Digital Single Market

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Neelie's Digital Champions and Young Advisers help women learn coding

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Slovenian and Bulgarian Digital Champions are taking to a unique initiative from Finland to their countries: "Rails Girls". Initially launched by Finish Digital Champion, Linda Liukas, this grassroots operation gives women their first experience in software craftsmanship. Between 31 May and 1 June, women will learn coding in Sofia (Bulgaria) and Maribor (Slovenia) with the help of Digital Champions and Young Advisers.

[1]

Bulgarian women think coding is not only a "man's job"

The event in Sofia is organised by Gergana Passy, Digital Champion of Bulgaria [2], and a group of enthusiastic volunteers, including Young Advisor Vasil Terziev [3]. The opportunity attracted great interest with over 180 candidates for 50 places. Now, the organisers plan to repeat the experience in Sofia and around the country.

Explaining the reasons why she took the initiative, Bulgarian Digital Champion Gergana Passy said: "The philosophy of Rails Girls is that the internet is a place for everybody. However, girls are often lagging behind or are under-represented. That is why actions are needed in to encourage girls to get involved and to open the door to a world of applications and programming".

The profile of the women who applied varies a lot: from students and teachers to marketing specialists and mothers on maternity leave. The training will be given by specialists who volunteered to be part of this great idea.

Rails Girls Sofia is organised in partnership with Telerik, Superhosting, Live and GitHub.

Slovenia: More than 800 women interested in coding

Maribor will also host a similar workshop from 31 May – 1 June. This is the third Rails Girls event in Slovenia and it is organised in partnership with the Faculty of Electrical Engineering and Computer Science, Maribor.

The initiative for the first Rails Girls Ljubljana workshop in Slovenia came from Aleš Špetič, Slovenian Digital Champion [4]. He recruited a team of volunteers, including Young Advisor Alja Isaković [5], who ran the first workshop in December 2012.

"The demand for the first workshop, 586 applications, surpassed all expectations. It was a success, therefore we organised another one in March this year. The March edition was special because it was targeted at high school students and organised in partnership with the Faculty of Computer and Information Science, Ljubljana. This gave teenage girls the opportunity to speak directly with female programmers about their studies and work as a programmer", said Alja Isakovič.

In total, the organisers received 878 applications to take part in the three workshops. This shows that Slovenian women are taking a real interest in programming.
The event is supported by local companies like Silikon Gardens.

Age doesn't matter

Women in Bulgaria and Slovenia proved themselves to be very interested in programming, no matter their age.
In Bulgaria, the youngest applicant was 15 years of age and the oldest was 53. In Slovenia, the age range varied from 14 to 64. More statistics are available here [6]

What is Rails Girls?

During a one-day workshop the girls are guided by a group of local volunteers through the lifecycle of a web application from concept to code. The event is open-sourced and has spread until now into over 90 cities around the world ranging from Belo Horizonte to Berlin, from Tokyo to Dar Es Salam.

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[4] http://www.alesspetic.si
[5] https://ec.europa.eu/digital-single-market/node/50628
[6] http://visual.ly/rails-girls-ljubljana-december-2012-english-version