

10 September 2007

By: Cosmin Vasile, Communications News Editor



[Sony Ericsson S500i Review](#)

Exquisite mid-level fashion phone

Sony Ericsson refreshes its mobile phone's lineup every 2 or 3 months launching new devices on different markets and for different targets. This time, the S500i handset seems to be intended for fashionistas and is available in 2 colors: "Mysterious Green" and "Spring Yellow". There's no telling if one is for men and another for women because the phone looks good in both colors and can be bought by either of the sexes. The slider seems to be a nice surprise from Sony Ericsson, at least in terms of design. From time to time, we're "blessed" to be able to buy a Sony Ericsson handset that looks stylish and elegant, different from the usual design that made Sony Ericsson so well-known. This is a little bit different from any of the Walkman series mobiles, so you should not expect too much from its multimedia features. Announced at the beginning of May 2007, both color versions of the slider have been made available on the market at the end of June for about USD 300-350\$.

DesignThe phone expresses itself from the moment you pull it out of the sales box. Both colors have polished finishes and fit perfectly in your hand. The sliding mechanism is a little bit hard to move at first, but you'll get used to it after 1-2 days of use. I can't blame SE for that as you have to choose between a too easy to slide mechanism that will make your phone open in your pocket, or a more firm one that will only make you push it harder. The slider has a curious form at its base where you'll notice that it's a little bit curved. This creates big problems when you try to open the back slid to get your SIM card in. The phone is surprisingly light (94 grams including battery) and slim for its size (99 x 47 x 14mm).

There's no flower motives visible this time as we might've expected from a fashionistas phone, but just slide up the phone and look on the back just under the camera and you'll notice that in fact it's still there. There are no external buttons included on the sides of the phone except the volume keys placed on the left side. Curiously, the M2 memory slot card has been integrated on top of the phone and it's covered by a plastic stripe. You can find the universal port used for charger, USB synchronization and headsets on the right side of the phone. Right under the display, there's a big 5-way navigation key which has a yellow backlight that lights every time you slide up the phone. There are also 2 sleek soft keys which are very hard to use, the "Back" and "Delete" keys and 2 dedicated buttons for Internet browser and My Shortcuts menu. The moment you slide up the handset, you'll notice a green, yellow or blue backlight that lights up the sides of the phone. The color of the backlighting depends on the time period of the day and the theme you are using. You will have access to the 2 Megapixel camera the moment you slide up the phone. The numerical keys of the slider covers only a small part and seem to be very easy to crack. If you are a heavy texter, then take a look at these [pictures](#) and think twice about getting this phone. Rumors say that Sony Ericsson replaced the keys for this model starting with the handsets shipped in August, but I can't say for sure. The problem seems to be serious, especially since Sony Ericsson doesn't sell replacements for this model's keypad. There are no external speakers, so if you want to listen to music you'll have to use the in-call speaker. The black power button can be better seen if you turn your phone on the back than if you're looking from the top. The back cover of the phone is very hard to slide even with the small pricked dots that should improve adherence. Overall, the phone looks really exquisite and out of the ordinary with the curved base. **Display and Camera**Sony Ericsson S500i features a TFT display that supports 262K colors and 240 x 320 pixels resolution. The themes embedded will simply take your breath away. This is a very good quality screen, perfectly visible in the sunlight, no matter what theme you might choose. While the phone has not been made for gaming, as you can see from the benchmarks, it still scores well on

some screen tests. The 2 Megapixel camera makes wonders for those that will use the phone mostly for taking pictures. Even without flash and digital zoom available in camera mode, the pictures are truly amazing for a cheap 2 Megapixel module. Colors are very real and vivid, there's no blur or sharpen pixels. The maximum resolution that you can use to take snapshots is 1600 x 1200 pixels, but be careful that you won't be able to use the 4x digital zoom in camera mode. The latter function can only be used in the video mode used for recording clips with a max resolution of 176 x 144 pixels (15 fps). There are plenty of settings available for both modes (camera and video) such as: White balance (Daylight, Cloudy, Fluorescent, Incandescent), Effects (Black & White, Negative and Sepia), Night mode and Self-timer. Overall, if you pay attention to the light conditions, you might just get the best pictures taken with a 2 Megapixel camera. **Menu and Software**The first thing you'll notice the moment you power-up the slider will be the amazing themes that have been embedded in this fashionable handset. There are a total of 3 pre-installed themes, but the one that I recommend is the Everchanging theme, which will change the lights of the backlighting and the wallpaper according with the time of day. Other than that, there are no innovations that you cannot find in other Sony Ericsson handsets. You get the usual Track ID application that will help you identify almost any song that you hear. Video DJ, Photo DJ and Music DJ will make you waste your free time faster than any other game you'll play. In fact, the only 2 Java compatible games included are: Brain Juice and Lumines block challenge. Besides the main menu, you will be able to access the Quick menu (by simply pushing the dedicated key), which contains shortcuts to various features of the phone (Bluetooth, Alarms, RSS reader, Calendar, Main menu), a report of various events (missed calls, alerts), as well as a list of running applications (if any). Other helpful applications that you'll find very easy to use and access include: Organizer, Calendar, Text notes, Stopwatch, Countdown timer, Alarm, Calculator and Code memory. The File manager is also easy to use and has 3 different views where it will list every folder on both the phone's memory and the external memory, or just on one of the two. You can also attach any MP3 file format, no matter where it is located (phone memory or external memory), to any ring tone, alert or alarm. For those that like to surf the Internet on their mobiles, Sony Ericsson included a standard browser that can work in landscape mode or even make the pages fit the screen's size. The browser also integrates a RSS reader which works smoothly.

CommunicationSony Ericsson S500i lacks the 3G technology, but I don't believe there's any need for that, especially since the phone has such a low price. Still, the slider offers the Internet surfers the possibility to log on the Web using the EDGE connectivity, which does a mediocre job scoring only 99 Kbit/s for download and 53 Kbit/s for upload. The phone is compatible with Bluetooth 2.0 with A2DP and managed to attain a maximum data transfer speed of 58 KB/s. You can synchronize the phone with the PC through the USB cable, but be careful what kind of connection mode you choose if you want to transfer data from your memory card. Messaging capabilities are almost unlimited and the phone features full support for email client, which can easily handle POP and IMAP. The quad-band (GSM 850 / GSM 900 / GSM 1800 / GSM 1900) network compatible handset has a good GSM signal reception. The sound is very clear and loud enough for you to be able to talk on the phone in crowded areas with no problems.

Processor and MemoryS500i slider embeds an ARM9 family processor running at up to 189 MHz speeds. While this is no low power CPU, it still insures low energy consumption. You'll have no trouble in running any Java compatible application you can think of, including applications that have more than 300 KB in size. The gaming experience is smooth and immersive with no lags or long loading times. Sony Ericsson S500i is neither a Walkman series phone, nor a camera phone, so don't expect it to feature too much internal memory. In fact, there's only 12 MB user memory available and you won't be receiving any memory card in the sales package this time. So, you must buy an expansive M2 memory card if you want more storage space.

MultimediaUnlike the Walkman series handsets, the S500i slider doesn't feature "specialized" earphones that will blast your ear drums. The Stereo Portable Handsfree HPM-61/HPM-62 offers a medium

quality multimedia experience. Nevertheless, users benefit from the same new Walkman music player version 2.0 which can play MP3, AAC, AAC+ and eAAC+ file formats. There's also a nice equalizer that can be set to any of the presets: Bass, Treble boost and Voice. You can also use the Stereo widening feature if you intend to listen to music on the external in-call speaker. If you opt for the latter, don't expect the sound to be too loud, but at least you'll be happy to find it clear enough and with no distortions. There is a microphone on the remote control for use as hands-free and a Send/End key, but obviously, it lacks any music controls. The slider also lacks a radio, so you will only be able to store some music files on your newly bought M2 memory card.

Battery Sony Ericsson's S500i features a 930 mAh Li-Polymer battery that is more than enough to serve any heavy user of the phone. The official numbers state an autonomy of 370 hours in standby mode and offers something near 9 hours of talk time. These numbers became usual for Sony Ericsson starting with this year's handsets, and that's quite impressive. Actually, I can approximate that on a daily use, with 30 minutes of talking and about 10 minutes of data transfer (Bluetooth and Internet), the battery lasted for about 5 days (nights included).

Impressions At first glance, Sony Ericsson's S500i slider looks exactly like a really fashionable phone meant to cover a wide segment of the market – fashionistas and trendsetters looking for medium priced handsets. I was impressed by the innovative design (especially form) that might attract more buyers than we would expect from a mid-level mobile phone.

The Good By far, the design of the phone makes up for all the major drawbacks that the slider might have. I believe that manufacturing a fashion phone might prove more difficult than producing a full-feature high-end phone. While lacking some important features, a fashionistas phone needs to have a rather unique and innovative look, and that is hard to come by these days where almost everything has already been invented. Sony Ericsson seems to have some aces up its sleeve and "hits" us from time to time with "wondrous items" that fortunately are more durable than other branded phones.

The Bad I believe the most "unattractive" flaw that can be found in this slider is the easy to crack keypad. This is a major drawback (see the Nokia N76 case) that might force Sony Ericsson to entirely withdraw all its shipped stocks of S500i handsets or start mass manufacture of replacements for the keypad. Also the lack of a radio might annoy some users that are more likely to use the phone than the music player, which in fact requires the presence of a memory card that you must buy.

Sales Package Sony Ericsson S500i handset
Battery Li-Polymer 930 mAh
Charger USB Cable
Stereo Portable Handsfree HPM-61/HPM-62
Disc 2
Phone software
PC synchronisation programme
User guide

Photo: Tudor Raiciu for Softpedia.com