



**„Equal opportunities on the labour market.
Gender Equality and the Fourth
Industrial Revolution.”**

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Republican Trade Union of Employees in Banks, Insurance Companies and Other Financial Organizations of Serbia RS BOFOS in cooperation with European Centre for Workers' Questions (EZA) and with the support of the European Commission organized a seminar with the theme: „Equal opportunities on the labour market Gender Equality and the Fourth Industrial Revolution” which was held, from 2. March to 5. March, 2022 in Belgrade, Serbia.



Including keynote speakers, expert speakers and the participants themselves, the seminar was attended by over 60 people. In addition to participants from Republican Trade Union of Employees in Banks, Insurance Companies and Other Financial Organisations of Serbia- RS BOFOS (Serbia), the seminar was attended by participants from: Lithuanian Labour Federation – LDF (Lithuania), Republican Trade Union of Workers- RSR (Croatia), Croatian Cultural Society Napredak- HKD Napredak (Croatia), World Organization of Workers – WOW (Belgium), Autonomous Trade Union of financial organizations of Montenegro – SFOCG (Montenegro), Confederation of Labour PODKREPA (Bulgaria), Trade union of United Bulgarian Bank UBB (Bulgaria), The Trade Union of Workers from the Financial Organizations of North Macedonia -SFOM (North Macedonia), Independent Trade Union of the Employees of UniCredit Bulbank (Bulgaria), Union of Independent and Autonomous Trade Unions of North Macedonia -UNASM (North Macedonia), Confederatia Nationala Sindicala -Cartel ALFA (Romania), and from Associação para a Formação, Investigação e Desenvolvimento Social dos Trabalhadores - FIDESTRA (Portugal).





The most important aspect of the seminar was the impact of the digitization on gender equality. Seminar participants were discussed about: the Gender Equality Index, gender equality strategies, about going digital and the future of work for women, about new digital technologies and equal conditions for women and men in the labor market, as well about women in information technology, and about women's economic and political participation.

The seminar was opened by **Mara Erdelj, President of RS BOFOS**.

Sigrid Schraml, Secretary General of the European Centre for Workers' Questions – EZA (online) and **Bjørn van Heusden, Executive Secretary, World Organization of Workers - WOW**, addressed to the seminar participants and also congratulated to RS BOFOS on its full EZA membership and wished a successful first self-organized seminar on a topic that is current throughout Europe, including at the UN level.

Hana Škero Kosić, Human Resources Director at Erste Bank a.d. Novi Sad talked about why it is important for companies to deal with this topic, from the employer's point of view, while **Milana Rikanović, Head of UN Women Serbia** had an introductory speech on the topic from the perspective of this important institution that participants visited the next day.





Andja Petrović



Irina Semjonova



Veselina Starčeva

Andja Petrović, Expert Associate, The Coordination Body for Gender Equality of the Government of the Republic of Serbia expounded on the subject: „Measuring Gender Equality in Serbia, Gender Equality Index“. She said that the Gender Equality Index is a unique measuring instrument that synthesizes the complexity of gender equality as a multidimensional problem into data that is easy to use and easy to interpret, and that the Index consists of 6 key domains: labor, money, knowledge, time, power and health. As an important fact, **Andja Petrović** pointed out that Serbia is the first country outside the EU to develop the Gender Equality Index (2016). She also stated that women in Serbia use the Internet and computers less than men, but also that the digital skills of the people of Serbia are lower than the EU average.

- Among ICT graduates in Serbia, 28.6% are women, which is above the EU-27 average (20.5%). In Serbia, 37.6% of part-time workers on online platforms are women. Serbian women's workers on platform are more educated than men, but earn less, said Andja Petrovic, adding that women in ICT occupations in Serbia earn 9.1% less than men, said **Andja Petrović**.

Irina Semjonova, Expert of the Project “Practical Implementation and Improving Supervision of Labor Protection Regulations” Free Trade Union Confederation of Latvia, LBAS presented Strategy for achieving gender equality.

As some of the main problems faced by women in the labor market, Irina Semyonova stated that there are more economically inactive women than men, that women are more represented in sectors with relatively low wages, and that the difference in wages in the private sector is greater than in the public sector. She also pointed out that the difference in salaries between men and women varies with age - it is usually smaller at the beginning of working life, and that it increases over time.

- The difference in salaries between men and women means that older women are at a higher risk of poverty - in the EU, women over 65 receive an average of 30% lower pension than men, said **Irina Semjonova**.

When it comes to the strategy for achieving gender equality, at the company level, these can be collective agreements that include gender equality issue, good communication within the company, transparent and fair remuneration system, flexible employment policy, work-life balance, opportunities for teleworking, promoting diversity and inclusion, zero tolerance of discrimination, gender balance among employees, more opportunities for men to care for children ...

And when it comes to the strategy for achieving gender equality at the state level, there are: laws, policies and regulations that create a gender-neutral environment, better social protection for women, improving women's representation ..., said **Irina Semjonova**.

Veselina Starcheva, Trade Union expert from Confederation of Labour PODKREPA Bulgaria has spoke on the subject: „Going Digital: The Future of Work for Women“. She especially emphasized that the gender gap increased under the influence of the pandemic. According to the World Economic Forum's 2021 Global Gender Gap Report: gender gap will not disappear until 2288. As for the representation of women in politics, the gender gap has worsened with the pandemic. Women are holding only 26.1% of parliamentary seats and 22.6% of ministerial positions worldwide, said Veselina Starcheva and stressed that in order to build a more equal, inclusive future, free of gender discrimination, we need to have a complex gender equality approach starting from the childhood, continuing with the education, family, work, society...

When it comes to the future of work for women, the opportunities for new technologies and digitalisation for women can be positive: women can acquire new skills; they can also generate new sources of income combined with flexibility; they can easily connect, work from home ...

Veselina Starcheva emphasized that only the work environment should find more options for women, because the gender difference usually occurs when a woman decides to start a family, because then she is less focused on her career due to her family obligations. This can be addressed at the work environment level by creating more flexible options for women, including teleworking.





Vesna Mamić



Biljana Simić



Marija Parun Kolin

Vesna Mamić, President of the Croatian Telecommunications Trade Union talked about “New digital technologies and equal conditions for women and men in the labor market.” She emphasized that the STEM sector (science, technology, engineering and mathematics) is dominated by men. For every 6 new jobs in the STEM sector, women get one job, while men get 5 jobs. Women publish fewer professional papers, are paid less for their research and do not progress as far as men in their careers, said **Vesna Mamić**.

In addition, there are external factors that affect the participation of women in the STEM sector, such as family responsibilities, work environment and lack of career growth, said **Vesna Mamić**, citing UNESCO data. - Some believe that digitalization will economies empower women for entrepreneurship. Flexible working hours, work platforms and e-commerce also enable women in rural areas, who have so far been denied access to the labor market, to find employment. On the contrary, there are fears that the digitalization and relocation of jobs from the predominantly female sector will further deepen the employment gap between men and women, said **Vesna Mamić**.

Biljana Simić Director in the Consulting Department, Deloitte Advisory d.o.o. Belgrade talked about: „Equal opportunities on the labour market. Women in Information Technology (IT)”. She emphasized that large IT companies are working slowly but continuously to increase the number of employed women. So while in 2019, the share of women in the total number of employees was 30.8%, and the share of women in relation to the total number of employees in IT was 22.4%, in the world, this year, that number rose to 32.90% for the share women in the total number of employees, ie 25% for the share of women in relation to the total number of employees in the IT sector.

Speaking about the results of the survey on the choice of IT profession, **Biljana Simić** emphasized that respondents around the world, as reasons why women do not choose professions within the IT sector, state: lack of mentors, lack of female role models in IT, gender discrimination in the workplace, unequal opportunities for advancement compared to men, as well as the difference in earnings compared to men for the same skills.



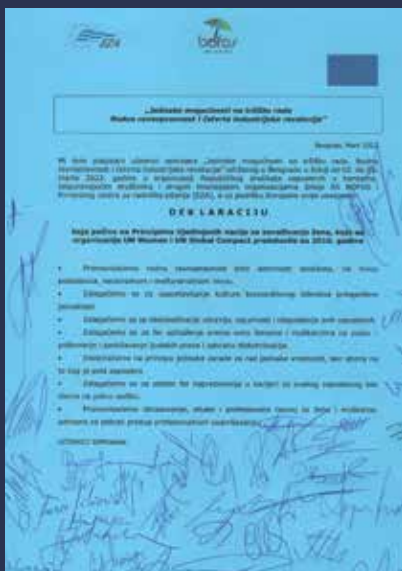
Marija Parun Kolin, Senior Social Researcher & Consultant, Center for Sociological Research at the Institute of Social Sciences talked about: Equal opportunities on the labour market. Economic and political participation of women in Serbia. She pointed out that more women than men enroll and graduate from colleges and universities: 57% of enrolled students and 59% of graduates in 2019. In the same year, more women (57%) than men (43%) received their doctorates. Recent data point to the growing digital literacy of women as it equates with men. The employment rate in relation to the total number of people over the age of 15 is 50.0%, which is 42.2% lower for women, while the employment rate for men is 58.4%. Self-employment is twice as high among men as among women 25% of men and 14% of women. Women earn less (11% less) than men even though they have better qualifications, said **Marija Parun Kolin** and added that lower salaries are a consequence of choosing a profession - data on employees by occupation and gender show that men are managers, officials, legislators in 67% in compared to 33% of women in the same occupations. She said women are more represented than men in the: humanistic sciences, arts, health, social care, journalism, while men make up the majority of all graduates in engineering, manufacturing and construction (65%), math and computer science (54%)... - Although the participation of women in new technologies and the IT sector has been increasing recently, incentive measures are needed to reduce the gender gap in these areas, said **Marija Parun Kolin**. She cited the following as the main influences threatening women's career opportunities: stereotypes about "men's" and "women's" jobs; inherited inequalities and traditional inferiority in the new social context; discrimination in the admission of candidates, weak support for social policy, traditionalist values and the model of women's sacrifice and care...





Seminar participants adopted Declaration based on the United Nations Principles for the Empowerment of Women in which they emphasized that they will promote gender equality through union activities, at the employer level, nationally and internationally, and advocate for fair treatment of all women and men at work - respect for and support of human rights and non-discrimination. They stressed that it is necessary to strive in order to establish a culture of corporate leadership tailored to equality and to ensure the health, safety and well-being of all employees. They also stressed that it is necessary to insist on the principle of equal pay for work of equal value, regardless of the gender of the employee, and on a system of fair career advancement for every employee regardless of gender difference, as well as to promote education, training and professional development for women and men, ie for equal access to professional development.

Everything that was emphasized in the declaration can be applied through negotiations towards the conclusion of a collective agreement, monitoring the implementation of the collective agreement, and through the views of the unions that they express in public, in order to promote gender equality.





On Friday, March 4, the participants visited the UN Women Office in Serbia, United Nations Agency for Gender Equality and Women's Empowerment. At the UN Women Office in Serbia, participants were welcomed by the **UN Serbia Resident Coordinator François Jacob, Technical Project Analyst Natalija Ostojić, Gender Responsive Budgeting Programme Coordinator UN Women Olja Janković Leković, and Project Officer UN Women, Nevena Marčeta.**

UN Serbia Resident Coordinator **François Jacob** introduced the participants to the activities of the UN Women Office in Serbia, namely: strategic planning, development of economics, partnerships, development of finance, data and results management and reporting, communication and advocacy. During the visit, the participants were given brochures: "Economic Value of the Unpaid Care Work in the Republic of Serbia"; and "Sustainable development goals". **RS BOFOS President Mara Erdelj** handed over to the hosts from the UN Women Office in Serbia the Declaration adopted and signed by the participants.

During the visit, they discussed whether women would lose their jobs more during fourth industrial revolution and whether their jobs would be replaced by technology that is cheaper and faster, as well as whether women are sufficiently computer literate and ready to switch to digitally mediated work and to future occupations for which we do not know exactly what it will look like.

It is important to point out that the cooperation of RS BOFOS with The Coordination Body for Gender Equality of the Government of the Republic of Serbia, as well as with the UN Women Office in Serbia will continue in the future on these and other common issues.



The seminar was covered by the media, with a report on the Radio Television of Serbia (RTS), as well as in the media in the region, in cooperation with participants from the Croatian Cultural Society Napredak - HKD Napredak:

<https://glaskulture.com/i-hkd-napredak-potpisao-deklaraciju-temeljenu-na-nacelima-ujedinjenih-naroda-za-osnazivanje-zena-koju-su-predstavili-un-women-i-un-global-compact-2010/>

HKD Napredak potpisao Deklaraciju temeljenu na načelima Ujedinjenih naroda za osnaživanje žena koju su predstavili UN Women i UN Global Compact 2010. - Hrvatski Glasnik

<https://www.vecernji.ba/kultura/i-hkd-napredak-potpisao-deklaraciju-temeljenu-na-nacelima-un-za-osnazivanje-zena-1569024>





CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

1. It is necessary to continuously improve the knowledge and competencies of trade union representatives in the field of gender equality, through various forms of education. Also, it is necessary to work on better informing employed women about laws and other legal acts that guarantee labor rights, and in relation to gender equality.
2. When it comes to gender stereotypes and prejudices, union representatives can also play a significant role in reducing them, both at the company level and at the sectoral and national levels. Trade unions can improve their actions with actions aimed at breaking the taboo on the reservation of managerial positions for men.
3. Trade unions need to be fully prepared to face the modern challenges of the labor market, which arise from the impact of digitalisation. Female employees should be encouraged to acquire new knowledge necessary for work in the era of the fourth industrial revolution.
4. The conditions of digitalization do not change the need for social dialogue. The task for unions is to promote social dialogue with issues that are gaining in importance in this digital age.
5. The issue of gender equality needs to be incorporated into collective agreements and other company acts.
6. Trade unions should also be prepared to address issues of gender equality and unequal wages when it comes to collective bargaining, so the above-mentioned education of trade unions in this regard is crucial. Trade unions should monitor quarterly parameters related to gender equality issues (representation of both gender in management, wages, etc.), as well as to provide proposals to the employer for corrective measures and activities related to gender equality.