



S E C R E T A R I A T

## **International Girls in ICT Day**

26 April 2012

### **Introductory Speech**

**Dinka Živalj, Spokesperson, Regional Cooperation Council (RCC)**

- We at the **RCC** are glad to have co-organized today's event. I **wish to thank** Damir Hadžić, **Minister** of Communication and Transport of Bosnia and Herzegovina and the Ministry for the initiative and all the other **partners** for contributing. And finally to **female students, their teachers and school directors** for recognizing the value of this initiative.
- I'm also glad we have so many great **role models** right here in the room: from politics, public administration, business and non-governmental sector.
- When I was your age, I was a student of **Secondary School of Mathematics and Computer Science** and thought it would be my profession. However, life had a different plan for me but I still vividly remember the excitement and creative possibilities such professions offer.
- **ICT** play **an indispensable role** in the economic and social development of a country but also in improving the quality of citizens' lives. This field currently plays a key role in advancement of each country, its competitiveness and productivity and in generating a lot of jobs.
- However, **women are significantly underrepresented** in the area of ICT, not only in our region but in a wider context as well. Thinking about the

main global ICT leaders, the first to come to my mind are all men - Zuckerberg, Gates, Jobs, Brin and Page – and unfortunately not one woman...

- **Researches** show that women have the same preferences and competence as their male colleagues in science and technology subjects at age 15 years old. However, a large majority of women choose a professional career in sectors of activity other than ICT. The decision of women to pursue other education and professional paths can be attributed to different social, economic and personal factors.
- How ICT subjects are taught in schools has a major impact on girls' attitudes towards these subjects, according to some studies which found that girls considered ICT subjects to be too theoretical and boring. It is therefore necessary to **make the education process more interesting** to encourage girls to enter the world of ICT in larger numbers.
- How do we get girls more involved in ICT?
- What the Ministry is doing today is a good example – **bring successful business people, primarily women, closer to educational process and students**, both male and female, in order to get the first-hand information that will encourage the students to pursue ICT professions. This is also the way to dispel inaccurate images of ICT careers through direct experience with positive role models.
- It is necessary to **start early** and introduce students to a wide variety of computing opportunities. Integrate computer use across the curriculum to invite more girls into technology through a broad range of subjects.
- Make explicit to students the **connections between ICT subject content and the world of work**. I can hardly think of any aspect of our lives that isn't affected by ICT. Also the importance of engaging parents in this process is key.

- Communicate to students the information that **all jobs in the future will involve the use of more and more ICT**. If I look at job postings half the jobs advertised are IT jobs, and this is during an economic downturn.
- **RCC** recognizes the establishment of Information Society as a key regional priority. RCC seeks to collaborate and support regional programs that promote an open and competitive market for information society, strengthen innovation and investment in ICT research and education, thus promoting growth and jobs.
- I hope that the **number of girls to pursue the ICT path will increase** after today's event and that stimulating educational system and family ambiance as well as the general social environment will also contribute to this. I wish also to **thank representatives of media** who recognized the importance of this topic and through their work contribute to larger involvement of girls in these professions. With this alone – the event is a success.
- Thank you.