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Gender mainstreaming and Media
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Membership Card nr. 2 : Status of women journalists in Croatia

Media is, or could be, one of the most suitable and appropriate medium for any country wanting to mainstream gender into public life, because it has the power to produce attitudes, perpetuate the status quo, or promote change. Therefore, media remains an important tool in constructing, reconstructing, and deconstructing the place of women in the modern society. Gender sensitive media is crucial to effectively challenge gender-based discrimination in the society and gender-based stereotyping that is commonly found in the public, private, local, national, and international media. This would not only foster gender equality in access to the media but also ensure equal participation in the consumption.

Two areas of gender mainstreaming are important: gender mainstreaming within the media institutions and gender mainstreaming through the media. The two are interlinked but gender mainstreaming within the media is strategic for the effective implementation of gender mainstreaming through the media.¹

To re-examine both areas, Center for Women's Studies has last year organised, within the manifestation Days of Marija Jurić Zagorka (26.11.-2.12.2007.), the manifestation that aimed to re-evaluate the life and work of Marija Jurić Zagorka, the most famous Croatian popular writer and the first women professional journalist and activist for women's rights, the Round table (in cooperation with the Croatian Journalist Association) **Women Journalists Today: What had Changed from Zagorka's Times?**

On the occasion of the 50th anniversary of Zagorka's death, along with international conference that brought 'new reading of Zagorka', The Center, wanted to promote our first women professional journalist as well as to open questions and discussion on gender and media.

Zagorka, a co-founder (with Slavko Amadej Vodvarka) of the Croatian Journalist Association, with membership card nr. 2, was founder of women's magazines: *Ženski list* (1928-40) and *Hrvatica* (1938 - 44), was an excellent example of women professional journalist and her struggle to gain status in the men's world of

¹ Gender determines power, status, and control over resources, development and benefits in our society. Media reflect cultural values and stereotypes about gender and reproduce cultural views of gender in individuals. Media portray women, men, and relationships between the sexes/gender relationships in ways that mirror widely shared understandings, preserves information and images but also creates ones. To a significant extent, media control what we see, know and think by deciding what programs to air, what news stories to feature, how to represent issues and events, and how to present/represent women and men. By selectively regulating what we see, media influence how we perceive ourselves and gender issues, and men and women in general. Better understand the elements, implications, consequences of media influence and benefits of gender mainstreaming into the media is needed.

journalism. Already in 1906 international media wrote about Zagorka (including *Figaro*) as woman correspondent from Hungarian Parliament and she was awarded for her journalism on her 10th anniversary. Her colleagues in Croatia did not even mention it!

Her attitude toward discrimination of women in professional life and work and in daily life, and her ability to promote gender equality, has inspired new generation of women to promote her as a role model.

While the occasion was celebratory, our aim was to examine what (if?) has changed from Zagorka's times for the women journalists as well as to see how media mainstream gender.

For the round table we invited women journalists covering gender issues in our media to exchange experience and talk about their position/situation/status in their daily work as journalists, especially work connected to the promotion of women's issues and experience regarding gender mainstreaming and women's human rights.

Media professionals need to have knowledge of gender and have to be gender aware. This would mean that they should be able to identify problems arising from gender inequality and discrimination, even if these are not very evident or are 'hidden'. It also requires that professional journalists should have a high level of gender consciousness (as specified in international and national documents on gender equality CEDAW, Croatian Law on Equality, etc.). In addition, the media environment has to be gender sensitive to be able to respond to differences in gender roles, responsibilities, challenges and opportunities for all.

While there does not exist gender statistics on women in journalism, there is assumption that there are more women journalists than men employed or working in the media, but with more men on the executive level (editors, editors in chief, desk editors, etc.).

All of the invited women promote gender issues in their field of expertise, some of them has been awarded by Women's Network Croatia Maja Miles Award², yearly presented on the occasion of March the 8th.

There were list of questions we wanted to share/to be discussed, such as:

Is there resemblance in status/life between women editors and columnists, editors in chief or desk editors, journalist running own TV or radio programs with Zagorka?

Are women journalists women journalists or journalists?

What have changed in their status since Zagorka's times?

Who has 'the right' to be an editor in chief? Is it necessarily man's job?

What is/could be gendered topic/issue?

Does feminisation of journalism brought/brings greater power for women in media?

Are there women's and men's topic *per se*?

Is woman journalist changing/challenging 'the picture of women' in media?

Is there space for feminism in media?

² *Maja Miles Award* for gender sensitive journalism is given by Women's Network Croatia since 2002. godine, and was awarded to: Tanja Šimić, Krešimir Volarić i Snježana Matejčić (2002), Petra Neuner, Branka Žužić i magazine Zarez (editorial board) (2003), Nataša Petrinjak i Marija Molnar (2004), Mirjana Rakić i Branka Valentić (2006), and Orlanda Obad i Irena Frlan (2007).

The round table gathered, for the first time, according to the journalists, most prominent women journalists who work in different media (daily newspaper, magazines, radio, TV, internet) to the 'same table'. Invited journalists to join the panel were: Koraljka Dilić, free lance, Ana Gruden, Zaposlena, Branimira Lazarin, Jutarnji list, Zaposlena, Sniježana Matejčić, Glas Istre, Sanja Modrić, Jutarnji list, Marija Molnar, Glas Slavonije, Petra Neuner HTV, Orlanda Obad, Jutarnji list, Morana Paliković Gruden, Zaposlena, Nataša Petrinjak, R1 portal, Jasmina Popović, Večernji list, Ivana Sansević, H-alter, Gordana Simonović, dopisnica DW, Nevenka Sudar, web majstorica, Tanja Šimić, HTV, Branka Valentić, Vjesnik (by alphabetical order).

Round table was structured so that first women presented themselves to get to know each others better by describing their own 'travel' into the journalism (as 'catch line' was used Zagorka's runaway from her forced marriage, and her arrival by train to Zagreb with a firm decision to become a journalist – 'travel to freedom')
Next round aimed to get thoughts/answers to the set of 'individual' questions addressed to certain women and questions range from:

Who decides which issues are 'legitimate? Is feminism a 'questionable topic' and gender politics just substitute issue? What has changed from Zagorka's time in connection to 'women's question'? (Branimira Lazarin, daily paper, covering culture issues.

What does it mean, and how does it feel to be 'free lance' journalist? (security/insecurity of job; work for several 'employers') What type of security does women journalists need?(Nataša Petrinjak, free lance journalist)

Promoting or 'smuggling' women's themes? (Petra Neuner – TV editor, she produced reportage on the 8th of March for the main TV news)

What does it mean to 'inherit' magazine from the mother as we 'inherited responsibility from Zagorka'? (Ana Gruden , editor in chief of women's magazine *Zaposlena*, her mother Morana Paliković Gruden was founder and editor in chief earlier)

Status of women journalist in local media? What is responsible journalism? (Marija Molnar, local newspaper, she reported from Afghanistan)

„Glass ceiling “ for women journalist – From journalist to editor in chief (Tanja Šimić, TV - under suspension)

'Right men on the right place' (Zagorka was called) Women writing on politics - How hard is to get own political column (Jasmina Popović, daily paper, political columnist, fallows president of the Republic on his trip and advocate for women in politics)

Journalism and gender mainstreaming journalism - On politics/work of Media Watch, Governmental Office for Gender Equality (Sniježana Matejčić, local newspaper, member of the Office Committee for Media)

Is the position of editor in chief men's privilege? Women's euro is 75% (Sanja Modrić, columnist in the daily paper)

Writing for the 'chosen ones' and caring for the Others (Ivana Sansević web magazine covering civil society)

Women journalists and politics – How does media cover women in politics (Morana Paliković Gruden, editor/politician)

New media and women (Nevenka Sudar, web master)

Gender sensitive journalism and political influence; Influencing the politics of own newspaper (how not to print adds for sexual exploitation of women) (Orlanda Obad, daily newspaper)

How to create gender politics – ‘smuggling’ topics or legitimate agenda? (Gordana Simonović, radio, news editor, political reporter)

As the ‘third round’ women talked about their professional association ‘ Association of Journalists – and possible Women’s session³ that might represent their specific needs and issues.

The round table resulted in fruitful discussion, mapping the position/situation in the status of women journalists as well as it disclosed media (state or privately owned) as lacking gender specific politics.

Often, the justification for perpetuating gender inequality, discrimination and bias in the media is under the umbrella that the public determines what the media covers, or that the media is a neutral institution and reflects what the people want, insinuating that the media is value-free. Some pertinent questions that emerge for reflection included: Can professional journalists claim gender neutrality in their thoughts and attitudes? Is the public a homogenous group of people with progressive perception of gender? Is it a myth or reality that the media is value-free?

Unfortunately, gender equity is far from the reality in media, particularly concerning gendered representations, stereotyping, and the perpetuation of male dominance.

Under-representation of women, whether in radio, television, newspapers was obvious in their reflections, and women were not only distorted in numerical representation but also in terms of the reality. Males outnumber females in stories newscasts, visibility/interviews; women tend to appear in supporting roles rather than as main characters. Even then women and men are often portrayed in stereotyped and polarized roles - women are the care givers, they are unable to handle positions of authority, and are sex objects, while men are decision-makers, politicians, and managers in-charge of state affairs.

Women in charge of media, television writers, executives, producers, managers of newspapers, newspapers publishers, film directors are still few or nonexistent. If *more* women occupy such strategic positions of authority at executive levels, media might/would offer more positive portrayals of women. However we were not surprised that women media professionals produced gender insensitive programs as well - being gender sensitive and promote gender equality requires skills, habits and determination that need to be cultured and supported.

Stereotypical portrayals of women and men - our media have continued to present women and men in stereotypical ways that create an artificial ‘glass ceiling’ in the

³ Croatian Journalist Association is giving yearly award named after M.J. Zagorka Marija Juric Award for press, radio and TV *Nagrada Marija Jurić Zagorka* za tisak, radio ili TV. Since the establishing of the award (1995) following women journalist got it:

Jasna Babić, Zorana Bajtić, Zinka Bardić, Jelena Berković, Višnja Biti, Tanja Božić, Jasmina Božinovska-Živalj, Božica Brkan, Andrea Čakić, Sanja Despot, Ivana Dragičević, Dubravka Družinec Ricijaš, Dijana Glavina, Giga Gračan, Gordana Grbić, Dalija Grin, Ana Jergović, Branka Jovičić, Morana Kasapović, Vlasta Kovač, Anamarija Kronast, Slavica Lukić, Silvija Luks, Nataša Magdalenic-Bantić, Ljiljana Marić, Darija Marjanović, Vasva Mazele, Irene Mestrovich, Sanja Mikleušić, Sanja Modrić, Nives Nedved, Orlanda Obad, Morana Panjkota, Tena Perišin, Ivana Petrović, Sanja Pražen, Mirjana Rakić, Renata Rašović, Morana Sušec, Silvija Šeparović, Nataša Škaričić, Ivana Šubarić-Hedl, Kristina Turčin, Nela Valerjev

perception of the possibilities and potentials of women and men. Media have created dichotomous, often polarized images of women as well. The media are consistent with the traditional views of femininity even if they are working women or hold posts of responsibility. Men (and media) continue to see themselves as powerful, leaders, managers of people, breadwinners, sexually aggressive, authoritarian and not willing to share private and public space. The reverse is true for women - they are depicted as minors, passive, incompetent, dependent or their independence and assertiveness are likely to be seen as bad or they are labeled as frustrated feminists. All such stereotypes distort how the different genders see each other and media just perpetuates 'the picture'.

Today in Croatia gender equality in media depends mainly on individual journalists efforts, based on their beliefs and commitments to mainstream it but media professionals must analyze and be critical of messages covered in the media in order to understand the implications such media have on women and men, and gender relations. This requires that professionals enhance their gender capacity so that they are able to promote media messages that strengthen gender equality.

To conclude: Media professionals regardless of their sex must have knowledge on gender and should be gender aware. This would mean that they should be able to identify problems arising from gender inequality and discrimination, even if these are not very evident or are "hidden". It also requires that professional journalists should have a high level of gender consciousness. In addition, the media environment has to be gender sensitive which means that media has to implement and respect all international/national documents that affirm gender equality.

p.s.

As a result, women journalist supported the Center's appeal to the city of Zagreb to buy Zagorka's apartment and establish memorial place, as an active place for researching women's history and promote women's creativity. The City of Zagreb bought the apartment in December 2008, stressing the Center's active role in reaching this goal.