



## WORKGROUP ON WOMEN ENTREPRENEURSHIP

### FINAL DOCUMENT

Agrinio, April 29th 2009

#### *Introduction*

This year's edition is specific because of the participation of the President of the Eurochambres Women Network (EWN) – *Ms Sophia Economacos*: it is a European network established in Brussels in 2003 that evaluates work potential of women and tries to intensify the commitment, the cooperation of all economic operators regarding equal opportunity, including greater involvement of women in the decision making process in the EU institutions as well as the member countries.

#### **Countries participants**

Greece, Croatia, Italy, Albania\*, Bosnia and Herzegovina

*\* Unable to participate, the President of the Chamber of Commerce of Durrës Mr Xhavara authorised Cristina Gorajski as the Albanian representative: at the meeting of the Board of Governors of AIC Forum held in Ancona on November 21, 2008 Albania has applied to host the fourth Congress of Women Entrepreneurship of the Adriatic and Ionian Area.*

#### *Proposals*

After the opening greeting of the President Radovanić every representative gave the updated data on female companies in their countries and presented strategies for the development of women entrepreneurship in the Adriatic and Ionian Area.

The main topic of the discussion was set up by Ms Sophia Economacos who was presenting the Interreg III B/Archimed WBC "Women in Business support Growth and Competitiveness": an interesting experience for the evaluation of the development of women entrepreneurship in the AIC Forum member countries.

#### *Greece*

59 of the Greek Chambers of Commerce have joined the National Chamber Network of Women Entrepreneurs (EEDGE) – a subsidiary of the Eurochambres Women Network.

National Chamber Network of Women Entrepreneurs, whose President is Ms Sophia Economacos, was established in 2004 by the Central Union of Greek Chambers to address the needs of women entrepreneurs and to realise the objectives from Lisbon. Its mission is to develop women entrepreneurship, improve gender equality at work, create an equal opportunity environment and develop women's capacities that can contribute to economic productivity and identify the obstacles that unable women to make it to places where decisions are made.

An overview of the possibilities for the support of women entrepreneurship on a national level has been made through the WBC project. The research has shown that many chambers are sensitized to the mentioned topic and that some of them are even organized in the way that gives direct support to new women entrepreneurs.

As the EWN President said, the unemployment rate of women in Greece is 72%, while the poverty rate is 22%. 9-10% of all entrepreneurs in Greece are women and 23% of women work, many of whom have part time contracts, temporary work contracts and often have jobs with no specialization. Women most often work in tourism, agriculture, healthcare and education.

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Within the WBC project thirteen Greek Chambers of Commerce have experimentally activated the so-called Antennas (similar to Italian Chamber Boards) that help women entrepreneurs by evaluation tests, specialized counselling and give support in creating a business plan.

Through the Antennas 15 educational courses have been held for women that are planning to open a firm, (educational courses from the "education" sector are starting this year); courses are held with the help of the chamber of commerce or FAD (distance education). The intent is to set up an Antenna in every Greek Chamber of Commerce.

There is an interesting experience from Cyprus where a first bank, Credit Cooperative for Women has been founded by women entrepreneurs for the support of the development of women entrepreneurship. In Cyprus, along with the national law for the support of women entrepreneurship, there are non refundable funds up to 50% available for the companies that employ at least 75% women together with the special support in running a business.

Greek representatives have pointed out that a women entrepreneur creates business, entrepreneurial culture, economic development, and where business is created there is development. There is a need to legally determine women entrepreneurship by an ethics code that can value women's capacities and at the same time promote the sensibilisation to the topic of equal opportunity and the expansion of the women entrepreneurship culture in every country.

### ✓ *Croatia*

There are about 100.000 companies in Croatia and about 25.000 of them are owned or majority owned by women (at least 51% of the company has to be owned by a woman) and they operate in all economic sectors. Every year more and more women are getting into the world of business: growth rate is about 39% and a company managed by a woman has never failed.

The Croatian Government has been supporting women entrepreneurship for years with specific projects. In 1995 a first association of women entrepreneurs has been established.

Split County Chamber, as the President reported, has already accepted the business ethics code and some 600 companies have already signed the document.

The role of women in politics and economy has increased in the last few years.

### ✓ *Italy*

According to the representative of the Ancona Province, with the authority for Equal opportunities and Budget as well as the Policy of the EU institutions, the institutions, administrators and politics have to make a „gender policy“ and it is necessary to fundamentally give the same answers to create a policy of quality.

Monica Onori from Retecamere together with Cristina Gorajski, the President of the Comity for the Promotion of Women Entrepreneurship of the Chamber of Commerce of Ancona for Italy have briefly presented all of the active policies for the support of women entrepreneurship in the Adriatic and Ionian area that are a result of the work of the Workgroup on Women Entrepreneurship during years:

- Internet site "<http://womeninbusiness.forumaic.org>" currently making a network of 135 women entrepreneurs of the Adriatic and Ionian area of which 25 are from Albania, 2 from BiH, 45 from Croatia, 9 from Montenegro, 1 Slovenian and 53 Italian; from the agriculture sector, manufacturing and personal services.
- Organization of three congresses of women entrepreneurship of the AIC area: Dubrovnik- Croatia (2006); Portonovo-Italy (2007); Pržno-Montenegro (2008)
- Analysis of the data on women entrepreneurship; the Secretariat has taken over the data containing the figures on consistency of female companies from the following countries: Greece (Agrinio, Igoumenitsa, Korfu, Patras, Pírgos, Preveza); Albania (Durrës); Croatia; Bosnia and Herzegovina (Mostar and Sarajevo) and Montenegro (Budva and Podgorica).



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Every member country of the AIC Forum has created an "Active group" on the topic of women entrepreneurship. Italian representatives are asking for more attention to be given to the initiatives of common projects and the sensibilisation of the chambers of commerce and the comities for the better promotion of Forum's initiatives such as the inscription in the data base and networking of concrete businesses.

For the growth of the culture of women entrepreneurship in the member countries of the Forum and the overcoming the obstacles that often unable women in their professional fulfilment, Italy suggests an informative management educational course as a meeting point together with a possibility of independent learning in order to increase the awareness of the business culture of the participants.

### ✓ *Bosnia and Herzegovina*

There have been many sensibilisation activities carried out by the local authorities regarding women entrepreneurship: special funds have been created for women entrepreneurs.

Bosnia and Herzegovina has 19 chambers of commerce where General Secretaries are women. In this country the number of female companies is 49 (data updated on December 31, 2007) and the new data, that will update the Forum AIC data base on women entrepreneurship, will be presented on the 4th Congress of Women Entrepreneurship of the Adriatic and Ionian Area.

### *Conclusions (Agreed actions)*

After a long discussion, the participants have agreed on the realisation of the following activities:

- 1) The organization (autumn of 2009) of the 4th Congress of Women Entrepreneurship of the Adriatic and Ionian Area in Albania. As 2009 is the "European Year of Creativity and Innovation", the Workgroup has decided that the matter of discussion on the Congress this autumn will be the creativity and innovation as a way of overcoming the crisis. (*Theme proposal: Creativity and Innovation in Female Enterprises in the Time of Crisis.*);
- 2) There is a wish for strengthening the network of women's enterprises of the Adriatic and Ionian area through the common participation in projects and initiatives. The President of the European EWN network Sophia Economacos has offered her help to the Workgroup and has confirmed her participation on the 4th Congress where she will present the EU project proposals that women entrepreneurs of the Adriatic and Ionian area could apply on;
- 3) The formation of a task force, within the Workgroup on Women Entrepreneurship, for the creation of the "Regulation on the Ethics Code of Women Entrepreneurship in the Adriatic and Ionian Area" by valuating, sharing and setting principles and carrying out education in order to meet the needs of a market that is before a great evolution that is threatening with the elimination of specific women's values. Each country is going to appoint a representative in the task force that is going to analyze and gather the necessary information for the implementation of the Ethics Code. The first version of the document will be presented in Albania during the 4th Congress and women entrepreneurs will be able to adopt/sing the Code.
- 4) Once again the need for continuing the collection of the "numbers" of companies run by women from the Adriatic and Ionian area has been emphasised, and the urgent organization of specialized informative courses, even distance learning, for the management of the network (managers/coordinators of associations and chamber comities joined in the AIC Forum) to qualify and increase entrepreneurial culture. The most important topics could be: access to credit, harmonizing life and work, technological innovation as a way for overcoming a difficult economic moment.



## WORKGROUP ON WOMEN ENTREPRENEURSHIP

Areas of interest and objectives are:

Area of interest:	Objectives:
Albania	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Formation of a task force for the development of the Regulation on the Ethics Code of Women Entrepreneurship in the Adriatic and Ionian Area and its drafting</li> <li>• Organization of the "Top-Down" education for the increase of the women entrepreneurship culture</li> <li>• Presentation of common proposals/projects for the empowerment of the network of female companies of the Adriatic and Ionian area</li> <li>• 4th Congress of Women Entrepreneurship of the Adriatic and Ionian Area</li> </ul>
Bosnia and Herzegovina	
Croatia	
Greece	
Italy	
Montenegro	