governments and communities. The project provides training to local communities with a special focus on youth, women, NGOs and municipal authorities. Women constitute 61.9 percent of trainees, and the project promotes equal representation of women and men among the ICT trainers.

'Capacity Building of Lithuanian Women Through ICT & Networking' provides ICT services and training for women in rural and isolated areas of Lithuania. This project has been identified as a good practice example, for details please see the Good Practices, below.

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[27] <www.undp.org.mk/ictc/>

Introducing a gender dimension into national ICT policies

The UNDP Regional Centre and Country Offices are using their strategic position to mainstream gender within national ICT policies. It is particularly important to ensure support for women to participate in decision-making within the Centre's regional governance activity, 'Formulation and Implementation of National and Local E-Strategies', which facilitates national ICT strategy development in a number of countries. The predominant issue for national and local e-strategies is access, in terms of infrastructure and costs. Specific objectives and goals targeting women are formulated only rarely.

Albania was one of the first countries in which the draft National ICT Strategy[28] was shared with a major local women's organization for comment on its gender components.[29] Indeed, four female experts, who represented governmental and international institutions, had been actively involved at various stages of the Strategy's development as members of different working groups. In Moldova, UNDP plans to support women's access to education and job opportunities in the ICT sector by addressing specific gender needs and barriers concerning women's traditional family obligations in the 'E-Readiness Report and the National ICT Strategy'.

HIGHLIGHTS OF THE FINDINGS

Gender and ICT issues addressed

Women's access to ICTs is the most common gender and ICT issue addressed. A variety of aspects pertaining to access *per se* were tackled, including infrastructure, training and education. Women living in rural and other underserved areas received special attention. Two out of 14 access-focused projects included activities for developing local, online content reflecting women's realities. Content development is an important strategy for ensuring that other access-focused activities (training, providing women with computers, running access points) are fully exploited by women. There has been criticism by gender and ICT advocates in other regions, especially Africa, towards programmes that only provide connectivity to women: "The truth is rather that ICT initiatives will not be appropriated unless they also deliver information that is useful and relevant to the end-users, and where the end-users (women and men, girls and boys) have the capacity to act on it."[30] To enhance women's access to ICTs, local content development based on women-specific information needs, should be prioritised and made an essential component of all access-focused projects.

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[28] <www.ictd.org.al>

[29] Ms Flutura Laknori, Chairwoman of the Albanian Association of Professional and Business Women.

[30] See Primo, op cit.

Only a small number of UNDP Country Offices focus on facilitating women's access to ICT-related decision-making and control over resources invested into ICTs. As women throughout the region are traditionally underrepresented in decision-making structures (including policy and regulatory institutions, ministries, boards and senior management of private companies), women's equal participation in ICT decision-making structures is an essential element for the process of women's empowerment and ensuring that women in the region fully enjoy the social, economic and political benefits of ICTs.

The UNDP Regional Centre and Country Offices have a strategic position for mainstreaming gender within national policies and supporting the participation of women in decision-making within their governance programme 'Formulation and Implementation of National and Local E-Strategies'. However, only the Albanian[31] and Azerbaijan National ICT Strategies were circulated to gender advocates for comment, such as local women's organizations or gender equality machinery, e.g. the State Committee for Women's Affairs of Azerbaijan. Women's equal and active participation in the formulation of national ICT strategies ensures that policies address the priorities and needs of women. More projects should promote women's participation in the drafting and implementation of national ICT policies.

Mainstreaming gender throughout project phases

Although the majority of the Country Offices stated that gender and ICT issues are recognised within their ICT projects, they do not propose goals and objectives to address these issues in the projects plans. Only six of 25 Country Offices reported project objectives being divided by gender or explicitly referring to women's concerns or gender equality commitments. Without setting specific gender-aware goals and objectives, project outputs of equal participation and benefit for both women and men cannot be expected. Lack of gender considerations in the goals and objectives also affects the overall design of the project. For all projects in which goals and objectives were gender-neutral, the planned activities, outputs and proposed indicators in the project evaluation were correspondingly gender-blind.

For projects in which objectives took gender into consideration, the share of women among beneficiaries was significantly higher. Indeed, as documented in the experience of Turkmenistan, both men and women can benefit from setting objectives in a gender-aware manner. As pointed out by the UNDP Gender Focal Point from Turkmenistan at WSIS (Geneva, December 2003) it was only two years after implementation of the InfoTuk project – which focused primarily on women – that the need to target men was recognised. Men's participation did

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[31] <www.ictd.org.al>

not exceed 35 percent of trainees across the training centres in six Turkmen cities.

As noted above, although the majority of UNDP Country Offices integrated gender within existing ICT programmes, only six out of 25 surveyed projects explicitly referred to women's concerns or gender equality commitments in the project objectives, and fewer than half of the ICTD projects reviewed have undertaken special measures to target women. Lessons learned from previous ICTD projects around the world tell us that:

> Women do not benefit equitably from development projects unless special efforts are made to identify their situation and needs and effective action is taken to incorporate their participation… As they [women] do not enter the world of the project on an equal basis, special efforts are needed both to ensure their entry and the possibility of receiving equitable benefits from the project…[32]

Proactive measures to ensure gender-balanced participation are particularly needed for information technology (IT) projects. A large number of women lack skills in this area and technophobia[33] is still widespread among them. Measures taken by the reviewed projects differed by project type. They varied from very simple but effective strategies such as putting photos of women-trainees on the flyers or setting up a quota for women participants in the training, to more complex approaches, involving study of the specific cultural context, organising women-only events and training sessions, holding the ICT-related activity in a women-friendly location, ensuring at least equal representation of women among ICT trainers, etc.

Most of the projects surveyed do report the percentage of women project participants or direct target beneficiaries. However, only few of the non-women focused ICTD projects developed gender specific indicators or gathered sex-disaggregated data (five out of 24 projects). Considering the lack of gender as a category in the goals, objectives and outputs, it is not surprising that a majority of projects do not provide data disaggregated by sex. It is also important to realise that an equal number of women and men among project beneficiaries is not a guarantee for equal gender impact. Since women and men have different needs and priorities based on their different social, economic and political roles, and different access to resources and opportunities, they do not benefit equally from the implemented projects, unless women's needs are specifically tackled.

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[32] See Nancy J. Hafkin, 'Are ICTs gender-neutral? A gender analysis of six case studies of multi-donor ICT projects' (Washington DC: *info*Dev, 2002).

[33] 'Technophobia' takes on different socio-cultural forms, but is a common barrier to access, including in the technology-saturated cultures of the North.

Gender representation in Country Offices

The questionnaire was distributed to Gender and ICT Focal Points within each UNDP Country Office. All gender focal points were women, and women also constituted almost 50 percent of ICT Focal Points of the surveyed Country Offices. In Lithuania and Turkmenistan the same person holds the two positions. Interestingly, two projects identified as good practices are implemented by these Country Offices. To ensure that gender equality and women's needs are successfully addressed by projects, the ICT Focal Points (and other responsible management) need to be gender aware. Experience highlighted in gender studies shows that women-only participation in project design and implementation is not a guarantee of effective and meaningful incorporation of gender aspects of the particular issue or area. Thus, it is important to ensure that ICT focal points, whether they are women or men, are gender aware.

GOOD PRACTICES

In consultation with the UNDP Bratislava Regional Centre,[34] the following projects were selected as good practices. Based on this selection, representatives were invited to present their projects at WSIS (Lithuania and Turkmenistan). The main criteria for the good practices identification were: whether and how well women's needs or gender concerns were considered in the project design and planning stage; and whether proactive measures had been taken to ensure that women would benefit from the project. As mentioned above, these factors were found quite rarely in the Country Office survey, thus it is beneficial to highlight projects that meet these criteria.

Information Sharing for Sustainable Human Development in Turkmenistan (InfoTuk)

Project context: The Turkmenistan ICT sector is among the least developed in the region. According to a UNDP Study on IT, by 2000 Turkmenistan had 0.004 web hosts per 1000 inhabitants; 0.24 Internet users per 10 inhabitants; and 0.006 country domains per 1000 inhabitants, all of which are among the lowest in the world. Over 95 percent of registered Internet users are in the capital.

Project description: The project objectives are to increase ICT access and training, particularly Internet use, as a means of increasing the level of information sharing and dissemination in Turkmenistan. Through a set of training centres (four in the provinces and one in Ashgabat), close to 1,200 individuals have been trained on basic computer skills, Internet use and web design skills. The project has contributed to an increase in the number of websites with Turkmen content, from 25 in 2001 to 53 in 2002. Information sharing and collaboration among ministries and departments was further

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[34] Ms. Dono Abdurazakova and Mr. Yuri Misnikov, RBEC Bratislava.

prompted by the development of several portals. The project also provided numerous information and educational materials and established technology solutions and information networks among professionals in sectors such as health and education.[35]

Gender and ICT dimensions: One of the project's objectives was to increase women's access to training (computer literacy, Internet use and web design) and the Internet. Women were targeted simply by putting photos of female trainees on booklets and flyers. As a result, close to 65 percent of the trainees were women. The project is also planning to support the development of a Women's Union and a Youth Union information portal to highlight activities directed at women and youth.

Promotion of ICT business units in rural areas to foster small and micro enterprise development (Uzbekistan)

Although yet to be launched, this project shows promise of becoming a good practice.

Project context: The micro and small enterprise sector is potentially important for generating employment in Uzbekistan, where an estimated three million people are self-employed. To support development of this sector, business incubators have been established across Uzbekistan. The incubators are independent entities, operating on a self-sustaining basis to deliver a range of technical, advisory, informational and managerial services to start-ups and existing small entrepreneurs. Currently, the network of business incubators consists of 23 provincial and 13 rural-based centres.

Project description: The project focuses on the development and incorporation of ICT-based services into the two existing business incubators in rural Uzbekistan. The project consists of two components. The first will focus on capacity building in the fields of ICT management, business planning, fund-raising and project management of the selected business incubators staff with an aim to transform them to ICT Business Units. These will then provide the training and other ICT services to local communities and business incubators clients. The second component aims to strengthen both micro-finance institutions and micro-entrepreneurs through ICT training and its website development.

Gender and ICT dimensions: The project targets women, as they constitute the majority of micro-entrepreneurs. One of the project's objectives is to develop appropriate gender participatory strategies in order to provide such ICT services and training that meet the specific needs of women-entrepreneurs. The women-

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[35] Nabat Gurbanniyazova, UNDP, Turkmenistan.

clients of the business incubators are expected to play an active role in the design and selection of ICT services offered by the new ICT units. Part of this will be developing a training curriculum that will again respect specific women's needs. The staff of the ICT units will then be trained to provide ICT training according to this gender sensitive curriculum.

Capacity Building of Lithuanian Women Through ICT & Networking

Project description: This project improves conditions for sustainable human development for women living in rural and less dynamic areas of Lithuania by empowering them (through women's NGOs and self-help organizations) to use ICTs as a means for increasing their involvement in social, political and economic spheres of life, both at local and regional levels. Besides providing hardware to leading women's NGOs, the project supports training of trainers and training for individual women to increase their skills and understanding of ICT's potential. The project also involves support for women to access new employment opportunities via an agreement with the Lithuanian Labour Exchange and the involvement of small and medium-sized enterprises in the training process. Another component builds the capacity of existing service providers to provide free ICT training.

Gender and ICT dimensions: By the beginning of 2004, 970 women have been trained at computer classes run in five provinces by the Women's Activity Centre of Marijampole County, Alytus Women's Crisis Centre, Anyksciai Women's Club, Jurbarkas Women's Employment and Information Centre, and the Kretingas Women Information and Training Centre. As part of an educational campaign, seminars and training courses are offered to improve computer literacy and to provide women's NGOs with information relevant to the local development context. One of the project's outcomes, the Women's Information Portal, which features and generates local content, is now available to Lithuanian women, <www.lygus.lt> ('lygus' means equal).

Emerging Trends Specific to CEE/CIS

1. Low representation of women and weak integration of gender-specific issues within ICT projects at all levels

Women are underrepresented at all levels of ICT initiatives in CEE/CIS and the integration of gender and/or women-specific issues remains limited. Awareness about the ICT gender component has been increasing among different stakeholders over the past few years in CEE/CIS. However, efforts to integrate gender are progressing at a slow pace, are not applied in their complexity, and in many instances are limited to formal statements in project documents. There is a common trend to define gender as an overall goal within initiatives, which then gets forgotten during the concrete implementation of activities. There are some empirical findings pointing to the fact that gender equality requirements or policies are generally not met unless specific gender-focused measures and procedures are developed and enforced. Nancy Hafkin, for example, tested this hypothesis in relation to six field studies on the Information for Development Programme (*info*Dev) projects that were commissioned as part of an *info*Dev effort to integrate gender issues. She comments:

> Several of the lessons learned from the gender analysis of the six projects support the hypothesis that women do not benefit equitably from development projects unless special efforts are made to identify their situation and needs and take effective action to incorporate their participation. This is essentially the outcome of the socio-cultural context, in which women are frequently disadvantaged by culture and concomitantly by inequitable access to all kinds of resources.[36]

2. Absence of CEE/CIS from global debates and inter-governmental processes or forums related to gender and ICTs

The vast majority of actors with a stake or interest in supporting gender and ICTs have focused their attention on least developed countries (LDCs). Most CEE/CIS countries are thus excluded from donor agendas. The lack of focus on CEE/CIS is illustrated clearly upon review of existing publications, reports and studies developed by different UN agencies in the field of gender and ICTs. The perspective and realities of women living in transition countries is for the most part missing. The low participation of women from the region in the WSIS process and the weak advocacy on this issue manifest such lack of attention. Consequently, the specific needs, challenges or barriers faced by women living in transition countries are neither documented nor debated, women's advocacy

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[36] Nancy J. Hafkin, 'Are ICTs gender-neutral? A gender analysis of six case studies of multi-donor ICT projects' (Washington DC: *info*Dev, 2002).

skills are underdeveloped, and the region-specific perspective has been left out of the WSIS-related agendas and the outcome Declaration and Plan of Action.

3. **Limited awareness among women and gender equality advocates of the benefits of ICTs, as well as lack of knowledge among women but also among decision-makers of the importance to ensure that gender is adequately integrated within ICT policies and programmes**

> Women in CEE/CIS require more information on the potential of ICTs, a subject that should be increasingly and concertedly promoted among women's organizations. In spite of some steps forward in the context of the Beijing review process, women's NGOs in CEE/CIS still do not exploit the full potential of ICTs as an effective tool for research, lobbying, campaigning, and communicating. Awareness of the potential for individual empowerment of women through ICTs is also limited. Women in all parts of CEE/CIS must be made aware of ICTs as a tool that can increase their access to life-long learning, new job and business opportunities, health information, political participation, and which can even create alternatives and solutions to difficult situations women might face, such as violence, harassment or discrimination.

4. **Initiatives that only provide access and training for women in basic skills will not lead to women's advancement in ICTs**

> There are numerous ongoing ICT training initiatives across the region. While some target women and others do not exclude women *per se*, the possibilities for women to benefit from such initiatives are nevertheless limited. It is necessary to ensure that efforts to increase women's access to ICTs go beyond providing access to computers and basic training in their use. Further efforts are required to motivate women and educate them about the usefulness of ICTs for their social development and personal advancement. Proactive measures are needed to strengthen women's interest and appreciation of ICTs, including through increased numbers of female trainers who can serve as role models, delivering women-only courses, recruiting women through promotional initiatives via women-specific social environments (rather than through general calls for application), and so forth.

5. **Local women-centred online content is imperative**

> Language and cultural incongruities are not the only barriers to women's accessing information that would be of use to them. Production of local content also plays an important role in raising awareness among women about the role ICTs can play in their lives. More electronic and online information in local languages as well as content produced by women and for women are certain to increase women's motivation to access and use ICTs. Women's and community organizations often can serve as important mediators for women in transmitting information. These should be supported in their promotion and/or production

of women-centred content and its advertising among their constituencies, as well as their offering means to access the content.

6. Young women have better chances to succeed in ICTs; older women must not be forgotten

The increased integration of ICTs within gender programmes as well as in schools offers girls much better access and chances to close the digital divide than women of middle age or older. In general, various ICT rankings, particularly those related to Internet use in CEE/CIS, rank the younger generation higher. In some CEE countries, such as the Czech Republic, there are indications that girls around the age of 15 are on equal footing with boys in Internet use.[37]

However, it is important to acknowledge that older women also possess great potential to use ICTs for improving their lives and deserve to be supported as well. In most former Soviet block countries, women have been present in the labour market for four generations. Contrary to women from Western economies who struggled through the women's movement for equal access and non-discrimination in labour markets, women's participation in the CEE/CIS labour markets was historically associated with state directives under communism, leaving women little option or choice, and overburdened with full-time work coupled with additional domestic and family duties. Women have penetrated all strata of economic and educational fields – although they remain a minority or even a rarity for some – technical fields included.

The advancement of women workers in technical spheres or fields using any sort of technology has been interrupted by political and economic changes after 1989. Women lag behind men in keeping up with ICT developments. During the immediate post-cold war period of the 1990s, women faced a number of obstacles. With economic transformation and privatisation processes, many jobs and professions became redundant; unemployment rates increased dramatically; many women who applied for jobs were rejected in favour of male applicants; technology levels in CEE/CIS were not compatible those in developed economies, and an extensive update was required in all strata of production and societal organization. These processes were experienced by CEE/CIS during the same period that ICT development was undergoing rapid landmark progress with the introduction of new means of communication due to the Internet. Because of the conditions experienced during the 1990s, women in CEE/CIS were unable to keep up with these rapid changes. In particular, women working in low-skilled jobs lacked the qualifications and education to

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[37] Kamil Kunc, Network Media Service (NMS) Research for the Czech Ministry of Education. This statement by NMS does not prove that girls are equal with boys in terms of Internet use. More research would need to be done to validate this thesis, and to analyse the quality, purpose, conditions, and frequency of Internet use among young girls.

enter a competitive labour market, and many made their living in grey economies or in domestic production. Nevertheless, taking into account their past work experience, women in the region still harbour the potential to counterbalance the gap, if suitable conditions and support are provided to them.

7. **Tertiary level education is a critical starting point for achieving gender balance in the ICT sector**

The level of education for women in the region is traditionally high and women have been active in the labour market for several generations. However, despite these facts, women's participation in specific IT academic tracks is low, as well as their share in the IT labour market.[38] Tertiary level education represents a critical entry point for encouraging women to become more involved in ICTs at higher levels, enabling them to participate in developing ICT applications and to shape ICT solutions according to female-specific experiences. ICT continues to be a rapidly developing industry and sector. Women should be supported in their quest to equally benefit from rewarding jobs such as software programmers or IT analysts.

8. **Gender dimensions and perspectives should be examined in context of the overall ICT development situation in CEE/CIS countries and in relation to alternative access solutions and options**

As was seen in the context of the WSIS process, there are many issues and concerns regarding ICT development directions for developing regions, including CEE/CIS transition countries. These include questions surrounding policy options for infrastructure roll-out; liberalization of the telecommunication market, making ICTs more affordable; selection and promotion of alternative software with a view to increasing citizen access; support for low-cost solutions such as open source and free software, to extend usage to low-income groups (among which women belong), etc. While gender bears relevance to all of the above, in CEE/CIS the gender dimensions are often missing from the debates on these issues.

UN agencies, donors and governments have invested in extending citizen access by establishing public Internet access points in CEE/CIS. However, many more public Internet access points should be installed, mainly in underserved areas and targeting marginalized groups, including women. Furthermore, it is important when building public access points, such as Internet cafes,

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[38] See the following resources: Nicole Kozera, **'**Czech Women in the Labor Market Work and Family in a Transition Economy', Czech Academy of Sciences, Sociological Papers (1997); BBC News, 'Keeping women in the tech industry', (9 August 2002); and the project 'Family – Friendly policies and Women's Employment in Czech Republic and Slovakia: Continuity or Change' (IREX, 2003), <www.soc.cas.cz/index.php3?disp=oddeleni&lang=&shw=5>.

information kiosks or telecentres, that women's needs and the specific barriers they face are taken into account to ensure their easy access (e.g. location, opening hours, gender-balanced and gender-sensitive staff, etc.).

9. Development of ICT policies lacks a gender perspective

Women's participation is for the most part not specifically addressed in ICT policy documents (such as the national ICT development strategies, or 'Action Plans for eEurope+'). These documents define the strategic priorities and provide guidelines for national ICT development, although gender advocates and women rarely take part in the drafting process. Special emphasis is needed to ensure that women are involved in these processes, beginning with the nomination of gender-balanced teams and supporting gender ICTs advocates to assist these processes and provide inputs from civil society.

10. The region holds special potential for ICTs; all forms of ICTs need to be utilised

Taking into account current teledensity, the experience and skills prevailing from the era before 1989, and the fast progress that youth are making, the region clearly has considerable ICT development potential. This potential should be realised by applying all forms of ICTs. ICT initiatives throughout CEE/CIS are mostly reduced to Internet use. In comparison with other regions such as Africa or Asia, the Internet and computers deflect attention from technologies that have been around before the Internet and often are more accessible to women – such as radio, video or fax. Other new technologies, such as mobile telephony, are not commonly included in CEE/CIS ICT projects. As noted in a recent ITU report,[39] mobile subscribers overtook fixed-line subscribers worldwide during 2002. Considering the fact that mobile telephones are narrowing the gaps for ICT access, SMS can also be a viable way to reach women.

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[39] Valerie Feldmann, 'Mobile Overtakes Fixed: Implications for Policy and Regulation' (Geneva: ITU, 2003).

Recommendations and Conclusions

OVERALL RECOMMENDATIONS

Take into account regional diversity

Taking into account the diversity of the region (including political stability, levels of economic development, and so forth), specific programmatic priorities and strategies for gender and ICTs need to be formulated based on subregional and national specificities.

Use appropriate technologies

A gender-focused ICT assessment that would identify what technologies are most accessible and user-friendly, which are most frequently used, and what gaps or barriers exist, is recommended. Older technologies are sometimes more accessible for women due to lower costs and less demanding user-skills (for example, radio in comparison with computers). In addition, SMS communication is often more viable than the Internet and can be used more effectively to reach those living in underserved areas. Investment in programmes focusing on communication and education through ICTs could also benefit from similar assessments in determining the selection of communication technologies for reaching a wide spectrum of beneficiaries.

RECOMMENDATIONS FOR THE UN

Deepen knowledge on the link between ICTs and achievement of the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs), and Goal 3 in particular

The specific target and indicators relating to Millennium Development Goal 3 – Promote gender equality and empower women – address education, literacy, jobs and political participation. ICT can serve as an invaluable tool for those striving to meet the target and to improve their performance for these indicators. The UN, UNDP and UNIFEM in particular, should seek to deepen knowledge on the potential use of ICTs to advance the realization of Goal 3, as well as to ensure the integration of gender within all other goals. Attention in particular should be given to integrating gender within Target 18 under Goal 8 (Develop a Global Partnership for Development), which calls for making available the benefits of ICTs for all. As John Daly notes:

…one certainty is that there will be no adequate measurement or tracking of the relative status of women without the application of ICT… Moreover, it is only by the application

of ICT that there is any hope of adequately unravelling the complex causal patterns in gender discrimination and of planning effective public gender policies.[40]

Daly acknowledges that the situation is complex and cautions that although ICTs offer significant opportunities if well used by those seeking to achieve progress, in some cases ICT development may trigger reactionary trends that could be harmful to women.

Support the establishment of a network of gender and ICT advocates and facilitate their work towards WSIS Tunis in 2005

Drawing on examples from other world regions (especially South-East Asia and sub-Saharan Africa), it is important to promote the establishment of a regional CEE/CIS network of gender and ICT advocates. Mobilization of women from civil society organizations and capacity building for advocates to enable them to advance the gender and ICT agenda, calls for investment of financial and other resources. Advocates should be encouraged and supported to participate in global networks working on gender and ICT advocacy, and in conjunction with them to actively participate in the processes leading up to the WSIS in Tunis in 2005. After the Summit is concluded, attention should then shift to monitoring the implementation and impact of the outcome Declaration and Plan of Action, at regional and national levels.

Map out all aspects of the position of women in relation to ICTs

This activity should ideally include the following three components:

- as an inter-agency cooperation, especially among those agencies that have already undertaken some activities in this field (UNECE, UNIFEM, ITU), initiate core research to provide information on, and a comparison of women's needs in terms of ICTs, barriers, and themes that need to be addressed;

- this research should then provide a basis for secondary analyses in specific thematic areas and subregions (such as the situation of women in e-commerce, e-learning, e-government, etc.);

- when producing global reports, studies, policy papers and other documents, include data, examples, experience, needs, good practices, and perspectives from CEE/CIS. In particular, the region must not be continuously excluded from documents that set the framework for programme areas and follow-up actions.

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[40] John Daly, 'ICT, Gender Equality and Empowering Women' (published on the Development Gateway, 2003).

Transfer of good practices from other regions

In many cases, CEE/CIS women can benefit from the successful gender and ICT projects implemented by UN agencies in other regions. When transferring good practices, it is necessary to ensure project goals and objectives corresponding to local needs and gender and ICT issues.

It is highly recommended that the African Digital Diaspora Project be adapted into the CEE/CIS context. The inter-agency Digital Diaspora Project was launched by UNIFEM in collaboration with other UN agencies (mainly NEPAD, UN ICT Task Force, UNDP and UNFIP) in Africa (for details on this project please see the UNIFEM section in Annex A). Within the CEE/CIS, such a project should address two crucial issues for gender and ICTs:

▪ strengthening local gender and ICT advocacy in order to enhance CEE/CIS women's participation in the process of ICT policy formulation and implementation at national and regional levels;

▪ providing economic opportunities for women through the use of ICTs, with a special focus on e-commerce, and promoting active women's participation in highly skilled jobs in the ICT industry.

The programme could be developed in partnership with UNDP and the International Organization for Migration (IOM), which have recently launched a similar programme, Transfer of Knowledge Through Expatriate Nationals (TOKTEN), in Bosnia and Herzegovina.[41] Within this project, ICTs receive attention as one of the main programmatic areas, but no gender considerations were taken into account (for details on this project please see the UNIFEM section in Annex A). Another possible partner is UNECE, which is developing projects in e-commerce.

RECOMMENDATIONS FOR THE UNDP COUNTRY OFFICES

Recommendations for the UNDP Country Offices are directed towards three main areas: project planning, implementation and monitoring; the 'Formulation and implementation of national and local e-strategies' programme area; and internal capacity building.

Project planning, implementation and monitoring

Context analysis: Include a gender section for context analysis of each ICT project to incorporate specific gender needs (men's and women's) as well as local gender and ICT issues in the project's planning process. To identify gender specific needs and issues a context analysis must be undertaken, not only at the

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[41] For more information, see <www.tokten.ba>.

macro/institutional level, but also for the micro/community and individual levels. For example, interviews or focal groups can be conducted with local men and women, or local women's groups can be contracted to prepare a gender context analysis.

Goals and objectives: Based on the gender context analysis, gender-responsive goals, objectives and outputs must be established to address identified gender needs, gaps and issues and take into account the socio-cultural context. To formulate gender-aware goals and objectives, a participatory approach should be undertaken to involve beneficiaries (with equal participation of women and men) in the project planning, or at least a gender-and-ICT-aware person should be part of the project planning team (for example the UNDP gender focal point person, who has been through ICT-sensitisation training).

Beneficiaries: Women and men should equally benefit from projects' outcomes. To ensure gender-balanced participation, proactive measures need to be undertaken, particularly in the case of IT projects, since women and men traditionally use and access technology differently. These measures can vary from very simple strategies such as putting photos of women-trainees on the flyers to organising special women-only events. Which measures are undertaken must again be drawn from a gender context analysis, in which the special needs of both sexes are defined. Good practice sharing, the participation of a gender-aware person in the project team or a participatory approach to project planning can again be effective in designing strategies which engage both sexes.

Monitoring and evaluation: The gender difference for impacts of ICTD projects as well as how they affect gender roles should be monitored to ensure that both sexes benefit equally from the project, and to gain insight for future projects. Sex-disaggregated quantitative and qualitative data should be collected for all indicators, as well as a gender impact analysis of collected data.[42] The gender-sensitive indicators must be designed and monitored from the beginning of the project and need to be both quantitative and qualitative. The findings from the evaluation should be distributed to all project stakeholders, as well as other UNDP Country Offices.

Project management: Women should significantly participate (at least 30 percent) in project planning, implementation and evaluation for all level of decision-making. Women's participation in project teams, however, does not necessarily ensure gender consideration. It is advised that projects solicit close collaboration with local women's groups or gender advocates for project planning, implementation and evaluation.

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[42] For example the APC-WNSP Gender Evaluation Methodology can be applied. See <www.apcwomen.org/gem>.

'Formulation and implementation of national and local e-strategies' (programme area)

The UNDP regional office and Country Offices should mainstream gender within national ICT policies and local e-strategies to ensure that gender equality, gender and ICT issues and specific women's needs will be addressed in the National and Regional ICT Strategies through:

- active participation of local women's organizations and gender advocates in formulating regional, national and local e-strategies;

- capacity building (training, financial support) for local women's organizations and gender advocates in ICT policy issues so they are able to actively participate in the processes;

- sensitisation of ICT policy-makers to gender and ICT issues. Gender-sensitivity training should be part of the capacity building process for local policy-makers, for example the curriculum 'Gender Perspective in Telecommunications Policy' developed by ITU can be applied (see Annex E).

Internal capacity building

- The UNDP Regional Centre may consider providing gender sensitisation training for UNDP ICT Focal Points with the aim of introducing them to the specific issues related to ICT impacts on women, as well as to gender mainstreaming in the design of ICTD projects;

- The UNDP Regional Centre should continue developing methodological tools and practical manuals to facilitate sharing of good as well bad practices among the ICT Focal Points to support gender mainstreaming within ICTD programmes and projects;

- The UNDP Regional Centre should support the sensitisation of the Gender Focal Point on ICT issues through training and information sharing;

- The close collaboration of Gender and ICT Focal Points in ICTD project design development, as well as for country ICT priorities formulation, should be supported.

RECOMMENDATIONS FOR UNIFEM REGIONAL OFFICE

Programme strategies

In partnership with UNDP and other stakeholders, mainstream ICT into various gender-related activities with a special focus on access issues, building a constituency among gender advocates about gender and ICT issues, and promoting the importance of national ICT plans for women's empowerment and gender equality (with ICT included as one of the gender mainstreaming targets).

Policy strategy development

The information and technology needs of women's organizations and associations in CEE/CIS region must be continuously mapped. The outcomes of these regional studies should be reflected in the donor's overall policy strategies and shared with other donors, local governments and women's groups.

Women's focus programme priorities

- Proactive strategies must be undertaken to promote ICT use within women's organizations in the region. By way of example of a proactive strategy, the HIVOS approach can be applied to the women's groups' grantees to use ICT as an effective tool for achieving their objectives and to incorporate ICTs within their projects activities. Indeed, donors should promote other innovative uses of different kinds of electronic media, such as mobile phones, radio, etc., for advocacy campaigns and information distribution.

- Continuation of and increased donor support for content development and innovative ICT projects focused on women's priority areas (violence, economic empowerment, equal participation, etc.) is encouraged.

- Financial resources for women's groups should be provided to purchase technical equipment (e.g. computers, software) and connectivity, as well as to access basic ICT skills training.

- Donor experience in cooperating with local women's groups and gender advocates through their ongoing or past programmes, such as Mama Cash or OSI, should be used to develop gender and ICT programmes, to:
  - raise awareness about gender and ICT issues among women's organizations;
  - support capacity building and networking of gender advocates in ICT policy issues, especially at a national level.

- Travel grants for CEE/CIS women should be provided to support participation of gender and ICT advocates from the region in strategic events, such as WSIS, Commission on the Status of Women (CSW), Association for Women's Rights in Development (AWID), or other expert groups' meetings.

- Scholarships and grant programmes promoting women's access to ICT tertiary level education need to be created to ensure a gender-equal presence among the technologically trained, and to ensure women's active participation in high-skill positions in the ICT industry.

ICT-focused programme priorities

- ICT programme developers and managers must adopt a proactive approach to ensure gender-balanced participation and to incorporate a gender perspective into the design of projects, as well as to monitor the gender impacts of

implemented projects. It is acknowledged that a proactive approach to mainstreaming gender can be controversial "…the friction between donor expectations and the individual responsibility of partners is an ongoing dilemma… The proactive approach needs to be taken in the context of gender relations and societal context."[43] An example of a successful strategy is that implemented by the Gender Evaluation Methodology projects during their workshops in two local communities in Ecuador.[44] To avoid problems they replaced gender with the broader concept of equity, which included racial, gender, age, cultural and social discrimination.

- Special attention must be given to women's significant participation in ICT advocacy networks and projects supporting local and national ICT strategy formulation, as well as to ICT global standard setting.

- In context of the financial resources provided to regionally based ICT providers and service organizations, the availability of gender-sensitive technical assistance for women must be emphasised to ensure that women's groups have access to ICTs, their strategic use and technological sustainability. Since many women fear technology and have barriers to interacting with male technology experts, the best approach would be to institute and develop the capacity of female technology experts or assistants within local ICT provider organizations with donor support. Female technical assistants should be aware of gender and ICT issues, as well as low-cost and sustainable technological solutions.

Programmes' beneficiaries

More attention should be paid to women who are disadvantaged by multiple social factors, such as single mothers, disabled women, women over 40, women living in rural areas, unemployed women or women from low-income groups, women-refugees and women from ethnic minorities (for example Roma women).

The following are important:

- provision of affordable technological tools and Internet access;

- development of training initiatives and promotion of basic as well as advanced ICT skills among marginalized groups of women;

- support for local content development (in local languages) addressing the specific information needs of marginalized groups and local communities.

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[43] Hafkin, op cit.

[44] <www.apcwomen.org/gem/whoslatin.htm>

Annex A – Key Gender and ICT Initiatives in CEE/CIS

United Nations

Historically, the United Nations has played the lead role in shaping ICT as a tool for development. The issue of women and ICTs has been on the international agenda since the Fourth World Conference on Women, held in 1995 in Beijing, for which increasing women's access to new communication technologies to express their opinions was identified as a strategic objective. However, ICTs as a powerful tool for women's empowerment and promoting gender equality has only recently attracted the attention of the UN, as well as other actors.

As evidence of the increasing importance of ICTs in UN development efforts, the Information and Communication Technologies Task Force was formally launched by the Secretary-General in 2001 to provide a global UN forum to formulate strategies on integrating ICT into development programmes and promoting partnerships with other stakeholders. The Action Plan adopted by the Task Force in 2001 includes a gender perspective.

Under the UN Inter-Agency Network on Women and Gender Equality (IANWGE), a Task Force on Gender and ICTs has been set up consisting of representatives from UNIFEM, UNDP, the World Bank, UNESCO, United Nations International Research and Training Institute for the Advancement of Women (INSTRAW), United Nations Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO), United Nations Volunteers (UNV), with the ITU as Task Manager. Currently the work of the Task Force concentrates on the outcomes of the WSIS. The Task Force is responsible for making an inventory of activities undertaken by all UN organizations in the area of gender and ICTs, developing a monitoring system to ensure that a gender perspective is included in the process leading to the outcome of the WSIS, and providing guidelines for UN agencies on integrating a gender perspective within their ICT programmes and projects.

The main framework for applying ICTs within UN agencies is that of the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs). In particular, poverty reduction is frequently cited among the strategic objectives. Achieving knowledge-based societies is another of the most common objectives underpinning the UN's ICT strategies.

All of the agencies included in the initial part of this mapping recognize ICTs as a tool for women's economic, social or political empowerment in their programmatic strategies. In order to achieve gender-related objectives within their ICT strategies, they are mainstreaming gender into the design of their ICT initiatives, as well as operating women-specific ICT projects. However, the

majority of UN operated programmes and projects target only women living in least developed countries (LDCs). Lack of focus on the CEE/CIS region is evidenced by the overview of existing policy documents, surveys and studies developed by different UN agencies in the field of gender and ICTs, where the perspectives and realities of women living in transition countries is mostly missing.

The majority of gender and ICT projects operated in the CEE/CIS region by UN agencies focus on three main objectives:

- supporting the development of regional and subregional women's networks;

- providing ICT training to specific groups of women;

- increasing and supporting the development of women-specific content.

Two additional priorities currently receive the attention of UN agencies operating in the region: the lack of surveys and sex-disaggregated ICT data mapping the specific needs of women living in transitions economies; and the involvement of women in higher-level ICT education.

The gender and ICT activities undertaken by UN agencies target different subgroups of women:

- young women and girls;

- rural women;

- women-entrepreneurs;

- women working in telecommunications;

- women working in media, culture and science;

- gender advocates and researchers.

Women living in rural areas and women-entrepreneurs are the most common subgroups targeted by UN initiatives in the CEE/CIS region.

In general, most UN initiatives in the region focusing on ICT and gender, are women-specific. From the publicly accessible materials available on the agencies' websites, it is not possible to conclude how efficiently gender has been mainstreamed in to the design of other, non-women focused ICT projects operated by the UN in CEE/CIS. Nevertheless, projects highlighted by different agencies as ICT success stories, for which more information about project design was provided, also indicate that gender was, in most cases, not an intentional consideration in devising the framework.

In the following second part of this UN mapping, agencies that less explicitly concentrate on gender and ICTs, but which have the potential for doing so, are reviewed.

International Telecommunication Union (ITU)

GENDER AND ICT POLICIES

The International Telecommunication Union (ITU) has taken the lead role in the preparation of the WSIS. The main mission of ITU is to coordinate global telecommunication networks and services, including the development of a regulatory framework. The ITU operates in several areas, all of which have relevance for women's agendas in CEE/CIS:

- promotion of ICTs for development;
- building information and communication infrastructure;
- increasing access to information and knowledge;
- capacity building;
- building confidence, trust and security in the use of ICTs;
- promoting enabling environments;
- ICT applications;
- cultural (identity) and linguistic diversity and local content;
- media;
- ethical dimensions of the information society;
- international and regional co-operation;
- Digital Solidarity Agenda.

Of three ITU specialized sections, the Development Sector (ITU-D), is charged with fostering telecommunication development in the least developed and developing countries with the aim of harnessing the potential of ICTs to contribute towards reducing the social divide and promoting universal access to ICTs. The ITU-D Sector also acts as an enabling force for the development of an active network of various types of women's organizations and individuals involved in the information and telecommunication fields, including NGOs.

Gender mainstreaming into ITU-D programmes is delineated under Resolution 44 (Istanbul, 2002), 'Mainstreaming gender in ITU-D programmes'. In particular the resolution recommends that Member States and Sector Members should:

- Review and revise, as appropriate, their respective policies and practices to ensure that recruitment, employment, training and advancement of women and men alike are undertaken on a fair and equitable basis;
- Facilitate the employment of women and men equally in the telecommunication field in all levels and sectors (state, inter-governmental and private);

- Review their policies related to the information society to ensure the inclusion of a gender perspective in all activities, especially in regards to the WSIS.

The gender perspective is also considered in the strategy documents of different programmes. For example the E-strategies Programme background document asserts the task of handling the special needs of women and men to "elaborate strategies for addressing ICT and gender in all activities undertaken in the Programme, with an emphasis on addressing the gender digital divide."[45]

WORKING GROUP ON GENDER ISSUES (WGGI)

In 1998, following the resolution taken at the 'World Telecommunications Development Conference', ITU established a Task Force on Gender Issues (TFGI) in the Development Sector, which was upgraded in 2002 to a permanent Working Group on Gender Issues (WGGI) with its own budget and ITU-based staff (see Annex D). Its aim is to increase awareness about the developmental impact of telecommunication on women, ensure that the benefits of telecommunication will be equally available to women and men, and promote mainstreaming of gender issues into telecommunication policies and programmes. To promote integration of a gender perspective into all areas of telecommunications policy, regulation and licensing, the working group developed the 'Gender-Aware Guidelines and Gender Training Curriculum'[46] for regulatory agencies and policy-makers (for more detailed information see Annex E). High priority is also given to mainstreaming gender within management, staffing and operation of ITU, as well as its member states.

The WGGI is comprised of representatives of the Telecommunication Development Bureau, representatives of Member States, Sector Members, UN bodies, other regional and international organizations, NGOs, and individual experts. The WGGI has nine members from CEE/CIS, two men and seven women situated in six countries.

The WGGI disseminates with the Annual Regulatory Survey the 'Questionnaire on Gender Equality Policies and Practices'[47] to the 189 ITU Member States. The questionnaire helps to build awareness among ITU members, evaluate their progress in gender mainstreaming, identify successful gender equality strategies, and develop expertise that can be shared with other UN agencies, telecommunication administrations, the private sector and NGOs. The responses to the questionnaire are entered into a database of basic indicators related to gender equality.

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[45] See paragraph 2.5 <www.itu.int/ITU-D/isap/WTDC-02FinalReport/Section2/Prog3.pdf>.

[46] <www.itu.int/ITU-D/gender/projects/GenderCurriculum.pdf>

[47] <www.itu.int/ITU-D/gender/projects/QustnrSectr.pdf>

In 2002, 53 organizations responded (21 from Europe) to the third ITU Gender Questionnaire. Of these, 49 percent requested assistance from WGGI in implementing gender equality strategies, mostly in the form of training, guidance on policy development, and information sharing on the experiences of other organizations. Among CEE/CIS institutions requesting assistance for incorporation of gender equality strategies are the Armenian Ministry of Transport and Communications, Poland's Office for Telecommunications Regulations, the Lithuanian Ministry of Transport and Communications, the Croatian Ministry of Maritime Affairs, Transport & Communication, and the Moldavian Ministry of Transport and Communications.[48]

KEY PROJECTS IN CEE/CIS

There are several projects operated and supported by ITU in the CEE/CIS region, but only a few of these initiatives are gender or women-focused. In ITU public materials about its projects, there is no indication of the extent to which gender has been successfully mainstreamed in the design and performance of projects.

Pilot projects are implemented in three main areas: ICT applications, such as e-government and e-health projects; capacity building; and infrastructure development, focused mainly on public access points.

The Internet Training Centres Initiative[49] is one of the major initiatives implemented by ITU, in partnership with Cisco, in CEE/CIS. The three-year initiative will establish Internet training centres in least developed and developing countries.

The centres are responsible for expanding the unrealised human capacities throughout their communities, thus giving marginalized groups an opportunity to become active participants in the global information society. By targeting university undergraduate students, telecommunications and IT professionals, the project addresses domestic demand for ICT-based training, while fostering the technology and knowledge transfers that are necessary for becoming an information society. The train-the-trainers approach is used in the training centres to foster a long-term and sustainable transfer of skills and knowledge. The main target groups are youth with the prerequisite technical skills. The project also places a high priority on getting women involved as the possessors of local knowledge and important communicators within the local communities. Each participating centre is responsible for training at least 50 students per year, for which at least 30 percent should be women. Indeed, some of the inaugurated centres are focusing specifically on women. In the region, ITU

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[48] See ITU, 'Gender Questionnaire Survey – Report for 2002' (Geneva: ITU, June 2003).
[49] <www.itu.int/ITU-D/hrd/itci/>

operated one women-focused training centre situated at the University of Galati, Romania. Providing women with high-level ICT skills can empower their positions within the communities. In the words of Patricia Faccin, who is responsible for the WGGI: "It is through this kind of initiative that women can be empowered to take a role in the social and economic development of their communities and countries."

As part of its E-strategies Programme, ITU launched a project for rural farmers in Madaniyat, a village of the Tokmok-Tchuyski region of Kyrgyzstan. In this region agriculture represents the largest sector of the economy and more than 60 percent of the population live in rural areas. The project's aim is to reap the benefits of ICTs through access to produce pricing information and to facilitate establishing direct relationships with potential buyers. The Multi-media Multi Purpose Community Telecentre has been established as a project component. As in the case of other ITU projects, there is no available information on whether women's needs were taken into account when designing the telecentre – such as how easily women can access the facility, whether special measures were introduced to ease women's access (e.g. location, time availability, cost, availability of female staff and trainers, gender sensitivity of the management, etc.).

Internet Training Centres established in CEE/CIS	
Country	**University**
Bosnia and Herzegovina	University of Sarajevo
Bulgaria	Technical University of Sofia
Kyrgyzstan	International University of Kyrgyzstan
Poland	Warsaw University of Technology
Romania	University of Galati**
Serbia and Montenegro	University of Belgrade
Ukraine	Head Training Centre of Ukrtelecom
*** Indicates women-focused centre*	

There are several telemedicine projects initiated by the ITU in Ukraine, Georgia, Bulgaria, and Uzbekistan, as well as others under consideration for future partnerships, e.g. in Tajikistan and Latvia.

Another broad area for ICT application is governmental services. There are several e-government projects undertaken by ITU in the region. In 2002, ITU launched an E-Government Pilot Project in Bulgaria with the objectives of increasing productivity, reducing costs, and enhancing citizen access to government services. The task force formed to implement the project's activities was characterised by a gender-balanced membership (except for male only top decision-making positions for the 'Head of the Task Force' and 'Technical Project Manager').

A similar e-government project to facilitate the processing and dissemination of official documents as a way of increasing efficiency and transparency of governmental services to citizens is now operating in Georgia.

There are also some CEE/CIS projects among those that ITU highlights as ICT success stories. These are telecentre projects in Hungary, and telecottages in Estonia and Hungary, both in rural areas. The case studies describing these projects use gender-neutral language, and women's concerns are not included as criteria for project assessment. The Estonia telecottage case study only mentions the potential to use telecottages as resource centres for the promotion of gender equality and to provide possibilities for housewives to tele-work.

PLANNED GENDER AND ICT ACTIVITIES IN THE REGION

At its meeting in July 2003, WGGI presented two forward-looking women-focused projects, the Centre for Training Women in Telecom and IT in Uzbekistan, and Women and E-Technologies in Armenia, both of which are in the planning stage and will be implemented in the near future.

The Centre for Women's Training in Telecommunications and IT will be a non-profit educational institute under the auspices of, and physically located at, the Tashkent University of IT. A priority of the Centre is to encourage and assist women to develop careers in the telecom, IT and ICT sectors through providing educational and training opportunities for women and girls, and serving as the hub of an Uzbek national and Central Asian regional programme. The Centre also plans to collect materials on gender and ICT research, including articles written by women in the sector documenting barriers to women's participation in ICTs. The training will be offered particularly to women working in middle and upper managerial positions in telecommunications and other ICT sectors; women-IT experts; women professors and students in telecommunications, IT, economics, and related disciplines; women within governments ministries and agencies who will be responsible for the e-government strategies; and women's NGOs. According to its Operational Plan, the project will be launched in 2004.

The main objectives of the Women and E-Technologies project proposed by the Armenian ITU member, ArmenTel, is to increase the impact of ICTs on socio-economical conditions, and to establish a permanent mechanism to bridge the gender digital divide in Armenia through ICT training. The following topics have been identified as priorities for the courses: e-government, e-commerce, e-agriculture, e-health, e-community, e-cinema, e-learning, and tele-working. The main target groups are women, particularly teachers, doctors, entrepreneurs, administrators, farmers, and advocates.

The project will be implemented by ArmenTel, in close partnership with the European Regional Academy of Information and Communication Technologies, the ITU and other agencies. However, according to Ms. Narine Abazian, the project initiator and the head of the Business Planning and Financial Analysis Division of ArmenTel, the project is currently in a deadlock. To ensure the sustainability and nation-wide impact of the project, as well as considering the focus of ITU on the governmental level work, Ms. Abazian involved the

government in the initiative as one of the main partners. However, there is an on-going serious conflict between ArmenTel (which holds an exclusive right of monopoly in telecommunication in Armenia for 15 years) and the Armenian Government. Indeed, when all of the company's attention is concentrated on discussions surrounding this existing conflict, only low interest is given to the new initiative. Ms. Abazian concludes: "From the non-healthy relationship between the company and the government, we women are losing a lot."

OTHER WORK WITH RELEVENCE TO GENDER AND ICTS

The ITU, in comparison with most other stakeholders active in the ICT sector, uses the whole spectrum of communication tools, e.g. phone, fax, with priority given to Internet and more recently to mobile telephony.

The variety of ICT tools is important to note when attempting to bridge the gender digital divide in CEE/CIS. In 2002, mobile subscribers overtook fixed-line subscribers worldwide.[50] This phenomenon has taken place across countries, regions, and continents, but also across socio-demographic and economic criteria such as gender, income, age, and price. It also has significant impact on universal access issues, which include gender concerns, since people living in rural and remote areas are given at least basic access to communication technologies. Universal access to ICTs can be increased by the spread of mobile phones due mainly to two factors:

▪ mobile networks can be built faster than fixed-line networks and can cover geographically challenging areas;

▪ prepaid models have opened access to mobile cellular for low-income groups, who would otherwise not qualify for telephone subscription plans.

Since it is still expensive for an individual to purchase a handset, new solutions are being developed such as mobile phone sharing in communities or new business developments around mobile payphone management.

Considering the growing importance of mobile phones to universal access issues, it is crucial to start considering their application as effective tools for increasing access to information and services contributing to social and economical development goals. ITU sees its role here, under its newly operating Strategy and Policy Unit,[51] as providing a multilateral forum to discuss the challenges and development possibilities, as well as the reconstruction of regulatory frameworks of the mobile communication industry.

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[50] See Feldmann, op cit.

[51] <www.itu.int/osg/spu>

GENDER AND ICT POLICIES

As the regional outpost of the United Nations in Europe (including CIS and Central Asia) and North America, the UNECE focuses on ICT development at a regional level and adopts a strategy based on the exchange of national experiences and the promotion of regional and global co-operation amongst UN member states and agencies. Taking into account the transition economies of CEE and CIS, UNECE gives special attention to ICT as a tool for economic development.

The Commission focuses on four priority areas of ICT applications:[52]

- **e-government**: ICT tools will make policies more accountable and transparent, and allow greater efficiency in their delivery;

- **e-business**: enterprises can use ICTs to foster innovation, realize gains in productivity, reduce transaction costs and benefit from network externalities;

- **e-society**: ICTs can be used to promote the involvement and participation of all, irrespective of gender or economic status and in key areas such as education and health, thus improving overall quality of life;

- **e-learning and education**: ICT-enabled access to knowledge is an essential tool against poverty and for reducing the digital gap.

Through its ICT for development projects and programmes UNECE promotes the creation of a knowledge-based economy as the main framework for ICT development, especially in the transition countries. Sixteen countries with transition economies participated in a project launched by the Commission in 2002, entitled 'Towards a Knowledge-Based Economy: Country Readiness Assessment Reports'. The project is based on country assessment reports on the utilization and development of ICTs. The major goal of this initiative is to assist policy-makers in identifying a country's strategic priorities, and stimulating the exchange of national experiences. The assessment reports provide an overview of the following areas:[53]

- ICT infrastructure and Internet availability;

- ICT in education and access by schools to ICTs;

- ICT workforce;

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[52] See OECD, 'Donor ICT Strategies Matrix' [CD-Rom], (OECD, 2003 Edition).

[53] The guidelines for developing e-readiness reports, are summarized in UNECE, Towards a knowledge-based economy: country readiness assessment report: concept, outline, benchmarking and indicators (New York: United Nations, 2002).

- online local content generation;

- media;

- e-commerce and e-government;

- ICT policy and the legislative framework;

- intellectual capital;

- research, and scientific and technological development.

However, in these reports, except for the sex-disaggregated data on Internet user's structure, none of the identified assessment criteria consider a gender perspective. This can lead to development of national ICT strategies in which women's needs and priorities will be left behind.

The UNECE gender activities focus on the transition economies in Eastern and SEE, Central Asia and in the Caucasus, where in many respects women's position in the economy has deteriorated during last decade due to changes in the tax and welfare systems, disproportional cuts in women's employment, as well as sectoral changes in the labour market. Its core gender activities include:[54] (i) gender statistics, (ii) population studies, (iii) economic analysis and policies, (iv) women's entrepreneurship; (v) ICT.

The work of UNECE addresses the following gender and ICT problems:[55]

- lack of sex-disaggregated ICT data;

- incorporation of gender into the process of preparation of national programmes on ICT and Information Society;

- support for building women's capacity to use ICTs for business development.

KEY PROJECTS IN CEE/CIS

UNECE also plays a catalyst role in mainstreaming gender issues into the preparatory process for the WSIS at both regional and subregional levels. In cooperation with ITU, UNIFEM and UNDP, the commission organized the 'Building a Gender-Sensitive Information Society' roundtable during the 'Pan-European Ministerial Conference for the World Summit on Information Society' in Bucharest in November 2002. The roundtable drew on the conclusions from the subregional conference of CIS countries in Bishkek and Moscow (September – October, 2002). The recommendations from this side-event were reflected in the final declaration, which stated:

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[54] See the UNECE website <www.unece.org>.

[55] Contributions from UNECE to the WSIS PrepCom-2, February 2003.

Governments and other stakeholders should provide the necessary conditions to ensure women's equal access to information and knowledge as well as ensuring their equal role as producers and decision-makers in all aspects related to the shaping of IT policies and frameworks.

The Declaration from this conference recognized the difference between women and men's access to information resources, as well as the potential of ICTs to reduce gender inequality. It called for women's active participation at all levels in ICT-related decision-making processes.[56]

UNECE continued convening the regional discussion during the WSIS held in Geneva (December 2003). The 'From Bucharest to Tunis' roundtable organized by UNECE was the main event focused on CEE/CIS women and ICTs. It aimed to strengthen cooperation between stakeholders who actively address women's ICT-related needs and concerns in the region. The participants (including representatives of regional offices of UNDP and UNIFEM, and the ITU WGGI) discussed possibilities for cooperation in four main areas, which had already been identified during previous regional forums as most critical for women's active participation in information society. These were:

- research and analytical work mapping gender and ICT issues in CEE/CIS;

- good practices collection and exchange;

- informing policy dialog to incorporate gender in telecommunication and ICT policies;

- raising awareness around gender and ICT issues and strengthen advocacy in the region.

UNECE assists in bridging the gender digital divide in the region through its programme on women's entrepreneurship. The Commission supports the exchange of good practices, creation of regional networks, and promotion of role models in e-commerce and ICT use for women-entrepreneurs. In its publication 'Women's Entrepreneurship in Eastern Europe and CIS Countries' UNECE recognized the potential of ICTs for small businesses. Moreover, ICT was identified as a tool to access global databases of information, to communicate with customers and suppliers regardless of time and place, to advertise to a global audience and to conduct financial transactions. However, both positive and negative aspects of the Internet are shown in this document: the Internet is a "great equalizer, which has opened the doors to almost anyone," as well as a tool that can replicate or perpetrate gender stereotypes, and can have unintended negative impacts. Women entrepreneurs need to be aware of the potential of ICTs to overcome the challenges of information society. To improve

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[56] WSIS, 'Declaration of the Bishkek-Moscow Conference on the Information Society', Bishkek-Moscow Conference on the Information Society, 9 November (ITU/WSIS, 2002).

the e-commerce capabilities among women-owned and women-led businesses in the region the publication identified several necessary actions:

- raise awareness amongst businesswomen of the benefits of e-commerce;

- establish accessible Technology and E-Commerce Learning Centres throughout countries in the UNECE region, to provide training in e-business and web-technologies;

- mobilize financial resources to support the above activities.

The publication also discusses the importance of networking among women-run enterprises. Due to the traditional pattern in commerce networks, which still reflect the economic structure prior to 1989, and the strong position of men in key industries, there is a gender gap in access to business and professional networks in most CEE/CIS countries. Formal and informal networks play an important role in the empowerment and self-confidence building of individual entrepreneurs, especially in new businesses. ICTs can help facilitate access to information and knowledge, new markets, business partners and financing, as well as provide business-related services, share experiences and build personal contacts.[57]

To facilitate the process of women's business networking development, the UNECE launched the online 'UNECE Network of Women's Business Associations'. The network includes 21 women's business associations from 15 countries.[58]

One of the main themes of the 'Second UNECE Forum of Women Entrepreneurs' (17-18 March 2003) was women entrepreneurs' access to ICTs. Participants from 38 countries, including women representatives from CEE/CIS, confirmed that new technologies are a powerful tool to improve women's position in the private sector. They identified WSIS as a good framework for strengthening partnerships between governments and other stakeholders to increase access to ICTs for women in business as well as for women entrepreneurs running companies in the ICT sector[59] (for more information on the strategies for gender and e-commerce adopted by the 'First UNECE Forum of Women-Entrepreneurs', please see Annex F).

UNECE maintains the virtual 'Portrait Gallery of Excellent Women Entrepreneurs',[60] to promote role models for women and to build business

[57] UNECE, Women's Entrepreneurship in Eastern Europe and CIS Countries (Geneva: United Nations, 2002).

[58] Albania, Croatia, Czech Republic, Georgia, Lithuania, Malta, Poland, Russian Federation, Slovakia, Slovenia, Tajikistan, Turkmenistan, Ukraine, Uzbekistan, and Yugoslavia. For more information about the network, see <www.unece.org/operact/entrepr/women.network.htm>.

[59] UNECE, 'Report on the Second Regional Forum of Women Entrepreneurs', Second Regional Forum of Women-Entrepreneurs, Geneva, 17-18 March (Geneva: UNECE, 2003).

[60] <www.unece.org/operact/gallery/>

contacts. The profiles of women managing successful ICT companies can be found in the Gallery. During the 'Second UNECE Forum of Women Entrepreneurs', UNECE also awarded, for first time, the best entrepreneur in Information Technology (one of six categories of ECE Awards for Excellent Women Entrepreneurs).

Statistical Division of UNECE

In 2003, the Statistical Division of UNECE initiated the 'Assessment on the Status of ICT and Gender Statistics'[61] to take stock of the state of official statistics on gender and ICT. The results provide the basis for a preliminary analysis of statistical collection activity pertaining to gender and ICTs among National Statistical Offices (NSOs) and for work towards the improvement of data collection and the development of gender-sensitive data and indicators in this area.

The Assessment found that the majority of EU accession and candidate countries had started ICT data collection, though many of these were not sex-disaggregated. There were some major gaps in ICT and gender data availability, in particular in the Balkan and CIS countries.

The process of incorporating sex-disaggregated ICT data into regular official ICT data collections had begun in a number of developed countries with the adoption of a harmonized regional ICT survey. Most notable is the 'Eurostat Household Survey on ICT Usage' which was first piloted among EU countries in 2002 and is on its way to becoming an annual sex-disaggregated ICT collection for EU member states. Data have been collected from countries for 2002 and 2003, with the first round of data recently becoming available and the 2003 data currently undergoing processing.

The availability of a time series of sex-disaggregated ICT data is desirable to establish definite gender and ICT trends and to work out possible inconsistencies and irregularities in the data. However, from an analysis of the available one-year's worth of data, it is possible to begin identifying emerging trends and subregional characteristics. These serve as valuable inputs to developing a methodology for statistically assessing the impacts of ICTs on women.

Valuable lessons can also be learned from the analysis. It has become clear that, while the availability of sex-disaggregated ICT data is a crucial step, the existence of sex-disaggregated ICT data in itself is not enough to ensure that ICT and gender statistics accurately reflect the reality of women and men in the

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[61] See Angela Me and Marie Sicat, 'Statistics on Women and Men and ICT: The ECE Region', Joint UNECE / UNCTAD / UNESCO / ITU / OECD / Eurostatistical Workshop, Monitoring the Information Society: Data Measurement and Methods (Geneva, 8-9 December 2003).

information society. The data suggest the need to scrutinize the gender usefulness of existing ICT indicators, many of which do not capture a number of hidden adverse impacts of ICTs on women and need to be re-examined and possibly revised in order to ensure gender-sensitive ICT indicators.

A great challenge exists in the identification and development of gender-sensitive ICT indicators. In addition, many countries, in particular in the CIS and the Balkans, face resource constraints making sex-disaggregated ICT data collection difficult. Methods for these countries to surmount this challenge must be developed. On the basis of the assessment, recommendations were made for developing a framework for gender-sensitive ICT indicators as well as methods through which resource-constrained countries may collect ICT and gender statistics.

United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO)

GENDER AND ICT POLICIES

UNESCO operates at the global level with special attention paid to women and youth, with a geographical focus on LDCs and Africa.

The ICT contribution to the development of education, science, culture and the construction of a knowledge society is mainstreamed as a cross-cutting component within UNESCO programmes. As stated in its Medium-Term Strategy 2002–2007, UNESCO's work in the area of ICTs has three main strategic objectives:

- promoting the free flow of ideas and universal access to information;

- promoting the expression of pluralism and cultural diversity in the media and world information networks;

- promoting and widening access for all to ICTs, especially in the public domain (information produced by public organizations).

UNESCO has a strong gender-mainstreaming policy. Two of the main principles for its gender policy implementation are the empowerment of women and girls through consciousness-raising and self-realization, and addressing women and girls strategic needs.[62] These two principles have also been identified by gender advocates as being critical to ensuring women's equitable and active

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[62] Strategic gender needs challenge the existing roles in favour of equity for women. Strategic gender interests begin with the assumption that women are subordinate to men as a consequence of social and institutional discrimination against women. See the Gender Evaluation Methodology (GEM) concept paper: APC-WNSP, 'ICTs for Social Change' (2002).

participation in shaping an information society, and the development and implementation of technological changes.

For UNESCO's Gender Mainstreaming Framework, ICTs are recognized as strategic resources for women's empowerment and the advancing of gender equality, and ICT development as one of the main objectives for its gender mainstreaming policy. However, as a cross-cutting issue, the use of ICTs is also incorporated into other objectives relating to women's representation in the media, as well as equal access to education for girls and women.

UNESCO's priorities in the CEE/CIS countries are formulated in the Medium-Term Strategy 2002–2007 for the European Region. The document includes strategies for targeting gender equity through expanding participation by women in scientific professions, decreasing the gender imbalance in life-long learning and gender mainstreaming in the media sector. The ICTD priorities for the region contribute to five principal areas:

- use of ICT in education and long-life learning;

- promoting the free flow of ideas and access to information through creation of educational, scientific, cultural and media networks;

- promoting freedom of expression and language diversity in media;

- strengthening of regional institutional and human capacities in ICTs;

- fostering regional and national reflection on issues related to the equitable access to information and ICTs including the development of statistical data on the current usage of ICT in the region.

None of the regional ICT-related priorities noted in the document take the specific needs of women into consideration.

Key projects in CEE/CIS

There are several women-focused ICTD projects operated by UNESCO in the region, especially in Central Asia and post-conflict countries.

Since 1996, one of the key UNESCO programming areas has been 'Women and the Media'. One of the challenges has been to employ all possible means to increase women's access to information, and to ensure that the content is truly directed at supporting women and their full participation in society. The subregional network, Women in Media in Central Asia, advances equal access to information, encourages training for women working in the media industry and raises opportunities for women journalists and other mass media practitioners to express themselves through media and the use of ICTs.

The Central Asian women's cultural network is an outcome of the international conference on 'The Role of Women in Intercultural Dialogue in Central Asia' which was held in Dushanbe (Tajikistan), in 2003, and is another women-focused

project undertaken by UNESCO. The cultural network intends to serve as a forum for Central Asian women who work in the areas of culture, cultural education, arts and the media. The network provides opportunities for women to express and share their ideas and views on issues and to foster cooperation and exchange among women's organizations, focusing in particular on women artists, artisans and journalists. Among the planned activities is the development of the bilingual (Russian/English) portal 'Women in Intercultural Dialogue in Central Asia', which will be hosted by the regional UNESCO office in Kazakhstan.

UNESCO is also actively engaged in fostering regional and national reflection on issues related to the equitable access to information and ICTs including development of statistical data on the current usage of ICTs in the region.

The Government of Lithuania, in cooperation with the International Federation for Information Processing (IFIP), UNESCO and other agencies hosted the World Information Technology Forum (WITFOR),[63] in Vilnius, August 2003, focusing on ICT-equity. Participation and empowerment of marginalized groups, such as women, youth and ethnic minorities through e-government were among the conference themes. The conference outputs are summarized in the Vilnius Declaration,[64] in which the participants called upon national governments to ensure, among others things, affordable and equitable access to ICT for rural communities, women and aged people.

OTHER COMMENTS

UNESCO also actively advocates and provides technical services for furthering the development of sex-disaggregated statistics and indicators.

In July 2003, UNESCO hosted an Expert Group Meeting on 'Gender Issues in the Information Society', which aimed to provide space for dialogue and the sharing of innovative ideas and views on how to integrate gender perspectives within ICT policies and development programmes. An output from the meeting was a list of recommendations provided to UNESCO and other UN agencies concerned with the promotion of gender equality and equity. These recommendations are setting the framework for UNESCO's role in the area of research and indicators development, as well as for documentation and information dissemination. Moreover, they urge for advocacy and lobbying of the policy and decision-makers, mainly at the national level, to address gender and ICT issues. Among the recommendations it has also been mentioned that there is a need to involve more young people and men in gender and ICT discussions, and to support the provision of gender-awareness training for policy-makers and ICT advocates and

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[63]
[64] <www.unesco.lt/?page=355>

to simultaneously build awareness of ICT issues among gender advocates and civil society.

'Women working on the net' is another gender and ICT-focused project implemented by UNESCO in partnership with the Society for International Development. It aims to strengthen women's use of ICTs through challenging and transforming the gender biases in cyber-culture. The main strategy is to adapt technology to the lifestyle and everyday work of women. The project focuses on gender-specific approaches to the Internet as a communication tool with social and political potential, and encourages women to use it as an empowering space through which to strengthen their networking and policy-making skills.

United Nations Development Fund for Women (UNIFEM)

GENDER AND ICT POLICIES

In July 2000 the ITU, UNDP and UNIFEM signed a memorandum of understanding to collaborate on developing gender-responsive approaches to telecommunications and ICT policy development.

UNIFEM recognizes the importance of ICTs for women's active and equal participation in society, and mainstreams ICTs within its three priority areas: economic empowerment of women; women's human rights and discrimination against women, including violence against women; and women's leadership in governance, peace-building and decision-making processes. Accordingly, UNIFEM's main thematic areas and core strategies related to gender and ICTs are focused on the following priorities/activities:

- engaging in policy dialogue and advocacy efforts to promote women's participation and gender perspectives in ICT development and governance;

- strengthening innovative initiatives for the use of ICTs for women's economic and political empowerment;

- developing ICT tools to share information on gender-specific issues.

KEY PROJECTS IN CEE/CIS

USE OF ICTS AS TOOL FOR COMBATING VIOLENCE AGAINST WOMEN

UNIFEM explores innovative uses of ICTs as tools for women's economic, social and political empowerment. In this area in particular, UNIFEM focuses on the use of ICTs as effective tools in combating violence against women. In 1998, the <end-violence> listserver was initiated in preparation for the global interagency video-conference, 'A World Free of Violence Against Women', which linked

women survivors of violence, advocates and policy-makers in five sites worldwide to the UN General Assembly in New York. It was a unique event in terms of using ICTs to tell women's stories. More than 1,000 women and men, advocates and experts, around the world had been e-mailing each other for months, comparing experiences and sharing strategies to respond to the problem of violence against women. The listserver was more than a practical information resource, it also illustrated the possibility for modern technology to raise public awareness about violence against women as well as to facilitate learning, networking and the empowerment of women.[65]

In partnership with the Media/Materials Clearinghouse at Johns Hopkins University, UNIFEM also developed an electronic catalogue/database of media and communications resources on violence against women.[66] The catalogue provides organizations with direct access to a wide range of posters, postcards, public service announcements and other media materials. These can be downloaded and adapted to cultural and country-specific contexts.

Recently in CEE/CIS, UNIFEM assisted in strengthening women's capacity to address violence against women through the development of a new virtual training site 'Stop Violence Against Women'.[67] The site not only provides access to a wealth of training materials on issues ranging form trafficking to domestic violence, but also offers resource materials and guidelines for lobbying and legislative reform, documentation of human rights violations and community education. Language concerns were taken into consideration in the design of this unique website, with a mirror site in Russian containing local content.[68]

ICTs as a tool for women's economic empowerment

Recognizing the importance of ICTs for business development and their potential to empower women economically, the Development Network International (DEVNET), with UNIFEM support, established Women Into the New Network for Entrepreneurial Reinforcement (WINNER), a global programme seeking to strengthen the practical and technical skills of micro and small women entrepreneurs through training in basic ICT use and e-commerce applications. Indeed, WINNER's global web portal can be used by any micro or small woman entrepreneur with access to the Internet for the purpose of showcasing her product, to expand business opportunities and gain access to a global market on an Electronic Market Space.

[65] See Women @ Work to End Violence: Voices from Cyberspace
<www.unifem.undp.org/resources/w@work/>.

[66]

[67] <www.stopvaw.org>

[68] <www.russian.stopvaw.org>

The WINNER programme also supported women entrepreneurs and intermediary women's organizations in Albania and Romania. Since 1999 around 593 Romanian women entrepreneurs have been trained through the WINNER's project. An independent evaluation concluded that the project helped to improve women's self-esteem and to raise their confidence in IT use by providing a safe space for learning, where they would not feel intimidated by more knowledgeable employees, children or partners. Among the main barriers identified as preventing women from using ICTs more strategically as effective business tools, were: the high cost of computers and Internet connections, lack of training and assistance to update their knowledge, lack of confidence in the economic effectiveness of ICTs, and poor telecommunications infrastructure.[69]

EXPANDING THE PRESENTATION OF GENDER-SPECIFIC ISSUES ON INTERNET

Among the initiatives developed by UNIFEM to expand access to gender-specific issues, two global web portals should be mentioned.

In collaboration with the Joint United Nations programme on HIV/AIDS (UNAIDS), UNIFEM launched the first comprehensive web portal on HIV/AIDS with a gender dimension.[70] The portal promotes understanding, knowledge sharing (of research, surveys, good practices, training materials and advocacy tools) and action on the HIV/AIDS epidemic as a gender and human rights issue. Specific information on CEE/CIS is also available on the website.

UNIFEM also developed a web portal on women, peace and security[71] as an online resource for policy-makers, media practitioners and researchers on the impact of armed conflicts on women and girls, and their role in the peace-building process. The portal provides gender profiles of conflict countries and information on issues affecting women before, during and after conflict. The website also includes gender profiles of four conflicts in CEE/CIS (Abkhazia [Georgia], Bosnia and Herzegovina, Kosovo and Macedonia).

Under its Regional Programme for CEE, UNIFEM financially assisted the website development of several women's NGOs. UNIFEM/CEE supported a three-year joint project between the Network of East-West Women (NEWW) and the Karat Coalition, which focused on fostering a better understanding among women's NGOs, academia and the governments of EU accession countries on the impact of accession on women's economic rights and gender equality. The project revolves around a website[72] and a bi-weekly online bulletin, 'Access', which

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[69] Iolanda Mihalache, National Director of WINNER Program, Romania, Bucharest, November 2002.

[70] <www.genderandaids.org>

[71] <www.womenwarpeace.org>

[72] <www.neww.org.pl>

provides an up-to-date collection of resources that women in the EU candidate countries can use for lobbying and advocacy.

CAPACITY BUILDING AND NETWORKING

UNIFEM has also facilitated the establishment of a regional youth network, Gender Youth Network in Central and Eastern Europe and the Commonwealth of Independent States (GEYN CEECIS), specifically devoted to the priorities of young women in the region, such as prevention of trafficking, education on the gender dimensions of HIV/AIDS, the challenges of youth unemployment, marginalization of young women in decision-making, etc. The consultation process and networking would not have been feasible without the intensive use of ICTs. The network is now developing its own website.[73]

OTHER ACTIVITIES WITH RELEVANCE TO GENDER AND ICTS

DIGITAL DIASPORA INITIATIVE – BRINGING GOOD PRACTICES FROM OTHER REGIONS

In 2002, UNIFEM in close collaboration with other UN agencies (e.g. NEPAD, UN ICT Task Force, UNDP, UNFIP) launched its African initiative 'Bridging the Gender Digital Divide through Strategic Partnerships' to economically empower African women and to tackle the feminisation of poverty through building strategic partnerships between African IT entrepreneurs living in the Diaspora and local women's organizations and business associations in Africa. The Digital Diaspora Initiative is guided by a Global Advisory Committee (GAC) of African ICT entrepreneurs from the Diaspora, ICT experts, and representatives from the private sector and the UN system. The GAC identified three priorities for women's economic empowerment:

- country level capacity building;

- business linkages and networking;

- creating and enabling an ICT environment for African women – tackling regulatory and infrastructure issues.

The programme activities operate around these three objectives. The programme plans to provide training to selected partner women's organizations in the use of ICTs, as well as to assist them in providing ICT-related training and services to their communities in the future, including local mentorship for women entrepreneurs. Indeed, the programme supports the creation of business incubators. The trainers will be chosen from African experts in the Diaspora.

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[73] <www.uploads.home.ro/yq/index.html>

The strategy of the project is to mobilize support from IT workers and entrepreneurs, including African businesswomen living abroad, to build the capacity of African women to engage in the African ICT sector. The expectation is that such linkage will additionally generate new employment and entrepreneurship opportunities for African women. Project activities include mentorship, business roundtables and a venture capital fund for women's ICT-related businesses.

The programme builds local advocacy capacity and enhances African women's participation in ICT policy formation and implementation at the national and regional levels and works towards the incorporation of gender perspectives into these processes. This component also includes a media outreach strategy focused on raising public awareness about ICTs for development issues and giving visibility to the advocacy group's work.[74]

Because of low salaries, and economic instability, CEE/CIS countries, especially the war-affected but also other subregions, are subject to the brain drain of highly qualified ICT workers to the US or EU countries. This threatens ICT development and the global competitiveness of the region. The transfer of the Digital Diaspora Initiative would not only economically and politically empower CEE/CIS women through the strategic uses of ICTs, but might also help prevent the outflow of ICT experts. The programme could be developed in partnership with UNDP and International Organization for Migration (IOM), who started a similar programme, Transfer of Knowledge Through Expatriate Nationals (TOKTEN), in Bosnia-Herzegovina in 2003.[75]

INCORPORATING A GENDER PERSPECTIVE INTO WSIS

UNIFEM has supported the formation and work of the WSIS Gender Caucus, a multistakeholder group, created to improve the effectiveness of women's participation and to lobby for women's rights within the WSIS. The network grew from the efforts of ICT-oriented African women's NGOs during the African WSIS preparatory meeting in Mali. The WSIS Gender Caucus has become a global caucus on gender and ICT issues, but, as in the case of other gender and ICT networks, active participation of CEE/CIS gender advocates is missing. As a contribution to WSIS they organized a series of panel discussions and roundtables during the WSIS summit in Geneva in December 2003. The series included discussions on regional priority issues and activities for Europe, CIS and North America, in which the CEE/CIS perspective on transition was also presented.

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[74] See the IANWGE Fact-sheets on Information and Communication Technology and Gender <www.itu.int/ITU-D/gender/GenderWSIS/>.

[75] For more information, see <www.tokten.ba>.

United Nations Information and Communication Technologies Task Force (UN ICT Task Force)

The ICT Task Force was formally launched by the UN Secretary-General in 2001, to provide a global UN forum for formulating strategies on ICT integration into development programmes and promoting partnerships with other stakeholders. The UN ICT Task Force is not an operational or executing agency. One of the Task Force's assigned roles is to facilitate the effective participation of women and men in the decision-making processes of international policy forums. The Task Force is the first UN body in which representatives from government, civil society and organizations have equal status.

GENDER AND ICT POLICIES

The strategic objectives of the UN ICT Task Force are outlined in the Plan of Action adopted in November 2001. In its Plan the Task Force recognizes the potential of ICTs to contribute to the elimination of gender disparities, and sets as one of its strategic objectives to provide a platform for the analysis of ICT's potential to enhance the programme's promotion of gender equality and the empowerment of women.

The Plan includes the number of actions that target developing countries as well as countries in transition, and address various gender and ICT issues, including:

- lack of awareness among governments and other policy-makers on the potential of ICTs for promoting gender equality and poverty reduction;

- lack of policy interventions addressing women's needs and promoting women's participation in the ICT sector;

- disparities in ICT access at higher educational levels, as well as for training opportunities and achievements between girls/ women and boys/men;

- women's access to health information and healthcare to combat HIV/AIDS and other pandemics;

- low participation of women, especially those living in rural areas of developing countries, in e-commerce, and other small and medium-size entrepreneurships involving IT-enabled services.[76]

To identify and pursue region-specific goals the UN ICT Task Force established regional nodes. The UN ICT Task Force Europe and Central Asia Regional Network (UN ICT Task Force EuCAs) have two sub-nodes: for Europe and CIS in Geneva, hosted by UNECE; and in Moscow. The Regional Network has set as its

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[76] See the ICT Task Force, Plan of Action <www.unicttaskforce.org/about>.

priority "to define ways for effectively promoting the development of networks, focusing on successful policy solutions and also promoting the diffusion of ICT to the poorer parts of society." The Network comprises representatives from Armenia, Azerbaijan, Belarus, Bulgaria, Croatia, the Czech Republic, Denmark, Estonia, France, Great Britain, Italy, Kazakhstan, Poland, Russian Federation, Switzerland, and Ukraine.

KEY PROJECTS IN CEE/CIS

Most recently, the UN ICT Task Force EuCAs was particularly focused on contribution to the WSIS. In preparation for the WSIS, the Regional Network was actively involved in organizing the WSIS 'Pan-European Regional Conference' (Bucharest, 7-9 November 2002). As part of the conference, UNECE organized the successful gender focus roundtable 'Building a gender sensitive Information Society', whose recommendations were presented at the plenary session.[77]

The Moscow Node, in close cooperation with the Geneva Node, was actively involved in the organization of the international conference 'Partnership Networks as Tools to Enhance Information Society and Knowledge Economy' (Moscow, December 2002), which brought together 100 decision-makers and high-level experts from the CEE/CIS region representing government, business, civil society, research community, and mass media. However a review of the materials available on the Internet indicates that the gender perspective was not considered within the presentations, discussions and conference agenda. The Moscow Node was also actively involved in the development of the Russian National ICT strategy and the city-targeted program, 'e-Moscow'.[78]

Although UNECE, as the facilitator of the Geneva Node, stated that one of its objectives was to integrate a regional dialogue on gender and ICT into the UN ICT Task Force – Geneva Node work, the implemented activities demonstrate, as is the case of the other UN agencies, that gender issues are not addressed as the part of UN ICT Task Force regional effort in CEE/CIS, and gender mainstreaming is not considered as a priority for the Europe and Central Asia Regional Nodes.

OTHER ACTIVITIES WITH RELEVANCE TO GENDER AND ICTS

The UN ICT Task Force Secretariat took a part in organizing an Expert Group Meeting on 'Information and communication technologies and their impact on and use as an instrument for the advancement and empowerment of women' in the Republic of Korea in early November 2002.

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[77] For more information, see Annex A – United Nations Economic Commission for Europe.

[78] UN ICT Task Force, First Annual Report of the Information and Communication Technologies Task Force (Geneva: UN ICT, 2003).

The Task Force also participates in the inter-agency Digital Diaspora Project in Africa, which links African information technology entrepreneurs living in the Diaspora with women's organizations and business associations in Africa, to combine access to resources with social, political and economic empowerment of women.[79]

The UN ICT working paper 'Tools for Development: Using Information and Communications Technology to Achieve the Millennium Development Goals'[80] sponsored by the Task Force provides an analysis of how ICTs can be used to achieved the eight MDGs, including Goal 3, "Promote gender equality and empower women." Additionally, the study suggests possible ICT indicators for measuring progress. For the second phase of this work the UN ICT Task Force plans to provide a platform for collaboration of international organizations developing and/or using development indicators (such as UNECE, UNDP, the World Bank) to formulate core indicators that would link ICTs to MDGs and other development objectives.

United Nations Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO)

GENDER AND ICT POLICIES

Food and Agriculture Organization has been a pioneer in the strategic use of ICTs to help rural people, often living in social isolation, to exchange experiences, access information and knowledge, develop better trade opportunities, as well as to actively participate in and manage agricultural and rural development activities. FAO's activities are dedicated to rural women and men. Since women play an important role in food production and household food security, gender mainstreaming is essential within FAO's ICT-related programme and projects, especially as various studies show that rural women have less access to information, education and new technology.

KEY GENDER AND ICT INITIATIVES

FAO's gender and ICT activities work to improve the quality and quantity of available data and statistics on rural women. One example is the Dimitra project, which collects and highlights women's contribution to development.[81] FAO also focuses on the expansion of rural women's access to information, important for

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[79] For more information, see Annex A – United Nation Development Fund for Women.

[80] UN ICT Task Force, 'Tools for Development: Using Information and Communications Technology to Achieve the Millennium Development Goals', UN ICT Task Force Working Paper (December 2003).

[81] <www.fao.org/sd/dimitra>

their social and economic advancement, taking into account specific audience needs and appropriate technology (such as radio and SMS which are more accessible than the Internet for rural women). The Socio-Economic and Gender Analysis Programme (SEAGA) is dedicated to the use of ICTs for the empowerment of rural women and ensuring their access to the benefits of a knowledge-based society. The programme aims to increase awareness of and sensitivity towards gender issues, as well as to strengthen the capacity of development specialists to incorporate socio-economic and gender analysis considerations into development planning through the use of ICTs for distance learning, publication dissemination and networking.[82]

FAO also takes a leading role in addressing the specific needs of women living in rural areas within the WSIS process. Gender and ICT advocates consider the FAO submission of comments to the Draft of Action before the WSIS intersessional meeting (Paris, July 2003) as one with the strongest gender statements among UN agencies, with the exception of UNDAW. The FAO submission considers gender not only in the context of obvious issues such as the digital divide and universal access, but also in terms of the creation and promotion of low cost equipment, the potential of traditional and new ICTs convergence to narrow the gender digital divide, and the need of gender-equality approaches in capacity building of both technology professionals and non-professionals, to use ICTs.[83]

United Nations International Research and Training Institute for the Advancement of Women (UN INSTRAW)

UN INSTRAW is the leading UN agency facilitating research, training and sharing of knowledge on gender issues to ensure gender equality and the empowerment of women.

KEY GENDER AND ICT INITIATIVES

To achieve their overall goal, INSTRAW has created the Gender Awareness Information and Networking System (GAINS), a worldwide network linking researchers, grass-roots organizations, ICT specialists, trainers and training institutions across the world to work collaboratively on Internet-based research and training, as well as to stimulate discussions on important gender issues. One

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[82] See the IANWGE Fact-sheets on Information and Communication Technology and Gender <www.itu.int/ITU-D/gender/GenderWSIS/>; and the FAO website <www.fao.org>.

[83] See FAO, 'Draft Action Plan: Based on discussions in the Working Group of Sub-Committee 2', (Geneva: ITU/WSIS, 2003); and FAO, 'Concept Paper: Contribution of the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO) to the World Summit on the Information Society' (Geneva: ITU/WSIS, 2003).

of the four active GAINS Networks connects gender and ICT experts and individuals concerned with ICT as a tool for women's empowerment. Two groups from CEE/CIS take part in this network: the Lithuanian Women's Issues Information Centre and the Russian Women's Innovation Projects.[84] GAINS also serves as a clearinghouse for gender resources and materials.

Through GAINS, INSTRAW seeks to involve and support organizations and individuals engaging gender and development-related research and training. INSTRAW's research activities are carried out through the innovative application of ICTs in the form of virtual seminars and online discussion forums, which allows cooperation between geographically dispersed researchers. One of three current strategic research areas is the gender dimension of ICTs.

As a component of the previously mentioned Gender and ICT project[85] a series of four e-mail seminars was held during June – September 2002. The virtual seminars highlighted good practices and lessons learned, identified research and policy gaps, and outlined policy options and recommendations. A total of 325 participants from more than 50 countries around the world subscribed to the seminar discussions, with a total of 184 contributions. The active participation and presentation of the CEE/CIS region was, however, very low. The participants discussed two main topics during an eight-week period:

- What are the persistent barriers to access to and use of ICTs by women?

- How to overcome these barriers to ensure the transformative empowerment of women through the use of ICTs?

The understanding and measuring of the gender digital divide was identified as the first step to ensure women's empowerment through the use of ICTS. The participants reported that currently available data tend to be inconsistent, unreliable and inadequate for understanding the real access and use of ICTs by women, and recommended increased focus on the collection of data on women's participation in the knowledge society (including participation in technical education and research) and on women's interaction with ICTs (e.g. access to computers, Internet, participation in tele-working, etc.). The seminar discussions also confirmed: "addressing inequalities in access to ICTs is important but in itself is not a sufficient condition for women's empowerment through ICTs ...as important as access strategies for women are, they are only useful when paired with content that women can use effectively in support of their activities and concerns."[86]

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[84] Women's Issues Information Centre (Lithuania, email: wiic@undp.lt, website: <www.undp.lt/wiic>) and East-West: Women's Innovation Projects (Russia, email: zhip@owl.ru, website: <www.owl.ru>).

[85] <www.un-instraw.org/en/research/gender_and_ict/index.html>

[86] See Sophia Huyer and Tatjan Sikovska, 'Overcoming the Gender Digital Divide: Understanding ICTs and their Potential for Empowerment of Women', INSTRAW Research Paper Series No. 1 (2003).

United Nations Conference on Trade and Development (UNCTAD)

The United Nations Conference on Trade and Development (UNCTAD), as manager of the UN Task Force on Gender and Trade, strives to mainstream gender into its own work on ICT and trade.

K EY GENDER AND ICT INITIATIVES

The annual UNCTAD E-commerce and Development Report (ECDR) illustrates the potential of ICTs for women's economic empowerment, if barriers such as to education, infrastructure and finance are successfully overcome. The ECDR 2003 maps obstacles and opportunities that women face in the digital economy, such as women's tendency to be hired for operations requiring less complex skills (e.g. data entry), which are usually less valued, and also less secure. For example, "development in the areas of voice recognition and computer image processing, may make data entry skills less saleable in the international market."[87] The main challenges identified by the report for women in e-commerce are: Lack of infrastructure and availability of low-cost access to ICTs; access to education, especially education in science, technology and computers; access to capital; and other social and cultural factors which differ between societies such as availability of free time, control over family income, etc. The study also makes a number of recommendations for policy-makers on how to overcome these challenges and ensure women's full-participation in the digital economy.

United Nations Division for the Advancement of Women (UNDAW)

Within the UN, the Division for the Advancement of Women has taken the lead in promoting the gender dimension in the ICT policy-making process.

K EY GENDER AND ICT INITIATIVES

In preparation for the 47th session of the Commission on the Status of Women (CSW – March 2003), during which the conclusions on participation and access of women to ICTs and the media were adopted, UNDAW organized two online discussions on 'women and ICT' and 'women and media'. The online discussions collected experiences from gender and ICT practitioners and demonstrated good practices and case studies of ICT use as a tool for promoting gender equality and women's empowerment (e.g. enhancing women's economic empowerment, increasing their educational level, contributing to better health,

[87] See UNCTAD, *E-Commerce and Development Report 2002* (New York and Geneva: UN, 2002).

and strengthening women's participation in decision-making). The online conference attracted 217 participants from around the world, the highest percentages of registered participants were from Africa (24 percent) and North America (16 percent). Eastern Europe had one of the lowest participation levels (4 percent).

In November 2002, also as part of the preparation for CSW 2003, UNDAW, in collaboration with ITU and the UN ICT Task Force, organized an Expert Group Meeting (EGM) on the role of ICT for the advancement and empowerment of women in the Republic of Korea. Participants presented a number of examples of women's lives being uplifted through expanding access to ICTs, and of ICTs empowering marginalized women. The meeting provided an opportunity to highlight the intersection of gendered social relationships, gender discrimination, and gender-blind ICT policy processes, which undermine women's access to opportunities in the emerging knowledge and information society and diminish the potential of ICTs to serve as an effective tool for the promotion of gender equality.

Besides barriers to equal participation in decision-making, women also face personal barriers such as fear of technology and lack of self-confidence. The presented studies also highlighted the negative effects of existing gender discrimination in labour markets, education, and the allocation of financial resources for business development and women's opportunities in ICTs. The report from the EGM served as a basis for the report to CSW 2003, and contains a summary of all discussions as well as recommendations for action addressed to different actors at different levels on ICTs.

The CSW during its 47th session agreed upon a series of actions to enhance access and participation of women in ICTs. The outcomes of CSW 2003 were sent as a contribution to the president of the WSIS preparatory committee with a request to integrate gender perspectives into every facet of the Summit.

United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA)

GENDER AND ICT POLICIES

The United Nations Population Fund contributes to sustainable development, in particular poverty eradication, by helping recipient countries address population dynamics and reproductive health issues. Within their programmes they use ICTs for advocacy, education and knowledge sharing, communication and networking. Likewise, ICTs are integrated into UNFPA projects for knowledge sharing and advocacy for issues such as HIV/AIDS prevention, affordable reproductive health commodities, reproductive rights, reproductive health needs of young people, and gender issues. Although gender and ICT projects

are not specifically addressed, both gender equality and the use of ICT for human development are cross-cutting issues addressed within their activities.

Key projects in CEE/CIS

In Estonia, UNFPA supports the Online Youth Counselling Project, implemented by the Estonian Family Planning Association[88] and provides confidential counselling on issues regarding sex, reproductive health, relationships, and gender roles. Youth up to the age of 25 appreciate the fact that they can submit 'embarrassing' questions about sexuality, love, relationships, and violence through the Internet to experts (consisting of doctors, midwifes, social workers, psychologists and others) without having to sit face-to-face with doctors. The project now receives support from the Estonian State Sick Insurance Fund.

UNFPA also plans to harness SMS for sexual health promotion campaigns to reach younger target groups in Estonia.[89]

United Nations Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific (UNESCAP)

The United Nations Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific (UNESCAP) also operates some information and communication projects in Central Asia.

Key projects in CEE/CIS

In 2000, UNESCAP funded and undertook the Central Asia and Caucus subregional study on women's organizations using ICTs. The study assesses ICT use by women's organizations across the Caucasus and Central Asia. The research is part of the Asia Pacific regional research initiated by the Asian Women's Resource Exchange. The countries involved include Armenia, Azerbaijan, Georgia, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan, Turkmenistan and Uzbekistan. The report provides the results of a questionnaire sent to over 100 women's organizations, as well as an overview of the macro context and existing environment in all eight countries. It maps barriers to ICT use by women's organization and offers recommendations for donors and development agencies on technical assistance.

Among the factors that impinge on local women's organizations effectively working with ICTs, respondents identified: lack of equipment, lack of sufficient

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[88] <www.amor.ee>

[89] Information provided by Kadi Mand – UNFPA Liaison Officer, Estonia.

technical skills, and lack of financial independence and sustainability to resolve the first two problems. The survey also acknowledges that ICTs can be used as a tool for women's empowerment. Women's groups that had been able to utilise the potential of ICTs reported increased opportunities to conduct research and access information, improved organizational as well as individual knowledge and skills, greater participation in global women's initiatives, greater dissemination of information and lobbying at local and regional levels, and greater ability to identify new partners and to apply for donor funding.[90]

European Union

European Union support and influence on ICTs in CEE/CIS is particularly relevant to the ten accession countries joining the EU in 2004 and to the next round of candidate countries. A significant amount of financial support has already been given to ICT-oriented projects in these countries, which is expected to continue. The EU also critically influences countries' internal telecommunications and IT development through its regulations and norms, policies, and also through investment.

eEurope+

A key policy instrument is the eEurope Plan, a set of objectives, actions and indicators designed with the goal of Europe becoming "the most competitive and dynamic knowledge-based economy in the world." Based on eEurope, the candidate countries' initiative, eEurope+, mirrors the priority objectives and targets of eEurope but also provides for actions to tackle the specific situation of candidate countries. To facilitate the comparison and exchange of information, not only amongst the candidate countries but also with EU member states, actions are clustered around the same three main objectives identified in eEurope and the same indicators selected by the 15 EU member states have been adopted for monitoring and benchmarking progress.

However, the candidate countries recognize that, if the full benefits of the actions are to be achieved, a further acceleration in the effective implementation and functioning of the *acquis communautaire* in areas related to Information Society is required. This has resulted in the inclusion of an additional objective, not

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[90] See AWORC, 'I on the mouse: ICTs for women's advocacies and networking in Asia and the Pacific', Asian Women's Resource Exchange (2001).

previously found in eEurope, to assist putting in place the fundamental building blocks of the Information Society. Thus, eEurope+ emphasizes the following:

- accelerating the 'putting in place' of basic Information Society building blocks;
- accelerating the provision of affordable communication services for all;
- transposing and implementing the *acquis* relevant to the Information Society;
- a cheaper, faster, secure Internet;
- cheaper and faster Internet access;
- faster Internet for researchers and students;
- secure networks and smart cards;
- investment in people and skills;
- European youth in the digital age;
- working in the knowledge-based economy;
- participation for all in the knowledge-based economy;
- stimulating the use of the Internet;
- accelerating e-commerce;
- online government – electronic access to public services;
- online health;
- European digital content for global networks;
- intelligent transport systems;
- online environment.

The eEurope+ Action Plan defines gender concerns as a component of 'Investing in people and skills' within the category of 'Working in the knowledge-based economy'. The challenge is worded as follows:

> First, the shortage of ICT and e-Business skills has created a barrier for fully seizing the employment potential and is expected to become also an increasing problem in the candidate countries, unless immediate action is taken. Particular efforts should be made to attract women to ICT professions where they are strongly under represented. All workers need digital literacy through life-long learning to adapt to changing skills requirements. An additional challenge lies with the modernization of work organization. Productivity gains largely depend on the adjustment of work organization processes to the higher level of skills and to the greater flexibility made possible by new technologies.[91]

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[91] eEurope+, 'Action Plan' (June 2001).

The Action Plan proposes to augment women's participation in ICTs by significantly increasing the number of IT training places and courses and promoting gender equality in such courses (both in work and in educational institutions), utilising PHARE funds (a pre-accession instrument financed by the European Communities to assist the applicant countries of central Europe in their preparations for joining the EU) where appropriate by relevant actors (candidate countries, social partners, the private sector, the European Commission, etc.). However, it is unclear whether the proposed actions have been implemented to-date.

The national monitoring reports of the Action Plan usually do not mention women or gender equality in other contexts. Projects undertaken by governments are usually quite limited in their focus and scope within the chosen priority area of the particular country. For example in 2001, the Czech government carried out only three ICT projects: information literacy; software for education and information sources for education; and infrastructure. All three targeted teachers, schools and education methods.[92] The thematic focus varies from country to country, and yearly growth and development is recognized. However, no special measures or attention are devoted to women's concerns or gender issues.

OVERVIEW OF THE EU FUNDING SCHEME AVAILABLE TO CEE WOMEN

To fully understand the actual contribution and potential of EU institutions for promoting gender equality in the area of ICT in CEE, it is necessary to understand the structure and functioning of EU funding mechanisms. Technically speaking, there are a number of possibilities as to how women in candidate countries could benefit from funding available in the ICT field (in EU terminology ICTs are commonly referred to as ISTs, Information Society Technologies). ICT/IST projects are found across the funding scheme, additionally there are separate programmes designed for ICT/IST-related projects. However, a closer look at the outcomes and conditions under which ICT/IST projects are conducted within CEE indicates a lack of focus on gender equality and women as direct beneficiaries.

PRE-ACCESSION FUNDS

Up to 2006, the EU will provide support to candidate countries under the three pre-accession instruments: PHARE, the Instrument for Structural Policies for Pre-Accession (ISPA), and the Special Accession Programme for Agriculture and Rural Development (SAPARD). These are vitally important as they impact on candidate countries' economies, and cover such essential areas as transport, agriculture and the environment in general. Pre-accession funds will generate

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[92] Evropsky pruzkum rozvoje informacni spolecnosti, Q8. Centrum pro Elektronický obchod, Vysoke uceni technicke v Brne, Ústav informatiky VUT FAST, 2001.

more money, therefore shaping the future of at least two major sectors in the accession countries – transport and agriculture. These instruments are also a learning experience for future use of structural and/or cohesion funds. Under PHARE there are a number of projects focused on advancing the position of women in different societal spheres. These are conducted by civil society organizations, and educational, research and public administration institutions.

STRUCTURAL AND COHESION FUNDS

Structural Funds are the main EU instruments for supporting social and economic restructuring across the Union. They account for over a third of the EU budget. The EU will contribute up to 75 percent of project costs for the Structural Funds, and up to 85 percent for the Cohesion Funds. Funding on selected projects can commence retroactively to the beginning of 2004, and the ten candidate countries expected to join the EU in 2004 are preparing to access these funding mechanisms. The Funds include the following specific funding programmes: EQUAL; INTERREG III; LEADER+; and URBAN II.

The EQUAL programme tests new ways of tackling discrimination and inequalities experienced by those in work and those looking for a job. Projects regarding gender equality can be applied in two areas: 4G Equal opportunities – reconciling family and professional life; and 4H equal opportunities – reducing gender gaps and desegregation. Unfortunately, from the candidate countries only Czech Republic and Hungary joined the programme and thus are eligible for submitting applications. There is a total of 30 projects targeting gender and ICTs found in the overall EQUAL database. None of them are from candidate countries. Nonetheless, it is worth looking at projects applied across Europe[93] for good practices, methods, potential partnerships and inspiration. In many projects, there are elements transferable to CEE and even in some cases to CIS countries. Vital illustration of these are provided by the following examples:

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[93] Gender and ICT projects under the EQUAL program: EQUITAS (Spain); Conciliar é Preciso (Portugal); Naoberschapsbank (Netherlands); Zijspan (Netherlands); MASS-MEDIACIÓN (Spain); Young Women Making It Work (UK); DONNE MANAGER DELLE RISORSE UMANE (Italy); Gender Mainstreaming in der Informationsgesellschaft (Denmark); JIVE (Joint Interventions) PARTNERS (UK); Gender Equality & Race Inclusion (geri) (UK); Fuirich Transport (UK); Proyecto Cultur-Civitas (Spain); Equal-it-y in the information society (Denmark); PORTICO: Pari OppoRtunità-Tecnologie Informazione/Comunicazione per Occupazione (Italy); KviTTens (Sweden); WordPower (Sweden); Partnerskap för jjämställdhet i Gävleborgs län (Sweden); SVI.P.O. (Sviluppo Pari Opportunità) (Italy); Girls Crack IT! Mädchen u. junge Frauen in nichttraditionelle Berufe (Austria); EQUALIZE (Austria); WoMen-Tiroler Gemeinschaftsprojekt (Austria); Girls Crack IT! Mädchen u. junge Frauen in nichttraditionelle Berufe (Austria); EQUAL – Agir para a Igualdade (Portugal); MIRROR (Finland); ΙΣΕΣ ΔΥΝΑΤΟΤΗΤΕΣ-ΙΣΕΣ ΕΥΚΑΙΡΙΕΣ (Greece); Vrouwen hebben kansen in de ICT (Netherlands); Gender sensible Regionalentwicklung (Austria); Nora – Netzwerk Neue Berufsperspektiven für Frauen (Austria); Vrouwenonline (Netherlands); The Glass Guide (Netherlands).

Women create opportunities in ICT[94] – This project contributes to eliminating or reducing the inequality between better-educated men and women working at ICT companies. The project focuses both on corporate culture and on the women themselves. The project encourages ICT companies to make the sector structurally more attractive to better-educated women, in order to motivate more women to start working and to continue working in the ICT sector. Partners are from the Netherlands, Sweden and Germany.

WomenIT – **Women in Industry and Technology 2001–2005**[95] **–** The purpose of this project is to influence structures that maintain workplace divisions and which lead to inequalities in society, including between women and men. The operational environments of the project include kindergartens, schools, secondary level colleges, polytechnics, universities, businesses and labour market organizations. The development focus within the sectors of early childhood education, education and training include teaching methods, national curriculum planning, as well as specific subject development (e.g. technology education, mathematics and the natural sciences). Areas of development within the working sector include student and career counselling; recruitment; training courses for re-orientation training in the IT, technology and industry sectors and entrepreneurial and leadership training for women and girls. The development of equal practices in the working sector is one of the main themes of the project. Project partners are from Denmark, the UK, Finland, Germany and France.

COMMUNITY PROGRAMMES

Community Programmes are based on extensive European cooperation, representing and supporting the integration of community policies, with the implementation of multi-annual projects via international consortiums. These include the following programmes: ALTENER; CULTURE; eContent; IDA; LEONARDO DA VINCI; LIFE III; SOCRATES III; YOUTH; CUSTOMS; DAPHNE; ENTERPRISE & SMEs; MARCO POLO; MEDIA; PERICLES; SAVE; and TEN-TELECOM. ICT and gender foci can be found across almost all of these programmes, however these two areas are most likely to be cross-cutting within eContent, TEN-TELECOM, and SOCRATES III.

[94]
[95] <www.womenit.info/in_english.php>

e-Content[96]

E-Content is a market-oriented programme supporting the production, use and distribution of European digital content and promoting linguistic and cultural diversity on the global networks. It focuses on digital content players in Europe of all sizes, i.e. content creators and owners in private and public sectors; packagers and designers; language and customisation players; publishers and distributors; net services companies; rights trading actors; capital market players; experts and market enablers. The programme supports: innovative and viable content projects involving multinational and cross-sector partnerships; accompanying measures addressing good practice, conservation awareness and dissemination; and market studies for visions, insight, challenges and opportunities. The European Commission has signed memorandums of understanding with the Czech Republic, Romania, Slovenia, Malta, Estonia, Latvia, Poland and Hungary, allowing them to participate fully in the eContent Programme.

Socrates III

Socrates is Europe's education programme and involves around 30 European countries. Its main objective is to build-up European knowledge and thus provide a better response to current challenges, in addition it promotes life-long learning, encourages access to education for all, and helps people acquire recognized qualifications and skills. In more specific terms, Socrates seeks to promote language learning, and to encourage mobility and innovation. Socrates advocates European cooperation in all areas of education. This cooperation takes different forms: mobility (moving around Europe), organizing joint projects, setting-up European networks (disseminating ideas and good practice), and conducting studies and comparative analyses. Socrates comprises eight separate actions out of which one specifically targets ICTs: Minerva – information and communication technologies in education (the others include: Comenius – school education; Erasmus – higher education; Grundtvig – adult education and other education pathways; Lingua – learning European languages; observation and innovation of education systems and policies; joint actions with other European programmes; supplementary measures).

[96] <www.cordis.lu/econtent> and <ftp://ftp.cordis.lu/pub/econtent/docs/econt_en_wp_200101.pdf>

Ten-Telecom Programme[97]

The European Community will establish a telecommunication network throughout Europe in the Ten-Telecom Programme (eServices). As part of the European community's effort to introduce market standards, its specific programme Ten-Telecom has a subtask to offer financial support to the European industry in order to bring about fair competition and target oriented research and development. Part of this programme is directed towards the EURO-ISDN standard. The Ten-Telecom programme covers feasibility, validation and deployment activities related to telecommunication networks and services. This emphasis on deployment distinguishes Ten-Telecom from other EU-supported research and development programmes in the telecommunication area. The programme is aimed at projects able to generate sustainable activities with a high social or business impact. Its purpose is to support the roll-out of trans-European applications and services in sectors of public interest and in situations where the commercial prospects are uncertain or too long-term.

The main programme priorities are:

- to stimulate the deployment of applications matching the socio-economic needs of the citizens, and of small and medium sized enterprises (SMEs), in areas of public interest;

- to support generic services, primarily Internet-based, which form the common tools for the development and implementation of applications and which will ensure their inter-operability and security;

- to promote easy access to telecommunication networks by ensuring the inter-operation of all components of the global information infrastructure, and by stimulating the strategic development of broadband networks (in particular satellite and mobile networks).

FP6 – Sixth Framework Programme

At the Lisbon Summit in March 2000, EU governments called for better use of European research efforts through the creation of an internal market for science and technology, a 'European Research Area'. The Sixth Framework Programme (FP6) is the financial instrument for making this Research Area a reality with EU-funded research and development projects in seven thematic priorities. FP6 is comprised of eight areas, out of which one is specifically dedicated to ICTs: 'FP6 -

[97] <www.ten-telecom.org>

Information society technologies'[98] (the other areas include: FP6 – Life sciences, genomics and biotechnology for health; FP6 – Nanotechnologies and nano-sciences, knowledge-based multifunctional materials and new production processes and devices; FP6 – Aeronautics and space; FP6 – Citizens and governance in a knowledge-based society; FP6 – Food quality and safety; FP6 – Sustainable development, global change and ecosystems).

European Survey of Information Society (ESIS)

The European Survey of Information Society (ESIS) elucidates the context, conditions and milestones of ICT development processes in CEE countries. The ESIS project, which ended in March 2001, was an extensive research initiative under the European Commission, carried out by its Information Society Promotion Office (ISPO).[99] Beginning in 1997, the first two years covered the EU, and from 1999 it mapped out the state of ICTs in the other 25 countries of CEE and the Mediterranean.[100] The research was completed and outcomes produced in a decentralized way through contracted partner organizations in individual countries. To-date, the project has placed limited emphasis on the collection of sex-disaggregated data or the analysis of gender issues in ICTs. Nevertheless, it offers a comprehensive pool of information (in domestic languages, as well as English) and thus can serve as an invaluable source for retrospective gender analyses. Applying a gender lens to the project outcomes can explain a lot about women's weak positions and absence in the information society in CEE.

One of the key ESIS strategies was to develop in each country a database of Information Society projects that significantly influenced ICT development in particular sectors. The database was then analysed for different indicators to produce a statistical analysis of the Information Society projects. A simple search in the database (containing 632 projects as of January 2000) showed no gender equality or women-focused projects in the analysis. There are two possible explanations for this: such projects were either nonexistent at the time of the database creation; or the database developers did not pay attention to these areas, or did not have sufficient information about their meaning and societal value. This is unfortunate given the fact these projects were intended to

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[98] It is interesting that in the first call of the IST/ICT programme (2002–2006), a total of 1473 project proposals were submitted. It is not known how many of these included any kind of gender concerns in the project planning and aims.

[99] <http://europa.eu.int/ISPO/esis/default.htm>

[100] Countries included in ESIS: Albania, Algeria, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Bulgaria, Cyprus, Czech Republic, Egypt, Estonia, Hungary, Israel, Jordan, Lebanon, Latvia, Lithuania, Macedonia, Malta, Morocco, Palestine Territories, Poland, Romania, Slovakia, Slovenia, Syria, Tunisia and Turkey.

incorporate a social dimension of ICT use, and that the search mechanisms would have been suitable for identifying women and gender-focused initiatives.

Within the whole database, a total of 40 projects mention women or gender in their description (although this does not guarantee a focus on women's rights and women's advancement issues, or gender equality. It could mean for example that a portal contains information about cosmetics and thus one of the focus groups is women). Of these only a handful are projects from CEE candidate countries: Documentation and Information Centre (Albania), Interactive System of Communications on Women Employment Market (Poland), TALKPL Internet System (Poland), Women into the New Network (Romania), Women into the New Network for Entrepreneurial Reinforcement (Albania), Women OnLine (Poland). Projects found in the rest of the countries (EU and the Mediterranean countries) were much more focused on women's advancement within ICT industries or for society in general, and on women as end-users of ICT applications or information. It is important that stakeholders who operate gender and ICT programmes in CEE as well as CIS, or intend to do so, become familiar with any good practices of these projects, work in partnerships with them, transfer inspiration, and apply proven methods in similar contexts.[101]

In addition to the database of key projects for ICT development and information society progress, ESIS had produced information on:

- basic figures and trends of Information Society developments and technologies;

- regulatory developments (a quarterly overview of Information Society regulatory developments);

Projects found in the ESIS database that had women or gender in their programmatic descriptions: Callús (Spain); Center for support of young people in transition from care to independent life (Bulgaria); Citizen, Gender and Information Society (Finland); Clun Forest Telecentre (UK); CNFL-Internet: Women in Decision-making (Luxemburg); Communication Applications for Education, Multi-User, Open Network Design, Infrastructure and Logistics. (Ireland); Customised Multimedia Tools for Marketing (Finland); De Digitale Hangplek (Netherlands); Documentation and Information Center (Albania); Electronic Service Centre (Finland); ELEKTRA – Elektronisk Handel För Assistenter (Sweden); Emancipation on the Internet (Netherlands); EUROPEAN WOMEN'S DIALOGUE (Belgium); Information System (ServerDonna) (Italy); Interactive System of Communications on Women Employment Market (Poland); IT as competence and resource support for women in small companies (Sweden); Job creation for rural women (Austria); Kvinnor i Tiden (Sweden); KVINTECH. (Denmark); L.A.S.P.I Libraries and Schools, Public Information (Sweden); Listen to the history – Danish audio history (2) (Denmark); Mobile InternetCafe for Women – Netbase for Education (Austria); NCBDigit@@l (Netherlands); NOW – New Opportunities for Women – Hermagor (Austria); ONLINE-NOW; Electronic information and communicationnetwork für women (Austria); Palestinian Academic and Scientific Network (Palestine Territories); Qnet (Sweden); TALKPL Internet System (Poland); Teleservices Centre to Teleworkers (Spain); Telework – an Opportunity to the Rural Areas (Finland); Teleworkcentre East Netherland (Netherlands); Turn in to the future (Denmark); URLOGY Campaign (Belgium); UTSIKT – Skolornas satsning p• IT I Jämtlands län (Sweden); WebgrrlsNL (Netherlands); Women all over the world (Germany); Women into new network (Romania); Women into the new network for entrepreneurial reinforcement (Albania); Women OnLine (Poland); Women Training Network (Luxemburg).

- alternative networks (a quarterly overview of major public service networks which are offering potentialities for Information Society applications);

- Information Society promotional activities and public strategies overview (a quarterly review of actions and initiatives launched to stimulate the progress of the Information Society – conferences, publications, experts groups, studies, websites, calls for tenders, programmes and strategies, etc.);

- a quarterly overview of key people and organizations involved in the Information Society;

- WWW indicators (a quarterly overview of Internet development for selected categories of organizations).

This information was collected and published by the contracted partners on the national websites, and in English on the ESIS website. Again, this extensive material is a valuable source for gender analyses. A gender lens can be applied in various ways, the most obvious being to observe the gender balance of the project's personnel. The project teams were for the most part comprised exclusively of men. This would imply that information analysis or the production of quarterly updates, were carried out by men who may not have been sensitive to the importance of incorporating gender analysis. In this regard, a 'search' function to access women-specific information does not feature as an option in the scope of interests.

The papers, news, and updates on the key players and studies, especially on the national information platforms (the texts in national languages were more detailed, whereas English was used for summaries and condensed information) gives the impression that women are absolutely on the same level as men, present in all expert groups, projects teams, managerial positions, development networks and benefit from all happenings in the Information Society that are reported on. Language is gender neutral; information gender-blind, with no gender concerns mentioned. This impression is obviously contradicted by already well-known gender analyses effected in CEE on the labour market, decision-making hierarchies, and segregation mechanisms in educational sectors. It is quite likely that women benefited very little from the project, and indeed, the project indicated how little representation women have in the Information Society actions and developments.

MONITORING AND EVALUATION OF THE EU ICT PROGRAMMES

The above analysis of funding programmes and projects demonstrate that possibilities for ICT-related women's and gender issues do exist within the EU funding scheme, but are not always utilized. This is true for the projects' aims, beneficiaries, those who accumulate expertise and skills via participating in different project's components, as well as management and staff.

However, an external evaluation of the IST-related projects requested by the European Commission in 2002[102] only recognises the latter. The principle of equal opportunities for career advancement for women and men was enshrined as one of the EU objectives in the Treaty of Amsterdam, signed in 1997. In 2000, The European Commission adopted a Community Framework Strategy on Gender Equality (2001–2005) to advance the matter. In contradiction with these fundamental EU principles, the Monitoring Panel that accomplished the external evaluation of the IST-specific programme in 2002 found that women were underrepresented in IST programme management. The Panel's report indicates that out of 268 people, only 44 women (16 percent) of IST staff were working in grades A8-A1 at the end of 2002: "As could be expected, the proportion of women is higher in the lower grades and there is still a serious imbalance in the career patterns of women and men in the Directorate General (DG) Information Society." The Panel found the causes of low representation of women in the DG Information Society (the top body administrating IST development on the EU level) to lie in the system of late-night working and late-night and week-end meetings, human resources practices, and the non-existence of explicit targets for redressing the gender imbalance.

Serious imbalances were found by the Monitoring Panel in the overall operation of the EU IST-specific programme.[103] It had the lowest figures among all the specific programmes for which data were given, which probably reflected the scarcity of women in the IST field. The Monitoring Panel therefore stated that for utilization of skills, and legal as well as equity reasons, this must be rectified: "It is a question of ensuring that the needs of women and men are addressed within research and that gender-relevant research is undertaken."[104]

To ensure that the next phase of the IST programme incorporates gender and gives women better chances on the managerial level as well as in the various phases of the implementation process, the Monitoring Panel made the following recommendations:

- To enhance the compatibility of professional and family obligations for both women and men, DG Information Society should seek to develop and adopt Human Resources practices, which allow for flexible and family friendly working structures and conditions. These include, among other things, avoiding late meetings and working non-standard hours. Following the Joint Research Council pilot, IST might develop its own 'Family-Friendly Practices';

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[102] IST Monitoring Panel, ‚External monitoring of the information society technologies (IST) specific programme, Report of the 2002 IST Monitoring Panel' (EC, 2002).

[103] In the EU terminology, the programme is marked IST-FP512 (Information Society Technologies – Fifth Framework Program).

[104] IST Monitoring Panel, op cit.

- Forty percent representation of women in panels and advisory groups should be a target followed in FP6 and whenever panels and advisory groups are appointed, special attention should be paid to make sure that these incorporate a sufficient number of women. In order to ensure a sufficient pool of expertise, the IST Programme Management should specifically promote women's registration in the experts' databases. This can be done, for example, by alerting research organizations of a special need to increase women's registration in the databases;

- To ensure that attention will be paid to the gender aspects of ICT, the high-level group on socio-economic aspects of the IST Programme should incorporate sufficient expertise in gender questions.

Interestingly, the Monitoring Panel reviewed the impact of previous external monitoring panels (1999–2001), and looked at the gender balance of the monitoring process itself. This retrospective view showed that there was only little improvement in women's careers or participation in the IST programme. The 2000 Panel first identified a problem with gender balance in IST staff and management. The 2001 Panel identified a problem in women's participation in IST in general. The latter panel also recognised a more general problem of the gender aspect of ICT development and use. The recommendations of the latter panel, however, only concerned the participation of women in IST. The recommendations concerning women's participation or a gender balance in the programme or IST staff have not been followed up with formal policy measures, though the Panel reported that initiatives had been taken to improve women's careers. However, changes in women's career patterns or participation levels could not be detected. There have also been some improvements in human resource issues and policies, although further measures are needed. The monitoring reports point out that both gender and human resource issues are not only the problem of the DG Information Society.

> The gender issue, particularly when it pertains to women's participation in IST, is related to the relative scarcity of women in the IST field in general. However, gender and human resource issues at the European Commission level and the membership of women in various committees and panels can be influenced by actions taken by the Commission. The argument that the issue is a more general, Framework Programme (FP) issue, and therefore cannot lead to impacts on IST, is not valid since there are other examples of recommendations (such as those related to procedures) which have led to changes at FP level. There is a need to address gender and human resource issues as official policy matters in the EU both at IST and FP levels.[105]

[105] Ibid.

Moreover, it has been recognized (and confirmed also by other EU ICT and gender related studies[106]) that the practice of selecting experts with previous experience of the IST programme may discriminate against women, since they have been a tiny minority in the panels and therefore cannot prove experience for this kind of work. This problem might be redressed by careful selection of the panel with attention to previous experience and sufficient representation of women.

GENDER IN ICT PROGRAMMES OF THE EU IN CEE

Unfortunately, there has not been any gender evaluation, monitoring or impact studies done for the EU ICT-related programmes in the candidate countries. Clearly, women are missing from all spheres of ICT programme performance. It is therefore important that EU funding receivers, international development partnership members, and civil society in general, remain aware of the gender aspects and impacts of these programmes and request necessary adaptations. Experience has shown that positive changes in policy (in this case, to influence funding levels for gender equality) requires continuous pressure by societal forces, including advocacy by women's groups. As outlined earlier, women's organizing around ICT issues has been limited, compared to other regions.

This is another reason why special measures need to be taken in EU funding distribution to CEE countries. In order to obtain EU funding, civil society organizations and other institutions need to orientate themselves in the funding scheme and the complex application process. Most of the candidate countries have established a specific ICT contact-training-assistance centre for EU projects. These function as information hubs; assist with the search for international development partners necessary in most of the larger EU-funded projects; undertake projects; provide orientation to EU funding and advice for applications. In order to advance the gender issue and allow more women to apply and receive funds to get into the ICT area, it is absolutely necessary that they follow the activities of such institutions, in whatever form they function – as an NGO, governmental body, affiliate to a research institute, etc. Conversely, these institutions should actively offer support to women's NGOs and other possible applicants by highlighting gender specific funding opportunities, or gender topics within specific ICT funding. Unfortunately, most of these countries' EU-related ICT centres were found to be gender blind.

Another way to start embodying gender and advance women in ICTs is to review national ICT policies. The national ICT strategies and eEurope+ Action Plans are carried out by means of structural funding and it would be useful to evaluate how the funds are allocated in terms of gender. This activity also

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[106] See EC, 'Gender Impact Assessment of the Specific Programmes of the Fifth Framework Programme, Directorate-General for Research / Science and Society / C.5 Women and Science (EC, 2001).

assumes sharing of successful EU cases on using the structural funds to advance ICT use for women.

Structural funding as such has received the attention of women's NGOs and some gender equality state machineries during the last two years (for example, the Gender Policy Conference, Gdansk 2002, NEWW; the Karat Coalition Gender & Economic Literacy Conference, Konstancin 2001 and Warsaw 2003). There are signs of uneven distribution and in some cases discriminatory practices in the ways structural funds are being put (or prepared) into operation at the national level. Some women's NGOs have already addressed the respective institutions with letters of concern that women's issues and gender equality have been insufficiently addressed so far (such as PHARE), and national agencies have been using biased methods when assessing the priority needs and submitted projects (mainly due to untrained staff, gender imbalance in the decision-making processes, and other factors). There is a new initiative by an NGO in the Czech Republic (Gender Studies, o.p.s.) in cooperation with other regional NGOs under the support of the Heinrich-Böll Foundation, to produce a gender assessment of the structural funds. Results of this and similar research and advocacy initiatives could prompt the answer to why gender is almost a non-existent category in ICT-related EU funded projects in the CEE.

For more annotated links of candidate countries Information Society resources please see Annex C.

Non-governmental Organizations

Compared with women's NGO activities in other parts of the world, civil society initiatives targeting issues of gender and the needs of women in the ICT domain have been taken on at a relatively slow pace in CEE/CIS. Globally, the women's movement played a pioneering role in creating and managing online spaces. Unfortunately, participation of CEE/CIS in these early happenings was rather sporadic. There are many reasons for this, beginning with the fact that at the time when gender dimensions of ICTs were first being recognized, the Women's Movement in CEE/CIS was still in the process of coalescing within the then new concept of civil society in fledgling democracies. Among the topics around which women began to organize during the first half of the 1990s, ICTs fell behind other priorities, such as violence, legislative change, political participation and the impact of drastic reforms in social security and labour markets. In some countries women had to face and bear the consequences of conflicts and war. This hierarchy still prevails, with ICTs lagging as a priority.

One of the innovative ICT initiatives was launched by NEWW. This network, connecting academics and activists in the US and CEE/CIS, developed an electronic communication system simply because 'old' ways of transatlantic and transregional communication were too expensive and time consuming. In 1995,

through the NEWW OnLine project a number of women's centres in the region were provided training on PC use, the Internet and e-mail, how to purchase equipment, install software, and connect with each other virtually. The first mailing lists were launched: <women-east-west> and Russian <glas.sisters>. This development took place as the Internet was shifting from a tool mostly for researchers, scientists, and computer 'nerds' to a medium accessible to the general public.

In CEE/CIS, electronic networking made its first significant strides in the environmental movement. Access to the Internet varied from easy to practically nonexistent. NEWW continues to facilitate electronic exchange and information dissemination through its growing mailing lists and has since expanded into other areas of gender equality work in the region. However, like some other organizations, it did not sustain focus on its primary goals in the area of ICTs as such. A lack of ICT gender advocacy and civil society initiatives specifically targeting gender and ICTs is quite symptomatic in CEE/CIS. While in each of the world regions, women's organizations are engaged in addressing ICTs and their various gender dimensions (covering issues such as training, online content development, policy and decision-making, curricula development at different levels of education, support of women ICTs professionals, development of ICTs tools to achieve social change, novelty in women's portray, collaboration on research, promotion of more accessible alternative solutions such as open source or free software, etc.), in CEE/CIS the scope is considerably more limited, focusing mostly on temporary projects, or provisional use of ICTs at the periphery of the programmatic scope.

CEE/CIS civil society organizations also rarely participate in global women's ICTs networks such as the Association for Progressive Communications Women's Networking Support Programme (APC-WNSP). This is one of the reasons why regional women's perspectives remained underrepresented in the WSIS process. Unlike elsewhere in the world, women have not felt the need, have not acquired sufficient ICT-related information, knowledge and skills, and have not been encouraged by donors' programmes to form coalitions, generate regional gender specific analyses and otherwise contribute to the WSIS process.

The landmark year for the international women's movement was 1995. The Beijing conference changed both the way women used electronic communications and how information was distributed and exchanged. The Beijing experience inspired women's groups to use the Internet for communication, advocacy and lobbying. It was also in Beijing where the idea of a regional CEE/CIS network originated, and out of which the Karat Coalition of women's NGOs was born in 1997. This first CEE/CIS network of women's organizations almost immediately adopted the most effective means of organizing its work. Preparation processes for regional presence in the UN CSW and the Beijing+5 were facilitated almost entirely online. It is important to note that this was possible thanks to the Karat Coalition's orientation to major women's NGOs, those with potential for regional and political work, which tend

to be best equipped and skilled in using ICTs for communication. The majority of women's NGOs in the region still have no access to ICTs, be it due to unaffordable costs, lack of information and skills, or fear of new technology.

Globally available analysis acknowledges the fact that ICTs can be used to either exacerbate or transform unequal power relations and thus influence the position of different groups (women, minorities, and other variously disadvantaged groups) in society. ICTs, in themselves, cannot create gender equality, or end poverty, but can be tools for social action and positive social change. The specific issues identified seven to eight years ago (including education, training and skill development, but increasingly also others, such as trafficking and pornography), still remain critical for most women in the world, and have recently gained recognition in the CEE/CIS as well.

Women's NGOs in CEE/CIS are increasingly realizing the potential of ICTs as a tool in gaining ground in specific areas related to advancing women's human rights in the region. One example is the regional web site Stop Violence Against Women,[107] developed by Minnesota Advocates for Human Rights with support of UNIFEM, OSI, and the University of Minnesota Human Rights Centre. The site is designed as a resource for advocates and organizations working to eliminate violence against women in the CEE/CIS region. The site has a Russian language mirror site, where local content is featured.[108]

GOOD PRACTICES

The projects and initiatives found in CEE/CIS were analysed in terms of the particular issues addressed, target groups, strategies, tools, level of expertise of their leaders, reliability within the region, and geographic focus. This analysis resulted in seven clusters of gender and ICT issues that are mainly addressed in CEE/CIS NGO activities. For each of the areas, at least one and up to five good practice projects were identified.

1. ICTs for women's networking and campaigning

1.a) **Use of electronic communications for advocacy campaigns against violence against women**

Bulgarian Gender Research Foundation (Bulgaria)

Fifth woman (Slovakia)

Minnesota Advocates for Human Rights (US)

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[107] <www.stopvaw.org>
[108] <www.russian.stopvaw.org>

1.b) **Use of ICTs for networking –
communication and information sharing**

Karat Coalition (regional/Poland)

Women Mayors Link (Romania)

Network of East West Women (regional/Poland)

2. ICT training initiatives and ICTs in education

Bulgarian Gender Research Foundation (Bulgaria)

Women's Forum (Czech Republic)

European Contact Group (regional/Czech Republic)

eRiders - Roma eRiders projects, OSI/AdvocacyNet (regional)

ENAWA Effective E-Feminism programme (regional / the Netherlands)

2.a) **USING ICTS TO IMPROVE EMPLOYABILITY OF WOMEN**

Women Issue Information Centre (Lithuania)

ZamirNet (Croatia)

3. ICT use for local policy-making

Women Mayors Links SEF – Equal Opportunities for Women Foundation
(Stability Pact countries, Romania)

4. ICTs for economic empowerment of women

Women's Economic Empowerment Project – Winrock International (regional)

UNECE Online Portrait Gallery of Women Entrepreneurs (regional)

Best Information Technology Entrepreneur of the Year Award (regional)

5. Online content development

Open Women Line (Russia)

European Social Forum (regional/France)

Women Action in the Beijing+5 process
(regional)

Women's information portals in a number of countries

6. Research

> Athena (regional/Belgium)
>
> Information Technology, Transnational
> Democracy and Gender (ITDG)
>
> Nordic Network (Scandinavia, the Baltic States, Russia)
>
> Siyanda (global, UK)

7. Computerizing women's library and information services

> REWIND Net (regional, Croatia)

Hivos

> Hivos, the Humanist Institute for Development Cooperation, is a Dutch NGO, which operates in SEE. During the course of 2002, Hivos disbursed over 58 million euros as grants or loans. These funds were provided by the Dutch government, the EU, donors and private institutions.

GENDER AND ICT POLICIES

> Four percent of Hivos' budget is dedicated to the southern part of CEE region, but there are also projects supported in Central Asia. Within the rubric of its ICT programme, 'Access for all: equal opportunities in cyberspace', the Institute focuses on six priority areas:
>
> - Internet access;
> - local Internet content;
> - capacity development;
> - online networking;
> - fair e-trade (e.g. utilising the economic opportunities offered by the Internet);
> - Internet rights lobby for 'cyber rights for all' and freedom of speech on the Internet.
>
> The ICT programme targets two main groups: Hivos grantees and other partners (i.e. organizations that already have relationships with Hivos); and newly contacted organizations, whose mission is to encourage ICT use.
>
> Women's empowerment is identified as a primary directive in the Hivos' policy documents. Hivos' gender policy is implemented through three strategies:

- support for women's organizations aiming to strengthen women's rights and to increase participation of women in decision-making processes;

- support for the mainstreaming of gender equality objectives and strategies into the internal and external policy and programmes of Hivos' partner organizations;

- support for the mainstreaming of gender equality objectives and strategies through all Hivos' thematic programmes

In harmony with the above gender mainstreaming strategies, gender perspectives should be incorporated in the design of all projects supported by Hivos under the 'Access for all' programme, as well as in terms of organizational structure and other activities of the programme's grantees. However, as pointed out in Hivos' policy memorandum: "…the friction between donor expectations and the individual responsibility of partners is an ongoing dilemma."

KEY PROJECTS IN CEE/CIS

The most significant gender and ICT activities supported by Hivos in the SEE region are operated in cooperation with the International Information Centre and Archive for the Women's Movement (IIAV) a Netherlands-based NGO, which is one of the initiators of a European women's network, European and North American Women Action (ENAWA).

In partnership with IIAV, Hivos funded several ICT training sessions for women activists in SEE (but also open to women from parts of CEE). Hivos is also one of main supporters of the newly established Women's Information Technology Transfer, a training campus focused on women's training by women.

Hivos financially supported the establishment of ENAWA, as a network of media, ICT, information and advocacy organizations strengthening and integrating a feminist analysis within the information and media sectors. Several CEE-based women's organizations are active members of the network, for example CROW and Be active, Be emancipated (B.a.B.e., Croatia), the Karat Coalition (Central and Eastern Europe), Centre for Gender Studies (Czech Republic) and the Romanian Roma Women Network. One of ENAWA's main activities is to cover international political conferences via Internet and e-mail. In this vein, Hivos has supported (through ENAWA) the participation of a number of CEE women in international events, where they can gain or practice their networking, media and ICT skills.

Mama Cash

GENDER AND ICT POLICIES

Mama Cash is an independent women's funding organization based in the Netherlands. As part of its international programme, support id provided to women and women's groups from LDCs and the CEE/CIS region working in five priority thematic areas: bodily integrity; art, culture and the media; economic justice; peace and security; and women's empowerment and participation. Financial support is also made available to small, independent women's groups, especially those encountering difficulties in raising money for controversial issues. Supported groups are selected in close cooperation with a worldwide network of local advisors, who are very well informed on local situations. Among the activities prioritised by Mama Cash, two are related to ICTs – communication (such as feminist periodicals, documentation centres, publications, communication technology and Internet, newsletters etc.) and international networking.

KEY PROJECTS IN CEE/CIS

In 2003 Mama Cash supported more than 80 women's groups with a total of 224,316 euros. They support mainly small-scale projects (most grants are from 2000 to 3500 euros). Over the last three years the fund also provided support to a number of ICT-related projects, mostly small-scale projects, undertaken by different women's groups across CEE/CIS. In general, the supported projects can be divided into four main categories:

- Information distribution and awareness-raising about women's rights through radio, video and TV. Examples include support provided to the Bosnian organization, Koraci Nade, to produce a radio programme about women's rights; or to NANDI Art Research Station to produce a documentary film about women's issues for Serbian media and television;

- Establishment of SOS-hotlines. For example support for hotlines for the victims of violence in Ukraine (Zhetem Women's Club) or the SOS-line provided by Women's Group Step in Karlovac.

- ICT training for women, such as computer courses for women provided by the Serbian Women's Centre, Uzice, or the ICT workshop organized by the Kaunus Women's Employment and Information Centre in Lithuania;

- Website development and mailing lists facilitation. A good example is the website and monthly newsletter about the activities of women's organizations developed by Georgian women's initiatives.

The fund has also supported projects such as setting-up an Internet Café operated by Croatian Lesbian Organisation, LORI, and establishing a Multimedia Resource Centre for Gender Studies in Romania (operated by AnA Society). Mama Cash also provides travel grants for women to attend international

women's conferences. During the last few years the grant has facilitated travel for women activists from CEE/CIS to international forums such as AWID or the Know-How conference in Kampala, where gender and ICTs were priority topics on the agenda.

Open Society Institute (OSI)

The Open Society Institute is one of the biggest donors operating in CEE/CIS, with 26 national foundations. The Institute works on the global, as well as national level. The main programme priorities are developed at the global level, but decisions on the grant's recipients are very often made by the national Soros Foundations, which are relatively autonomous and can select their own priorities within OSI's global programme framework. It is important to point out that there is wide range of projects for which OSI is both the donor and project initiator.

GENDER AND ICT POLICIES

The main goal framing all regional activities is the building of a more open society through shaping government policy and supporting education, media, public health, human and women's rights, as well as social, legal, and economic reforms. The most important component of the open society development strategy is the support of ICT development and applications as effective tools for political empowerment.

The OSI Information Programme was launched in 2001, consolidating OSI's Internet, library and publishing programmes. The Programme is structured around four ICT features:

1. A policy component, which aims to develop an environment that makes it possible for civic actors and governments to take advantage of the democratic capacity of ICTs in three ways: policy advocacy to enable and encourage investment in infrastructure; to protect basic liberties in the new media environment; and to enhance public participation in the global ICT standards-setting process, as well as in national ICT strategy formulation;

2. A content component, to provide access not by funding content directly, but by developing global consortia for affordable access to content;

3. A tool development component with the objective of developing robust, low-cost ICT toolsets for civil society governance and learning applications;

4. An ICT networking project to empower civil society and to provide ICT support for the non-profit sector, enabling civic actors to take full advantage of new technologies.

OSI and the Soros Foundation assist in the development of national ICT strategies, mostly in cooperation with UNDP and other stakeholders, in several CEE/CIS countries. In 2002, the Azerbaijan Soros Foundation's Information Programme was a key partner in the new National ICT Strategy project (NICTS) initiated by UNDP with the cooperation of the Azerbaijani government. The NICTS' goal is to increase public access to information technology in Azerbaijan. The Azerbaijan State Committee on Women Affairs was involved in the process of NICTS formulation. The application of ICTs to promote gender equality and resolve gender disparities is listed within the directions for future action in NICTS.

The Information Programme focuses on work with public libraries as traditional community information centres. Public libraries often have very good national infrastructure reaching even the rural areas in most CEE/CIS countries. These initiatives aim to transform the libraries into community centres, offering public access to information and information-based services especially for people living in underserved areas. Considering the high number of women librarians and library users, the libraries have great potential to narrow the gender digital divide.

Among the women-focused ICT projects, there are several projects implemented under the Women's and Roma programmes of OSI. The Women's Programme's main objectives are focused on women's human rights, gender-sensitive education, eradication of violence against women, mass media and gender policy, equal opportunities in the EU accession process, women's oral histories, Romani women's leadership, information initiatives, and women's health. ICTs are mainstreamed primarily through projects aiming to eradicate women's rights violations, strengthen Romani women's leadership, and information initiatives.

As part of a regional grant programme, 16 Days Media Campaigns to combat violence against women, a number of SOS and information phone lines and webpages have been set up across the region. The campaign was, in most cases, a joint effort of several local women's organizations, and networking was an integral part of these projects. OSI Budapest, which coordinates the programme, also facilitated women's networking across borders to share experiences and strategies on how to most effectively communicate the message to the public.

In 2000, the OSI New York – Women's Programme sponsored REWIND NET, a regional network of women's information and documentation centres from 15 mostly post-communist countries of CEE/CIS. They also supported the production of several documentary films through the Women's Programme, for example a documentary from Tajikistan on women and drug trafficking.

The eRiders Initiative operated by the Roma Programme, in collaboration with the Women's Programme and the Network Information Programme, helps Romani women's organizations increase the visibility and effectiveness of their work through the use of ICTs. eRiders are technology consultants who work with NGOs in a particular region or within a particular thematic area. An important

condition for support is that the people/organization must be from the communities they serve, so they can understand the issues facing their community and thus maximize their impact.

Since 2001, the Advocacy Project has worked with OSI to develop a sustainable model of ICT support for Roma advocates in seven CEE and SEE communities. The project aims to introduce a selected number of OSI's Roma grantees to IT. Four of six eRiders are women, and a number of Roma women's groups from Kazakhstan, Bulgaria, Macedonia and the Czech Republic are among the supported organizations. As part of the project, ICT training for Roma women was provided to increase technical assistance to Romani NGOs.

The project has already generated considerable local interest. USAID has highlighted the Roma eRiders Initiative as an innovative project deserving close attention.

> *"Working with the women wasn't much easier. Many of the women I worked with were used to being taught by men, and they were distrustful of a woman teaching them. They were fearful of showing they did not know how to use the computer. Their competitiveness and fearfulness kept them from really learning from me, and I was unable to break through their resistance. This resistance and pressure from the men in our community is commonplace, and it has meant that few Roma women know how to use computers and even fewer use e-mail. Luckily, the younger generation, men and women like me and my other eRider colleagues, are breaking down these walls."*
>
> – Maria Metodieva, The Roma Women's Movement Takes on Technology, 4 March 2003, Techsoup.org <www.techsoup.org>

Bilateral Donors

In addition to the following, there are a number of other gender and ICT projects in CEE/CIS supported by different foundations, for example the Heinrich-Böll Foundation, the Global Fund for Women, the Ford Foundation, and governmental development agencies. The majority of these funders do not run specific gender and ICT funding programmes. If they support gender and ICT issues, it is through small scale, individual projects within other areas of their foci.

Government of Italy

The Italian Government supports e-government initiatives in SEE, primarily in cooperation with the governments of Albania, Bulgaria and Romania. The Italian Government financially assisted the implementation of the 'eSEEurope Agenda for the Development of the Information Society', and SEE subregional guidelines for the creation of National ICT Strategies Policies. They also funded the global WINNER project (for more information see the UN agencies section, on UNIFEM).

Government of Japan

GENDER AND ICT POLICIES

Although the primary regional focus of the Japanese Government is on Asia, they also funded two large rural women-focused ICT initiatives in CEE/CIS. As an outcome of the Fourth World Conference on Women, Japan launched the Women in Development initiative to support the education of women and girls, women's health and their socio-economic participation. As part of the initiative, the Japanese Women in Development Fund (JWDF) was established in cooperation with UNDP. The Fund has three objectives: women's capacity building; sustaining locally managed development initiatives; and promoting collaboration. Increasing women's access to ICTs is also one of the Fund's priorities.

KEY PROJECTS IN CEE/CIS

The Fund supported a two-year project with ICT components in Ukraine targeting women farmers. The 'Sustaining Women Farmers in Ukraine' project worked to empower rural women through capacity building and networking of existing women farmer's organizations.

The JWDF also provides funding in Lithuania for women's capacity building through ICT and networking. The Lithuanian three-year initiative assists women and women's organizations in rural and less developed areas to access and use ICTs. As part of the project, five regional cyber centres have been established and equipment has been provided to women's organizations. The project provides training and training materials for future trainers as well as for individual women.

US Agency for International Development (USAID)

GENDER AND ICT POLICIES

"USAID seeks to bring the benefits of ICTs to underserved regions and populations, apply ICTs across different socio-economic areas of development, particularly for women, and provide opportunities to increase economic growth."[109]

USAID is another major donor active in the area of ICTs, in the CEE/CIS region. The Agency operates directly through its worldwide network of field missions. Most ICT investments form part of broader programmatic investments in areas such as health, democracy, agriculture, economic growth, and the environment. The USAID ICT for development strategy has five key objectives:

- promote policy reform in telecommunications and electronic commerce to foster private investment and competition of developing countries;

- expand access for underserved populations, especially women and girls, the poor, ethnic minorities and rural residents through community ICT centres and innovative technologies;

- build capacity in the ICT sector for both professional and institutional development;

- demonstrate innovative applications tailored to specific sectors, e.g. health, agriculture, and democracy;

- collaborate with the private sector for essential investments and service delivery.

USAID recognizes women as key actors in social and economic development and democracy promotion. Gender is mainstreamed into the design of all USAID programmes in close cooperation with the office of Women in Development (WID). The WID office is responsible for dissemination of good practices; identifying emerging development issues with differential impacts on women and men; and creating programmes and activities to address these issues, as in case of ICTs. The WID office supported the study, 'Gender, Information Technology, and Developing Countries', which examines, "what we do and do not know about the gender dimension of the digital divide. It identifies some of the key barriers to women's participation in IT, as well as some areas where women already are participating in and benefiting from the use of information technology."

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[109] OECD, Donor ICT Strategies Matrix [CD-Rom], (OECD, 2003 Edition).

The regional focus of USAID targets SEE and CIS countries. Considering progress made in SEE, the Agency is planning to withdraw from these subregions, and focus mainly on activities in Central Asia. Due to negative political developments, financial support has also decreased over the last few years in Ukraine.

There is a large range of ICT-oriented initiatives supported by USAID in the SEE/CIS region, targeting all of the previously defined key ICTD areas.

In 2002, USAID Romania funded the three-year Romania Information Technology Initiative (RITI). This project is implemented within the framework of the USAID-supported Digital Opportunity through Technology and Communication (DOT-COM) programme.[110] The initiative has two components that address the major barriers facing ICT expansion in Romania through assistance to the Government of Romania with its new telecommunication policy and regulatory reform (RITI-Policy) and through expanding ICT access to people living in underserved areas of Romania (RITI-Access).

RITI-Access is a community-based approach, in which access to ICT services is provided to citizens through community ICT centres (telecentres). The four pilot telecentres have been established in underserved Romanian rural areas to assess whether this model would be a sustainable and cost-efficient way of meeting universal services obligations. In all of the selected communities, very few private households have access even to the most basic telecommunications services, such as a telephone. The lessons learned from the evaluation of the telecentre pilot projects will be used to further universal access policy initiatives and to determine a standard configuration of the centres across Romania. However, the pilot study, does not document, how the projects meet women's needs and constraints. Further, statistics regarding the use of the telecentres, which the centres are obliged to collect, are not sex-disaggregated.

The lack of gender analysis in the design, as well as missing impact assessments of the pilot projects, can have unanticipated negative impacts on women's usage of the pilot centres and future telecentres. Gender inequalities in the access to information and ICT skills could therefore increase, and women's social and economical position could deteriorate in those communities.

RITI-Policy is designed to assist the regulatory and administrative functions necessary to create a competitive telecom market and enable e-commerce in Romania through transfer of international experiences, and intensive training of regulators. As a component of RITI-Policy, several local municipalities

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[110] <www.dot-com-alliance.org>

e-governance projects have been funded. For example, the main objective of the 'Integrated Informatics System of Giurgiu Local Municipal Council' project is to develop a pilot ICT application and programme that would enable the Giurgiu Local Council to change the process of tax payment and document management. These e-government projects aim, among others things, to increase women's participation in the decision-making process through the use of ICTs.

Through RITI, USAID also provides funding to actively assist ten state-owned companies in the privatisation process. The companies were pre-selected by the government across a variety of sectors. Prior to the selection process, the firms' staffing patterns were examined in order to understand the potential gender impacts of downsizing activities.

The LearnLink project, implemented by the Romanian government with USAID assistance, addresses institutionalised child welfare concerns by strengthening professional development opportunities for child welfare workers through online networking. The project assists the Romanian Resource and Information Centre for the Social Professions, a women-owned and operated NGO, to use ICTs and distance training approaches to create an online learning community for social workers. Through online courses delivered via the Internet and CD-ROMs the Centre's staff have been trained in how to digitise documents or create and moderate a listserver, among other things. As illustrated in the project report, the application of a distance learning system helps reach a greater number of Romanian child welfare professionals and enables them to participate in training while working due to the logistical adaptability of the training. However, the report also illustrates that technology is still perceived as an obstacle rather than an advantage by rural-based and less-educated people.

In Ukraine, the Winrock Women's Economic Empowerment project has also been financed by USAID. The project was originally intended to address some of the economic reasons contributing to the trafficking of Ukrainian women through fostering entrepreneurship and enhancing job opportunities for Ukrainian women. The project provides job training, technical skills building, and crisis prevention help. Email and Internet access helps to connect victims, find missing people, provide contact with law enforcement personnel, connect anti-trafficking advocacy groups, and provide learning opportunities. The project has also made a significant contribution to SME development, grass-roots advocacy, and lessening corruption in the business environment in Ukraine.

OTHER ACTIVITIES WITH RELEVENCE TO GENDER AND ICTS

There is potential for gender mainstreaming within the Public Computer and Communication Centre (PC3) project supported in Bulgaria. The project is an integral part of the Internet for Economic Development Initiative implemented by USAID in 11 pilot countries. The project provides access to information and IT education for underserved rural communities. In partnership with selected

Bulgarian entrepreneurs, the PC3 project established ten centres in underserved Bulgarian communities of between 5,000 to 30,000 inhabitants, who can now access information and communication resources, education and training. The project is also designed to promote local competitiveness in employment and increased information and access to government social services. Each centre offers fee-for-use access to the Internet and IT products and services, related training, and business support services.

The ten local partners, who now operate the telecentres, were selected from 90 qualified applicants based on five criteria: understanding of the PC3 concept; respondent's contribution; business plan scenario; characteristics of the town or community; and telecommunication infrastructure. However, according to publicly accessible project documentation, gender equality does not appear to have been taken into account. The telecentres run by women-entrepreneurs or women's organizations can play an important role in encouraging and building the self-confidence of other women in the community to learn and use ICTs.

As guidelines for its development assistance, USAID also published the report 'Future Direction in Agriculture and Information and Communication Technologies', which examines the impact of new ICTs for agriculture, and outlines trends and emerging ICT opportunities. The report highlights, among other things, the need to "ensure that women and girls can participate effectively and equitably in emerging knowledge networks by ensuring women's access to ICTs, availability of women-oriented content (e.g. subsistence as well as cash crop information), and selection of intermediaries with women in meaningful positions as key partners."

Swedish International Development Agency (SIDA)

Although few gender or women-focused ICT initiatives were found among the Swedish International Development Agency (SIDA) projects, considering their geographic focus on CEE/CIS, and their strong interest in promoting gender equality, as well as ICTs for development, SIDA has been identified as a potential partner for future gender and ICT initiatives undertaken in the region.

GENDER AND ICT POLICIES

SIDA's work in the CEE/CIS region is concentrated on poorer countries in SEE and Central Asia, mainly Bosnia-Herzegovina, Serbia and Montenegro, Albania, Macedonia, Kosovo and Croatia in SEE; and Russia, Belarus, Ukraine, Moldova, Georgia, Tajikistan and Kyrgyzstan in CIS. Their CEE/CIS work aims to improve living standards of poor people, with a special focus on following priorities:

- creation of stable democracies;
- promotion of security;

- support of socially sustainable economic transition;
- support of environmentally sustainable development.

Gender equality and women's rights are highlighted mainly within programmes focused on democracy and social development. However, as stated in SIDA's Southern Caucus developmental strategy framework, gender and gender analysis are considered within all SIDA programmes:

> All development cooperation between Southern Caucasus and Sweden must be informed by a concern for gender equality issues. When programmes are being prepared, their impact on both women and men must be analysed. Similarly, follow-ups and evaluations must consider how the programmes have affected women and men respectively. Special initiatives may be warranted specifically targeting women and/or men.

As for many other donors, ICT is thematically cross-cutting and integrated into all development programmes run by SIDA. The ICT strategy framework recognizes the gender disparities within the ICT sector as well as the different impacts of ICT on women and men, and acknowledges ICTs as tools that can be used to either exacerbate or transform unequal power relations among women and men.

LESSONS LEARNED FROM OTHER REGIONS

In 1999, SIDA determined that research would become one of its priority areas for ICTD. SIDA supports a series of country ICT surveys in Africa, where the quantity and quality of ICT-related information is generally very limited and fragmented, as for CEE/CIS. SIDA surveys provide information on connectivity, access, human resources, policy frameworks and key institutions. The surveys also provide basic data on gender disparities and women's situation with regard to ICTs.

SIDA is also one of the co-funders of the WSIS Gender Caucus, a global research programme on gender and ICTs, which is planned to start in the first quarter of 2004.

Canadian International Development Agency (CIDA)

Although few gender or women-focused ICT initiatives were found among the Canadian International Development Agency (CIDA) projects, considering their geographic focus on CEE/CIS, and their strong interest in promoting gender equality, as well as ICTs for development, CIDA has been identified as a potential partner for future gender and ICT initiatives undertaken in the region.

GENDER AND ICT POLICIES

Poverty reduction is a central component of CIDA's ICT application strategy. As in the case of other donors, gender and ICTs are thematically cross-cutting for all CIDA activities. The main objective of CIDA's ICT strategy is to increase the access of beneficiaries to information and knowledge, and develop their ICT skills. In addition, research on links between gender, ICTs and poverty reduction are highlighted in their strategy. One of the most important principles guiding CIDA ICTs initiatives is to include a wide range of ICT tools – radio, television, telephones and the Internet.

Gender is strongly taken into consideration in the design of all of CIDA programmes. CIDA's policy on gender equality highlights the need to incorporate specific strategies within programming to address the gender digital divide in access to ICT infrastructure.

KEY PROJECTS IN CEE/CIS

CIDA work focuses on the needs and priorities of developing and transition countries. Currently the Agency operates throughout the whole CEE/CIS region, but by 31 March 2005, CIDA-funded assistance will be withdrawn from all countries joining the EU in the first wave (Czech Republic, Slovakia, Hungary, Poland, Slovenia, Estonia, Latvia, and Lithuania).

Most CIDA ICT projects implemented in CEE/CIS focus on poverty reduction and socio-economic development. One ICT project operated by CIDA in the region is the South Caucasus Health Information Project, to strengthen health reform in the South Caucasus countries through the appropriate application of health IT and information management strategies. Another example is the Global Distance Learning project in Ukraine supported by CIDA and the World Bank. The project wants to contribute to the establishment of an online distance-learning centre in Ukraine, which will be one of 50 centres around the world, and to develop the capacity of Ukrainians to conduct courses in distance learning. The collection of sex-disaggregated data on programmes impacts and performance is emphasized in the regional programming framework.

Corporations

ICT-related industries have been growing rapidly in most of the region over the past decade. The scope of businesses established varies between countries according to their economic indicators. Over the past few years, CEE and some CIS governments have focused on pursuing economic strategies and policies that seek to promote a more attractive environment for the ICT industry, including deregulation of telecommunications, promoting foreign investment, and increasing Internet connectivity. There is new momentum to create

multistakeholder partnerships, including private companies, towards bridging the gender divide in ICTs.

However, such initiatives are still rather rare in the region. An outstanding example is the E-jednakost project in partnership with Ericsson and other companies in Yugoslavia.[111] The reason initiatives such as this are not found more often, seem to lie in the low level of readiness of their potential initiators and implementers. Generally speaking, NGOs in the region are not yet prepared to make partnerships with the private sector. At present, only a very small number of women's NGOs in the region request financial support from corporations, and an even smaller portion uses private money to run projects.[112]

As for companies holding leading positions within the ICT market in CEE/CIS, no evidence of gender initiatives was found. It should be stated that the idea of investing in non-profit initiatives, as well as the concept of social corporate responsibility, remains unexplored in CEE/CIS. Companies that run such programmes in their countries of origin rarely transform these to environments in which they invest or outsource. The same could be stated about the corporate culture that is much friendlier to women in well-established economies than in CEE/CIS. Additionally, their employee diversity programmes were not found to be replicated in the countries where investment is directed. However, these companies are active in the field of gender equality in the countries of their origin (usually the EU, US, Canada; it does not apply to numerous Japanese companies making investments in CEE/CIS). In order to better illustrate this phenomenon, the following brief examples illustrate how companies profile themselves in their home countries.

Microsoft

Microsoft strives towards employee diversity. Diversity in character, interest and background enables the company to think along their clients' perspectives. Since the percentage of female employees is low, Microsoft has decided to participate in the EU funded project 'Women Create Opportunities in ICT' in Western European countries (for details please see European Union section). During the period of October 2003 to June 2004 the company is involved in a number of activities within this project:

[111] <www.e-jednakost.org>

[112] Gender Studies, o.p.s., 'Mapping the fundraising strategies and attitudes towards private corporations among women's NGOs in CEE', *profem* (Prague, 2003).

- Network of Ambassadors Gender Equality of a group of high potentials;
- internal and external PR and communication;
- participation in mutual coaching programmes for companies.

IBM

As one of the older, more established companies in the sector, IBM has long held the vision that diversity builds a bridge between the market and the company. IBM wants its company to be a reflection of society and its current and potential customers, in order to better meet their needs. IBM believes that its efforts give it greater appeal to a wide variety of potential employees. As a company operating in the IT industry, IBM must establish an appeal to women (45 percent of the professional population) in the 'war for talent'. The practical application of these views has been translated into HR policy, allowing plenty of room for local initiatives in programme implementation. IBM's activities focus on two aspects: the management mindset, and the mindset of women. The activities work on the principle of 'the best person for the job', while paying particular attention to feminine potential. The activities are initiated and supported by the business units, and assisted by Human Resource management. In recent years, for example, the number of women in IBM Netherlands has increased to 22 percent. The percentage of female managers is now 13 percent.

Getronics

At Getronics Netherlands, a great deal of work and thought has gone into the gender issue, which until recently was relatively virgin territory for the company. A company director, a Human Resource division manager and a project manager came together in the EQUAL project 'Women Create Opportunities in ICT' (for details on this project, see European Union section). A group of women professionals were approached about participating in a group-coaching programme. At the same time, the project team worked to increase management commitment, mainly through confronting existing practices (using examples from other companies) and providing relevant (economic) reasons. Coaching the group of 32 women was particularly instrumental in embedding the need for cultural change in the company. Following from the group coaching sessions, a team led by the division management will present recommendations to the company board, in addition to other activities. The findings will also be presented and discussed more widely throughout the organization.

CISCO Learning Programme

The most visible activity in terms of gender and ICTs in the region is the CISCO Learning Programme.[113] In addition to specialized training for women, CISCO produces studies on the situation of women in the IT sector, and for ICTs in general. These studies are based on local experience of the CISCO Academies operating throughout the region and innovative approaches, especially in the area of education and labour.

CISCO states that to enable women who desire a higher level of education in ICTs, innovative approaches need to be found. For example, some of the Academies in the region saw educational programmes became more gender inclusive when run at high schools. At the high school level, there is less segregation among students as found higher in the educational hierarchy, and there are also more female teachers.

In relation to the labour market, CISCO believes it is beneficial for more ICT employers to learn about the advantages of gender-balanced workforces. Among other benefits, it has been documented that through investing in women, 'brain drain' can be prevented. This phenomenon is quite typical and the outflow of ICT experts is becoming a threat to ICT development and competitiveness of the region. Women tend to be more stable in employment and tend to find jobs locally. Therefore active recruitment of women to skilled ICT jobs can be a strategy to keep expertise within the region.

[113] <http://gender.ciscolearning.org/>

Annex B – Questionnaire to the UNDP Country Offices

Gender and ICTs in Central and Eastern Europe and CIS (RER/03/0006)

Please send the completed questionnaire and forms Lenka Simerska and Katerina Fialova by email gem-cee@apcwomen.org with copy to Yuri Misnikov and Dono Abdurazakova by **October 10, 2003**

UNDP Country Office:

Gender Focal Point:

ICT Focal Point:

What are the overall key **priorities/directions** of the Country Office in ICT-D (tick one or more)?

Polices & Strategies	__
Content & Applications	__
Access	__
Capacity building	__
Partnerships	__
Other (pls specify)	__

Please kindly fill out the attached form for each **key past, ongoing or planned ICT-D projects**:

Project title: _____

(__ past __ongoing __ planned), URL: _____

Project Description:

On the below questions, all answers are "No" for the above projects:

1. In which of the following ICT-D dimensions does your project belong *(see attached list of ICT-D dimensions)* Pls put the dimension's number_(could be more than one dimension)

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2. Are the objectives of your ICTD projects disaggregated by sex, or refer explicitly to gender equality commitments?

3. Do your ICTD projects address any of the following issues (please tick one or more, and comment, if necessary):

Female access to ICTs in terms of infrastructure and costs, as compared to men   __

Female access in control/input of ICT/decision-making, as compared to men   __

Female access to training/work opportunities in ICT sector, as compared to men   __

Women from isolated households/rural areas   __

Language barriers/local content reflecting women's reality/needs   __

4. Does your project in any way link with the goal of advancing gender equality or women's priorities related to ICTs? Yes ____   No ____

If the answer is "Yes" please describe briefly these links:

5. Are there specific measures undertaken within your ICTD projects to target women ?

Yes ____   No ____

If the answer is "Yes" please specify, what kind of measures: _____

6. Is gender dimension explicitly reflected in the project planned outputs/outcomes and output targets? Yes____   No_____

7. If the indicators have been developed within your ICTD projects, have they been gender disaggregated?

8. Do project statistics provide information on the share (percentage/number) of women among project participants or direct target beneficiaries? Yes _____   No _____
If the answer is "Yes" please specify and provide figures_____

9. Describe partnerships entered in the context of your work on ICT-D. For each, please specify name/type of organizations, or departments and briefly describe forms of cooperation:

Governments (Ministries, Municipalities, which departments):

Civil society (media, research/think tanks, women's organizations, etc.) :

Private sector:

UN agencies:

Other:

Annex C – Annotated Links to Information Society Resources for Candidate Countries

BULGARIA

Governmental portal <www.government.bg>
Information about Members of the Cabinet and their programme, links to the respective Ministries, search function (in government decisions), records from press conferences, discussion forum, public registers, services etc.

Ministry of Transport and Communications <www.mtc.government.bg>
The Telecommunication Law and its extensions, strategy for Information Society Development, National Programme for Information Society Development, the structure of Coordination Council on the Information Society, Action Plan of the Coordination Council on the Information Society. The website for the Information Society Promotion Office for Bulgaria will become available mid-June <www.ispo.bg>

Bulgarian Association of Internet Providers <www.bai.bg>

Bulgarian Research and Educational Network <www.acad.bg>

All the websites mentioned above are also available in English

CZECH REPUBLIC

The Office of the Czech Republic Government <www.vlada.cz/>. Comprehensive information on Members of the Cabinet and their programme, links to the respective Ministries, search function (in government decisions), records from press conferences, etc. It also includes information of the Czech Republic Government Council for State Information Policy <www.vlada.cz/1250/eng/vrk/rady/rady.htm>. Available in English.

The Office for Public Information Systems <www.uvis.cz/>
A new website, currently under preparation, will provide access to basic documents related to State Information Policy, standards, information from abroad, and links to information resources. Available in English.

Czech Forum for Information Society <www.info-forum.cz/indexe.html>
The Forum is intended as a public dialogue on information society issues. Available in English.

Czech Telecommunication Office <www.ctu.cz/index_a.htm>
The site presents the origins of the Czech Telecommunication Office, its mission and activities, a list of legal acts and implementing provisions, and International activities. Available in English.

Central website address <www.centralni-adresa.cz/cadr/index.htm>
The official information system on public procurement and auctions. Link to the Public

Administration portal (prototype version), which is to become an integrated site for obtaining information and to use the services of public administration bodies. Available only in Czech.

ESTONIA

State portal of the Estonian Republic <www.gov.ee/en>
Integrates and coordinates national information systems. Information about the state, Parliament, Government (including Estonian Government of Ministers Session Information System) and related organizations, state politics, and www-services.

State Information Systems <www.riik.ee/infosystems>
Coordination of state IT-policy actions and development plans in the field of state administrative information systems.

Estonian Informatics Centre <www.eik.ee/english/index.html>
Supporting agency for the coordination and development of information society.

HUNGARY

The Government of the Hungarian Republic <www.meh.hu/>

The Office of the Government Commissioner for ICT <www.IKB.hu/>

The Inter-Departmental Committee for Information Technology (in Hungarian) <www.Ith.hu>

LATVIA

'One stop shop' for Information Society in Latvia <www.sam.gov.lv>
Housed at this time by the Department of Informatics, Ministry of Transport.

LITHUANIA

In the near future material relevant to information society issues will be placed on special website <www.ivpk.lt>

At the moment national websites related to the issues of information society in Lithuania are:

Information Policy Department of Ministry of Internal Affairs (in Lithuanian only) <www.vrm.lt/index1.htm?padaliniai.htm>

Parliament's Commission of Information Society Development – on the Lithuanian Parliament website (mostly in Lithuanian) <www.lrs.lt>

INFOBALT, the Association of Information Technology, Telecommunications and Office equipment companies of Lithuania (Lithuanian and English) <www.infobalt.lt/index_en.html>.

Lithuanian Academic and Research Network Litnet (in English) <www.ktl.mii.lt>

POLAND

The website of the Polish Forum for Information Society <www.kbn.gov.pl/cele/index.html>
The advisory body to the Council of Ministers, presents the basic Polish documents related to Information Society development in Poland as well as the activities of the Forum.

The Information Society website maintained by the State Committee for Scientific Research (KBN) <www.kbn.gov.pl/gsi/index_eng.html> Presents the strategy 'Aims and Directions of the Information Society Development in Poland' adopted by the Council of Ministers in 2000, other documents related to the Information Society development in Poland, links to the websites of European Information Society (documents, programmes, etc.) and provides information on IST programme. You can find some essays and interviews there as well.

The website of the Ministry of Posts and Telecommunications
<www.ml.gov.pl/english/documents/index.html>
Presents the list of ministerial licences, regulations and documents; among these is the latest 'ePoland - The Strategy of an Information Society Development in Poland for 2001–2006'.

The Polish Information Processing Society website <www.pti.org.pl/english/index.html>
Provides information on the Society's activities. It also presents some useful links to the Polish, foreign and international organizations active in IT related issues and provides information on the European Computer Driving License.

The Interkl@sa programme website <www.interklasa.pl/portal/index/strony>
Presents a wide range of initiatives related to the education aspects of Information Society, an overview of the undertaken actions, links to some educational web sites and many institutions active on this field.

ROMANIA

The Government of Romania

The Ministry of Communications and Information Technology

SLOVAK REPUBLIC

The Office of the SR Government Comprehensive information on Members of the Cabinet and their programme, sessions of the Government, documents, etc. (available in English).

The Ministry of Education
From the Ministry site, the webpages of the Council of the Government of the SR for Information Technology are also available (mainly in Slovak)
<www.education.gov.sk/svs/oit/rvisk.htm>

The Ministry of Transport, Posts and Telecommunications of the SR
General information about the Ministry, access to basic documents related to State Telecom Policy, Telecom Law, etc., links to information resources (available in Slovak, English version is under preparation).

National Office ISPO Slovakia
Web-site is intended as a public dialogue on information society issues and National Action Plans Support, links to information resources (available in English).

The Slovak Society for Computer Science
In addition to society activities, the site contains also some documents related to Information Society development: a proposal of the national policy (prepared in co-operation with Ministry of Education), information about activities of the working group on electronic signature, progress in implementation of the ECDL programme (currently available in Slovak only).

SLOVENIA

Ministry for the Information Society <www.gov.si/mid>
The Telecommunications law and its extensions, national Information Society policy (the English extensions should be provided not later than June 2001).

Government Centre of Informatics <www.gov.si/cvi>
E-commerce strategy for public administration (also available in English).

Civil Society -Society Informatika <www.drustvo-informatika.si>
Translations of key information society documents, ECDL contact point.

Annex D – Members of ITU Working Group on Gender Issues (WGGI)

Narine ABAZIAN, Head of Business Planning Division – ARMENTEL, Armenia

Lina DANOVSKA, Head, Telecommunication Policy Department – Committee of Posts and Telecommunications, Bulgaria

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Svetlana PITERCEVA, Managing Director – Telecommunications and Electronics Consortium TECNIS, Russia

Latinka RAZPOPOVA, Senior Expert – Ministry of Transport and Communications, Bulgaria

Divna VUCKOVIC, Operations Director – ERICSSON D.O.O., Yugoslavia

Aleksandra ZAGORAC, Teacher – Faculty of Electrical Engineering, Bosnia and Herzegovina

Annex E – ITU's Gender-Aware Guidelines and Training Curriculum in Telecommunications Policy for Regulatory Agencies and Policy-makers

The 'Gender-Aware Guidelines' provide basic introduction for decision-makers to conduct their work in such a way that both women and men are considered in the process of licensing and regulation.

The guidelines are practical checklists covering different gender issues at the levels of institutions, human resources, capacity building, and the licensing process. These can be used in two ways: 1) as a checklist of issues to consider when making decisions, and 2) as a consultative document to provide ideas on how to mainstream gender in regulatory and licensing agencies.

The primary goal of the 'Training Curriculum on Gender Perspectives in Telecommunications Policy' is to teach telecommunications professionals how to rethink telecommunications policy from a gender perspective and consequently implement gender-aware policies in their work. The curriculum is prepared for an audience already trained in the telecommunications policy field, and focuses primarily on professionals working in regulatory and policy agencies at the governmental level. However, it has also been developed so as to be easily adaptable to the different levels of telecommunications policy knowledge of individuals from different backgrounds (gender, social, economic, etc.). The course covers a wide range of gender issues relating to the telecommunications policy-making process, such as developing pricing and tariffs, licensing, capacity building, network planning and deployment issues, and development of appropriate technologies.

Gender Aware Guidelines for policy-making and regulatory agencies

GENERAL

1. Facilitate and promote the establishment of a Gender Unit within the Regulatory Agency, the Ministry and/or as an inter-agency effort

2. Review, revise or develop new regulations, circulars, issuances and procedures to remove any gender bias.

3. Promote gender analysis as part of the policy process

4. Develop and establish systems to gather gender statistics

5. Dialogue with other national entities

HUMAN RESOURCES

1. Ensure equal hiring opportunities for all women and men, regardless of race, ethnicity, class and age

2. Ensure that a certain percentage, targeting 50 percent, of all supervisory and management positions are occupied by women

3. Develop campaigns to attract women professionals (particularly for technical and decision-making positions)

4. Develop and ensure the existence of appropriate support systems for professional women and men

5. Ensure that there are no wage disparities among the sexes and establish a policy to eliminate any such gaps

TRAINING

1. Ensure equal access to training opportunities

2. Promote gender-awareness training opportunities for women and men

3. Support technical and management programmes that train women professionals and create internship programmes with educational institutions

LICENSING ACTIVITIES

1. A certain percentage of licenses should be awarded to woman-owned companies and/or companies with women in top management positions

2. Develop and market licensing procedures where potential women owners can have access to the information

3. Promote the development of business assistance programmes and partnerships with expertise in assisting women entrepreneurs

4. Develop license award criteria based on social responsibility of the business as well as universal access objectives of the proposed venture

5. Ensure that licenses awarded contain certain conditions to promote gender analysis and mainstreaming for the particular company.

Source: Sonia N. Jorge and the Task Force on Gender Issues, *Gender-aware guidelines for policy-making and regulatory agencies* (Geneva: Telecommunication Development Bureau, ITU, 2001). <www.itu.int/ITU-D/gender/pdf/GenderAwarenessGuidelines.pdf.>

Annex F – UNECE E-Commerce gender strategy

The First UNECE Forum of Women-Entrepreneurs, held on 22 October 2001, adopted a regional strategy for 'Promotion of electronic commerce between women-owned and women-led enterprises region-wide' and a plan for the following implementation activities:

1. Develop a package of training courses on e-business and e-commerce.

2. Set up a UNECE Cyber Network, which would allow women entrepreneurs and women's business associations to:

   - Exchange and receive information on market/product information; the financial resources availability for women entrepreneurs, including start-ups; on national and international fairs; on fellowships, training opportunities, study tours and exchange programmes; and on the availability of services for women's enterprises.

   - Propose their project ideas.

   - Discuss common problems.

3. Promote the creation of cyber business incubators as a training means for women entrepreneurs.

4. Mobilize financial resources to support the above activities by pooling own financial resources and borrowing from national, regional and international financial institutions.

5. Establish an UNECE Euro-Asian Foundation of Women-Entrepreneurs with the following goals:

   - to improve access of women-owned and women-led enterprises to financial resources;

   - to improve women's access to information;

   - to assist women-owned and women-led enterprises in building up new technological capabilities and capacities;

   - to assist women entrepreneurs in developing their business networks;

   - to assist women entrepreneurs in mobilizing the support of the public and private

   - sector.

   - to improve the competitiveness and sustainability of women's businesses in the market

Source: United Nations Economic Commission for Europe (UNECE), *Women's Entrepreneurship in Eastern Europe and CIS Countries*, (Geneva: United Nations, 2002).
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Notable Events with relevance to CEE/CIS in 2003–2004

'Gender and ICTs Evaluation Methodology Training', Association for Progressive Communication Women's Networking Support Programme, Prague, Czech Republic, February 2003.

'Women Crossing the Digital Divide', Diplomatische Akademie, Vienna, Austrian, 27-28 October 2003.

'Information Technology, Transnational Democracy and Gender', Lulei, Sweden 14-16 November, 2003.

'From Bucharest to Tunis' UN inter-agency roundtable at WSIS, Geneva, Switzerland, December 2003.

'Gender & ICT Symposium', Policy Research Centre on Equal Opportunities, Brussels, Belgium, January 20, 2004.

'Rural communities and the Internet', CIVITAS Foundation for Civil Society, Cluj-Napoca, Romania, 5-8 February 2004.