

WOMEN 4CYBER
EUROPEAN CYBER SECURITY ORGANISATION
GREECE

W4C GR CYBERSECURITY WOMAN PROFILE OF THE MONTH

INTERVIEW WITH RANIA!

Name: *Ourania (Rania) Siorovigka*
Job Position: *Acting Head of the Department of Planning and Information Systems Support Directorate of Transparency and e-Governance Region of Peloponnese And Chief Information Security Officer – Region of Peloponnese*
Current Employer: *Region of Peloponnese*
Cybersecurity areas of expertise: *Cybersecurity training and awareness, Cybersecurity Governance, Cybersecurity Policy and Strategy Making, Risk Management, Resilience*
Previous career(s): *Special Advisor to the Regional Governor on Information Technology, Telecommunications and Networks (Region of Peloponnese)*
Educational background: *BSc, Telecommunications Science and Technology, University of the Peloponnese, MSc, Advanced Telecommunication Systems and Networks, University of the Peloponnese, MSc, Organization and Management of Public Enterprises, Services and Organizations, University of the Peloponnese, National School of Public Administration and Local Government (EKDDA), Department of Digital Policy, PhD Candidate in Cybersecurity, University of the Peloponnese*
Other interests/hobbies: *Photography, reading*
Favourite quote: *Work hard in silence, let success make the noise!*
Network with me: *https://www.linkedin.com/in/rania-siorovigka-229b1a42/*

Intro & Inspirational

1. Which values are guiding your life and work?

If I had to single out the values that guide my life and my professional path, I would say integrity, consistency, responsibility, and continuous development. I deeply believe in the power of knowledge and in the importance of constantly evolving, especially in a field such as cybersecurity, which changes every day. At the same time, I consider it very important to act with ethics and respect toward the people around us, to create an environment of collaboration and trust, and to try, through our work, to leave a positive impact.

2. What's the most important life lesson you've learned?

The most important lesson I have learned so far is not to be afraid to try. To dare to enter the game, knowing that sometimes I will win and other times I will lose. In my personal and professional journey, I have understood that growth does not come only through successes, but mainly through experiences, changes, and even failures. Every new challenge, whether academic or professional, gave me the opportunity to discover abilities that I perhaps did not know I had. Many of the moments that initially scared me were ultimately the ones that shaped me the most as a person and as a professional.

3. How do you define success? And what's the best advice that you can give about success?

For me, success is not only a professional position or a title. It is to continuously evolve, to remain faithful to your values, and to have a positive impact on the people around you and on society. It is also important to be able to look back and feel proud not only of what you achieved, but also of the way in which you achieved it.

If I had to give one piece of advice regarding success, it would be not to compare our journey with that of others. Everyone has their own pace and their own challenges. We should invest in ourselves, not be afraid to step out of our comfort zone, and remember that many times the greatest opportunities are found exactly there.

4.Do you think your job makes a difference? How?

Yes, I truly believe that my work makes a difference. Working in the field of digital governance and cybersecurity in the public sector, I realize every day that behind every system, every process, and every security policy are citizens and their trust in the state.

Cybersecurity is not only about technology or data protection. It is about ensuring the continuity of public services, protecting critical infrastructures, and creating a safe digital environment for everyone.

What motivates me the most is the feeling that I contribute, even to a small extent, to the creation of a more modern, resilient, and secure public sector. In an era where digital threats are constantly increasing, our work becomes even more important, because ultimately cybersecurity is above all a matter of trust and protection of people.

5.What is the best and the worst piece of advice you received? (+How did you unlearn the latter or use it to your favour?)

The best advice I have received comes from my mother, who taught me not to be afraid to show who I truly am and to always try to become the best version of myself. It is advice that accompanies me in every step of my life, personally and professionally, and I am deeply grateful to her for that.

The worst advice I received was in the first year of my studies, when a professor essentially suggested that I change my professional direction, because he believed that computer science was not suitable for women who want to start a family at some point.

Fortunately, I did not listen to him. On the contrary, that moment served as additional motivation for me to continue evolving and to prove, first to myself and then to others, that our choices should not be limited by stereotypes. Today, as a woman, wife, mother, and professional in the field of cybersecurity, I can say with certainty that family and professional development can not only coexist, but often one gives strength to the other.

6.Can you name a book that has influenced your journey?

A book that has particularly influenced me is Thinking, Fast and Slow by Daniel Kahneman. Through this book, I realized how often we, as people, make decisions based on quick, intuitive judgments, and how important it is to cultivate critical thinking and the ability to examine data more deeply.

I believe that this approach is particularly important in the field of cybersecurity as well, where we are called every day to assess risks, make decisions under conditions of uncertainty, and deal with complex problems. This book reminded me that the right decision is not always the fastest one, but the one that is based on thought, analysis, and the careful evaluation of data.

Cybersecurity General

7. How can someone stand out in a competitive cybersecurity job market?

Cybersecurity is a field that is constantly evolving and, in my opinion, what makes someone stand out is not only technical knowledge or certifications. They need to have the “bug.” They need to truly want it, to be interested in it, to have curiosity and the willingness to keep learning continuously.

Cybersecurity is not a profession where, at some point, you say, “I have learned everything.” Every day, new technologies, new threats, and new challenges appear. If this continuous learning journey does not excite you, it is difficult to remain active and grow in the field.

Equally important are the so-called “soft skills.” Communication, collaboration, critical thinking, and the ability to translate complex technical issues into understandable and applicable solutions are skills that make the difference.

I would also advise young professionals not to be afraid to step out of their comfort zone, to participate in communities and activities in the field, to take initiatives, and to continuously invest in their development. In cybersecurity, knowledge is necessary, but what truly makes a professional stand out is passion for the subject and the willingness to keep evolving continuously.

8. What trends in the technology & cybersecurity industry are you keeping an eye on for the future?

If I had to single out two areas, they would definitely be Artificial Intelligence and modern risk management methodologies.

Artificial Intelligence is already changing the way we operate, both in the detection and response to threats and in the way threats themselves are evolving.

At the same time, I believe that effective risk management will become increasingly important. In a world where more and more services, data, and infrastructures are moving to the cloud and the digital ecosystem is becoming more and more complex, cybersecurity is no longer only a matter of technology. It is mainly a matter of strategy, resilience, and proper risk management.

9. What is the most common mistake someone could make when applying for a role in the cybersecurity industry? What do you believe makes a successful candidate/application?

I think that one of the most common mistakes is for someone to focus exclusively on technical knowledge, certifications, or the tools they know, without highlighting their willingness to learn and their real connection with the field.

A successful application, in my opinion, is one that highlights not only technical skills, but also the way of thinking, the willingness to collaborate, and the candidate's genuine interest in the field. Passion for cybersecurity and the continuous desire for growth are often just as important as the knowledge someone already has.

10.Do you believe that there are misconceptions people make about working in the cybersecurity industry?

Yes, and perhaps the biggest misconception is that cybersecurity is a purely technical field and that it concerns only programmers or people who "write code" and do hacking.

Cybersecurity is a multidimensional field that combines technology with strategy, risk management, governance, compliance with regulatory frameworks, but also communication and people management.

Behind every technological solution there are processes, policies, decisions, and, above all, people. That is why the field of cybersecurity needs professionals with different backgrounds, different skills, and different ways of thinking.

11.Which concrete recommendations would you give to women who want to change career and join cybersecurity?

First, I would tell them to believe in themselves and not to think that it is "too late" for a career change or that they need to know everything before taking the first step.

Cybersecurity is a field that offers many different paths and needs people with different experiences and skills. It is not necessary for someone to come from a purely technical background to be able to contribute meaningfully to the field.

I would advise them to invest in knowledge, to look for communities and people who can inspire and guide them, and, above all, not to be afraid to try. Many times, the biggest obstacles are the ones we place on ourselves.

My own journey has taught me that continuous learning, persistence, and the willingness to step out of your comfort zone can open paths that you may never have imagined.

12.And any tips for those who are still very young and might be considering it? Can they start "preparing" somehow from early on?

Of course they can prepare from an early age, but I would say that the most important thing is not to start by learning complex technologies. It is to cultivate their curiosity and learn to think analytically.

Cybersecurity is a field that requires continuous learning, problem-solving, and adaptability. Young people can, from an early age, acquire basic knowledge around technology, become familiar with how the internet works, and develop skills such as critical thinking and the responsible use of technology.

Above all, I would tell them not to be afraid to experiment, to ask questions, and to explore new subjects. Curiosity and the willingness to learn are perhaps the most important assets for a future path in cybersecurity.

13.What skills do you think are not "most important", as this is very limiting, but skills that are key for a career in cybersecurity no matter the specific profile?

First, analytical thinking and problem-solving ability. In cybersecurity, we are called every day to manage complex situations and make decisions in environments that are often characterized by uncertainty.

Equally important are adaptability and the willingness for continuous learning. The field evolves so quickly that no one can rely only on the knowledge they already have.

Finally, I consider communication and collaboration skills particularly important. Cybersecurity is not only technology. It is people, processes, and collaboration between different teams and specialties. The ability to explain complex issues in a simple way and to collaborate effectively with others is often just as important as technical knowledge.

14.Do you (or did you) have a mentor or someone who guided you? What is your opinion on mentoring as well as on getting a start via an internship/traineeship? Are you planning to mentor or coach others in the future, or have you been mentoring already?

I deeply believe in the power of mentoring, and I consider myself particularly lucky that in my professional journey I have had people who guided and inspired me.

One of them is Dr. Konstantinos Ioannou, whom I consider my mentor. Through our collaboration and his guidance, I had the opportunity to broaden my way of thinking, to face new challenges with greater confidence, and to understand the importance of continuous development and a strategic approach to professional matters.

I believe that a good mentor does not simply give answers, but helps a person discover their potential, gain confidence, and grow both professionally and personally.

For the same reason, I consider internships and traineeship programs extremely important, because they can be the first meaningful contact of a young person with the professional field.

In the future, I would also like to offer, in my turn, guidance and support to young people who are now starting their journey. I believe that knowledge and experience gain even greater value when they are shared.

You & Your job

15. What was your childhood dream job (and why you liked it)?

I think I was one of those children who often changed their professional dream, because I was excited by many different things and I constantly wanted to discover something new.

When I was very young, I wanted to become a singer, because I loved music and creative expression. Later, I went through the phase where I wanted to become an astronaut, because I was fascinated by the unknown and the idea of exploring new worlds. Then, chemistry won me over and I wanted to become a chemist, because I liked experiments and the process of discovering how things work.

Looking back, I realize that the common denominator of all these was curiosity and experimentation. I always liked to try, to explore, to ask questions, and to search for answers. And perhaps, in the end, this is exactly what led me to the field of technology and cybersecurity, a field where curiosity, discovery, and continuous learning are part of everyday life.

16. Did peer pressure, trends or other factors play a role in your choosing cybersecurity and particularly your specific field of work in it?

I would say no. I never chose a path because it was fashionable or because it was considered the “right” choice. My decisions were always guided by my curiosity, my need to learn, and my desire to try new things.

My journey was not completely linear, and perhaps that is what makes it so interesting. Every academic and professional step led me to new experiences and helped me discover aspects of myself that I did not know. Cybersecurity came as a natural evolution, because it combines everything that fascinates me: technology, analytical thinking, risk management, and the ability to offer something with real impact.

If something influenced my choices, it was my willingness not to remain stagnant. I was always fascinated by the idea of exploring new paths, questioning my assumptions, and trying things that at first may have seemed difficult or unknown to me. After all, many of the most beautiful moments of my life came when I dared to say “yes” to something new.

17.Did you face any challenges related to your gender, race, visual appearance, or background, or any stereotypical biases? How have you overcome these?

I think that all of us, at some point in our lives, have faced stereotypes or prejudices. In my case, I am a woman in a field that for many years was considered mainly male-dominated and, in addition, I also have a... quite impressive height, as I am 1.86 meters tall, something that often made me stand out from a young age.

When you are different in some way, you learn early on to feel comfortable with it and not to let other people’s perceptions define your path. In my professional life, there were moments when I had to prove my knowledge and abilities more, but I never saw this as an obstacle. On the contrary, I saw it as additional motivation to keep evolving continuously.

Over the years, I learned that diversity is strength. Confidence does not come from trying to fit into a specific standard, but from accepting who you are and letting your work, your values, and your actions speak for you.

18.Do (did) you ever experience imposter syndrome and self-doubt about your career and skills?

I think that most people who grow professionally and continuously set new goals have experienced this feeling at some point. And I was no exception. Every time I found myself facing a new challenge — whether it was a position with more responsibilities, a new academic step, or my involvement in a new field — there were moments when I wondered whether I was truly ready.

Over time, however, I understood that doubt is not necessarily something negative. I learned to turn it into motivation to prepare better, to learn more, and to keep moving forward. After all, if I never felt uncertainty, it would probably mean that I was not daring to try something new.

19.What has been your most exciting role to date?

If you asked me what the most important and exciting role of my life is, I would say without a second thought those of wife and mother. My family is my greatest support, and through these roles I have learned patience, empathy, resilience, and the value of balance. They have made me a better person and, I believe, a better professional.

On a professional level, one of the most exciting roles I have undertaken is that of Information and Communication Systems Security Officer of the Region of Peloponnese. It is a role with great responsibility, which combines technology, strategic thinking, and risk management, while at the same time giving me the opportunity to contribute to strengthening the cyber resilience of a public organization.

20.What is the best and worst experience you have had in your career?

If I had to single out one experience that was at the same time the most demanding but also the most beautiful of my professional journey, it would be my studies at the National School of Public Administration and Local Government.

For eighteen months, I had to travel every week from Tripoli to Athens, to be away from my family, and to try to balance my studies, my personal life, and my daily obligations. There were moments of great fatigue and doubt, but I never thought of giving up.

Looking back, I realize that this journey offered me much more than knowledge. It taught me discipline, resilience, patience, and showed me that many times we are stronger than we believe.

For this exact reason, my studies at the National School are for me at the same time the most difficult but also the most beautiful experience of my career. It was an experience that shaped me deeply, both as a professional and as a person.

21.Do you enjoy your work, and why? What's your favourite and least favourite part of your job?

This is probably a question that my husband should answer!

The truth is that I truly enjoy my work, because it is a field that never lets you stop learning. Cybersecurity is dynamic, it evolves constantly, and every day brings new challenges and new opportunities to discover something different.

My favorite part is exactly this continuous evolution. I like dealing with complex problems, searching for solutions, and feeling that I contribute to the creation of a safer and more resilient digital environment.

If there is one less favorite part, it is that in cybersecurity you never completely "turn off" the switch. Developments are continuous, and many times the mind remains at work even outside the office. Nevertheless, perhaps this constant challenge is also one of the reasons why I love this field so much.

22.What role has networking played in your skill development?

Networking has played a very important role in my professional development. I believe that the exchange of views and experiences with people who are active in the same field broadens our way of thinking and improves our understanding of the subject.

Cybersecurity is a field that is constantly evolving, and no one can know everything. Through professional communities, conferences, collaborations, and discussions with colleagues, we gain new perspectives, meet different approaches, and continuously learn from one another.

23.What's the next big milestone you're working towards (if you can and want to share)?

At this period, one of my most important personal and professional goals is the completion of my doctoral dissertation in Cybersecurity.

For me, the PhD is not simply another academic goal or a title. It is the natural continuation of my constant need to learn, to explore, and to go deeper into a subject that fascinates me. The research process is demanding, especially when you are trying to balance the multiple roles of professional and personal life, but at the same time it is also extremely creative.

24.Do you have any passion or side-projects you´re focusing on?

One of my greatest passions is photography. I like capturing moments, people, and landscapes, and trying to see beauty in the small details of everyday life.

Photography is, for me, a different way of expression and creativity, and it often functions to slow down, observe, and see things from a different perspective.

I believe that the interests we have outside of work help us maintain our balance.

Other

25. How do you handle criticism?

I would say that my relationship with criticism is... a continuous exercise in self-improvement. It is not always easy for me to manage it, especially when it comes from malice or when its purpose is not to help you evolve.

On the other hand, when criticism is well-intentioned, documented, and aims to make me a better person and a better professional, then I try to accept it, process it, and see what I can learn from it.

Over the years, I have understood that constructive criticism is valuable, even when it is difficult to hear. The real challenge is to be able to distinguish the criticism that helps you grow from the one that offers nothing more than negativity. And I admit that this is something I am still learning.

26. How do you manage stress?

I would say that one of my main mechanisms for managing stress is self-sarcasm. I believe that being able to laugh at yourself and see a difficult situation with a little more lightness is often liberating.

Of course, I also try to organize my priorities properly and face challenges one by one, without letting stress overwhelm me. However, I have found that humor and the ability not to take everything too seriously help us maintain our balance, even during the most demanding periods.

27. Cybersecurity is considered a very demanding and "intrusive" career in someone's life (takes a lot of hours, lots of learning constantly, you are "seeing" cybersecurity triggers everywhere even outside of work). How do you balance work and personal life?

I will answer with complete honesty: barely!

Cybersecurity is a field that does not allow you to disconnect easily. Developments are continuous, threats do not have a schedule, and there is always something new to learn or monitor.

However, I consciously try to set boundaries and devote quality time to my family and to the people I love. As a wife and mother of two children, I have realized that balance does not mean doing everything perfectly. It means giving priority to the things that truly have value and accepting that some days you manage better than others.

I am still working on it and trying to find better balances. I think, however, that this is an ongoing challenge for most people who work in the field of cybersecurity.

28. What do you do to prevent burnout in such a demanding line of work?

Prevent it? More like dealing with it!

I think that those of us who work in cybersecurity have, at some point, faced professional burnout. It is a field that requires constant alertness, continuous training, and many times does not allow you to completely “turn off” your mind.

Personally, I have understood that it is very important to recognize the signs of fatigue and to give ourselves time to recharge our batteries. For me, this means time with my family, a few moments of calm, photography, but also accepting that I cannot do everything perfectly and at the same time.

29. How do you set boundaries in the workplace?

I will be honest, setting boundaries has never been my strong point, and it is still something I am learning. Especially in the public sector, where the demands are many and you are often called upon to take on more roles than those provided for by your position, boundaries are not always clear.

However, I try to be honest and clear with my colleagues, to set priorities, and to remember that I cannot do everything on my own. I have learned that asking for help, sharing responsibilities, and sometimes saying “no” is not a lack of cooperation, but a necessary condition to be able to contribute meaningfully and in the long term.