



4TH CONGRESS OF WOMEN ENTREPRENEURSHIP OF THE ADRIATIC AND IONIAN AREA

26TH – 27TH OCTOBER 2009

Durres (Albania)

On 26th-27th October 2009, Durres (Albania) housed the 4th Congress of Women Entrepreneurship of the Adriatic and Ionian Area. The initiative, now an annual event linked to table activities, enjoyed significant success due to the subjects broached and the great level of participation by the area's female enterprises. *Creativity, innovation and crisis* were the main themes discussed during the congress.

Organisational secretariat:

Workgroup on Women Entrepreneurship of the AIC Forum at the Ancona Chamber of Commerce and the Durres and Tirana Chambers of Commerce and Industry.

Countries involved:

Albania, Croatia, Greece, Italy and Montenegro.

Participants:

200 entrepreneurs (of which approximately 100 Albanian) and representatives of the Durres and Tirana Chambers of Commerce and Industry, the Croatian Chambers of Commerce of Economy (Split, Šibenik, Dubrovnik and Pula), the Italian Chambers of Commerce (Ancona, Ravenna, Bari), the Ioannina Chamber of Commerce, the 'Croatian Business Women KRUG' Association and the Albanian Association of Female Entrepreneurs (SHGPA), as well as representatives of local organisations and bodies.

WORKS DEVELOPMENT

The working programme began with greetings from the Albanian institutional authorities as the rapporteurs provided points for reflection on the difficult international economic situation. Particular attention was paid to all factors guaranteeing female companies competitiveness, growth, network and development.

Two different methods were identified for leaving the crisis behind: investing in new technology, innovating and creating more and more new opportunities to get to know and gain more in-depth experience of other countries. Today, more than ever, we need to re-invent, re-think in order to re-start.

✓ Albania

The rapporteurs attending the congress recognised the added value of the Congress initiative organised by the AIC Forum female entrepreneurial table, for all the area's female businesses and particular for those of Albania. It is seen as a 'useful tool' by which to combat the current world economic crisis.



Adhesion to the European Union, liberalisation of visas, reforms and extraordinary investments in infrastructures are Albania's operative priorities today. Albanian companies now need, above all, 'new rules of play'. According to the representative for the Ministry of Economy for the Albanian government, Bashkim Sykya Mete, in recent years, business in Albania has increased by 6%-7%. And the Director of the Tirana Chamber of Commerce and Industry, Z. Leonard Prifti, states that female enterprises are spread throughout almost all sectors.

However, the President of the Durres Chamber of Commerce and Industry, Andrea Xhavara intervened during the congress stressing the need to create better conditions by which to guarantee the competitiveness and re-launch of micro-companies, whose role is fundamental to the development of employment and the country's economic growth.

After a careful study on the Communication issued by the European Commission on 25th June 2008, entitled "A preferential lane for small enterprises – In search of a new reference framework for small enterprises (A '*Small Business Act*' for Europe)", the President therefore identified five guidelines for his country, for the formulation and implementation of policies in favour of SMEs. More specifically, he stressed the need to:

- 1) **create an SME-friendly environment** stimulating the innovative entrepreneurial spirit amongst the younger generations, introducing entrepreneurship as a key skill in school curricula, as well as the need to spread the entrepreneurial culture and that of working 'for oneself'. Furthermore, female enterprises must be supported with funds and prepare networks of cooperation, exploiting the full potential of SMEs as an important ground for entrepreneurial training, acting in a socially responsible manner;
- 2) **formulate rules compliant with the principle of 'thinking small'** considering the characteristics of SMEs and, at the same time, simplifying the legal context in place and reducing costs and charges for business management to a minimum;
- 3) **make public administrations accessible to SME requirements**, promoting e-government and simplifying, as far as possible, bureaucratic procedures, specifically reducing legal and tax obstacles;
- 4) **increase SME cash capacity** by easing access to credit, particularly to risk capitals, micro-credit and developing a legal and economic context that encourages timely payment in commercial transactions;
- 5) **support SME management capacity** and particularly technological innovation and their expansion on the global market through aid programmes focussed on R&D, transnational research, groupings and the active management of intellectual property.

If these principles are recognised/valued to SMEs, the President Andrea Xhavara states, this will result in a growth in employment and economic prosperity.

However, we do need to support entrepreneurial spirit with funds, loans and financing, and the Chambers of Commerce must continue to provide support with contributions from all territorial players. If this challenge is be met with success, Albania will therefore be able to head towards a knowledge-based economy. And this success will result in an economy that is both competitive and dynamic, with better and more jobs, and a higher level of social cohesion.

✓ Croatia

Despite the structural crisis that has struck Croatia, female entrepreneurs make up for 25% of the entire entrepreneurial fabric, also thanks to outright grants awarded by local government.

Jadranka Radovanić believes that the potential of the female businesses of the Adriatic and Ionic area are bearers that should be optimised. During the congress, the President of



the AIC Forum therefore presented a proposal for the Charter of Values for the area's female businesses: a declaration of intentions to spread a new business culture inspired by the principles of social and environmental business responsibility as a sustainable development model.

A significant boost to recognising the role played by women can come from the principles of social responsibility (Green Book), facilitating their participation in the dialogue and decision-making processes that guarantee a harmonious coexistence of business and society.

The Charter has been prepared by the secretariat to the workgroup for women entrepreneurship, after having gathered all the concrete experiences sent by the Work Group (listed hereto), consisting of one representative from each country (or group of regions of a country) adhering to the AIC Forum:

- **Brizida Hoxha** from the Durres Chamber of Commerce and Industry;
- **Željana Bevanda** from the Bosnia and Herzegovina Federation Chamber of the Economy;
- **Jadranka Radovanić** President of the Forum of the Chambers of Commerce of the Adriatic and the Ionian / Split Chamber of the Economy;
- **Jasminka Trzun** from the Croatian Chamber of the Economy;
- **Luciana Frontini** from the Ancona Chamber of Commerce/Forum of the Chambers of Commerce of the Adriatic and Ionian Area;
- **Maria Concetta Malorzo** from the Brindisi Chamber of Commerce;
- **Ksenija Đukanović** from the Montenegro Chamber of the Economy.

The document aims to provide a proposal for developing a subsequent Code of Ethics that each business in individual or associated legal format can process. It should therefore provide a starting point by which to identify commitments and behaviour, at the same time as guaranteeing growth and social cohesion according to the European Union model.

Finally, the President suggested that the next Congress of Women Businesses of the Adriatic and Ionian seas is organized in Bosnia-Herzegovina (whose representative is unfortunately not participating in the Congress), in order to allow the female businesses of this country to present examples of excellence, stimulating women's entrepreneurial aid and encouraging them to invest in their potential.

✓ Italy

In Italy, the economic crisis has not discouraged female businesswomen. The galaxy of businesses guided by women, or with a strong female presence, has, in fact, continued to grow. And this is a truly important and encouraging sign, because it highlights a strong, positive reaction by women faced with the crisis, showing how female business is one of the pillars on which we should focus in order to re-start growing. Women in Italy head the most stable and most ethical businesses, even if they are also the smallest.

Capital companies headed by a woman close their financial statements with positive year results. **From 2001 to 2007, 80.6% of companies guided by women closed their financial statements reporting a period profit, as compared with 80% of those headed by men (Source: Cerved).** However, there are still a great many obstacles limiting women in Italy from expressing their creativity and professionalism in the world of work. Obstacles that can be removed starting with the adoption of policies aimed, for example, at supporting ways by which we can conciliate family and work – as suggested by the representative of the Union of the Italian Chambers of Commerce Unioncamere, Rome, attending the Congress.



The increasing importance of female businesses in making up the national GDP must push institutions to implement interventions aimed particularly at appropriately supporting the thousands of women who every year risk it all, wagering on the art of entrepreneurship, including with specific tools.

In these terms, the Italian system of chambers of commerce is structuring a network of offices for female entrepreneurs by means of an equalisation fund. This is a service that should aid female entrepreneurs, or would-be female entrepreneurs, with all their needs. To take a better look at the reality of female entrepreneurs and to better and more fully understand just how interventions could be structured to support businesswomen, the Union of Chambers, together with the Ministry for Economic Development and the Department for Equal Opportunities are working on the National Report on Female Entrepreneurship, scheduled for presentation in 2010.

According to Paola Morigi – General Secretary of the Ravenna Chamber of Commerce – women must continue to study, gain specialisations, yet be flexible and ready to meet the changing demands of a continuously altering market. A good (or higher) level of professionalism is certainly an important skill, which will prove useful throughout life in attempting to deal with the many different situations that shall doubtless arise. Women need to be continuously ready to compare notes, re-assessing themselves and creating new solutions that will allow them to conciliate professional needs with family and personal demands. Information tools help. The digital gap must be overcome (also by stimulating public administrations to invest in this sector), but these tools must always be studied and reprogrammed in order to successfully use them to the full. This is no easy task, but it is the challenge that awaits us for the future.

On the other hand, the complexity of the current scenario and the serious economic crisis underway has instead led the Ancona Chamber of Commerce, as states the Director for the Economic Development department, Luciana Frontini, participating in the Congress, to face up to new challenges, identifying analysis and intervention tools that increasingly comply with the demands of the local entrepreneurial system. It is precisely within the scope of this framework that the Chamber has thus begun to design and develop new initiatives that are able to meet the growing, renewed demand for services, offering a range of activities that functionally integrate with those supplied by parties providing support and accompaniment on the territory with the start-up of new entrepreneurial initiatives. Starting from this viewpoint, the chamber has therefore structured a series of services available free of charge that are integrated and flexible, and based on a focus on the person accompanying and guiding the female entrepreneur through all stages of business creation.

The afternoon session, on the other hand, was devoted to the presentation of the individual businesses, comparing experiences according to sector and country:

Albania

Mimosa Shuli - Hotel Perla (Pogradec)

SGHPA – Shoqata e Grave Professioniste & Affariste (Tirana)

Florentia Xheka – Alufloor Construction Group (Durrës)

Croatia

Iva Jurić – Be Craft (Dubrovnik)

Hansal Jany – Deša Dubrovnik (Dubrovnik)

Italy

Paola Morigi – General Secretary to the Ravenna Chamber of Commerce

Maria Luisa Martinuzzi – Female Entrepreneurial Committee of Ancona



Montenegro

Nada Dobaj – Finans Albatros d.o.o. (Podgorica)

CONCLUSIONS

In the light of the interventions carried out and the considerations and points raised during the congress, female entrepreneurs express the need to create relationships with the institutions based on trust, that currently simply do not exist.

Continued support to female businesses is needed, with traditional tools, although they also require services that are additionally, if not above all, real: guidance, training, accompaniment, limitation of some logistical costs. And, above all, female businesses need to 'be networked', to have information, contacts and continuous connections that become fundamental to: consolidate, improve, internationalise, develop collaborations (horizontally and/or vertically) with other similar, identical or related businesses, thereby producing greater interaction and innovation.

Furthermore, those in attendance **unanimously approve the charter of values** presented by the president Radovanić, this programmatic document with which ethical behaviour and social responsibility of the area's female businesses is valued. The appointed work group will also present a proposed **business code of ethics** at the **5th Congress for Women Entrepreneurship scheduled for Autumn 2010 in Bosnia-Herzegovina**.

Those in attendance also decided to launch a **competition call for female entrepreneurs** on the occasion of the 10th Edition of the AIC Forum planned for 2010 in Italy. This will be reserved to all the female businesses of the Adriatic-Ionian area who, with their virtuous choices linked to the environment, to social responsibility and to innovation, help raise quality standards and create value over time. By rewarding excellences, we will therefore also obtain another result, namely that of encouraging research and the application of good practises, thereby raising the quality and originality of female businesses. All female entrepreneurs who have already participated in the four editions of the congress will be involved, and prize-giving will take place in Bosnia-Herzegovina in 2010. This will see the following awards: best female entrepreneur, best female manager and most innovative. The area's Chambers of Commerce will manage the competition call as a whole, through specific regulations prepared by the workgroup for women entrepreneurship of the AIC Forum.

Finally, **the best practices** developed by the Ancona Chamber of Commerce under the scope of the Italian chamber system will be **transferred to the Adriatic-Ionian area**. These allow us to:

- assess all opportunities to do business on the territory;
- recognise and acquire specific entrepreneurial skills;
- assist future female entrepreneurs in developing and consolidating the entrepreneurial idea;
- offer opportunities to get the businesses to meet, to collaborate and to network.

This service will specifically provide new entrepreneurs with assistance from planning to start-up by means of an analysis of demand, information on beneficial legislation, guidance and training for start-up, accompanying through start-up and a business community.

The Congress experience will be taken to the European Parliament in November, when a delegation guided by the President Jadranka Radovanić will be received to present the work of the AIC Forum to the new European Parliament members. On this occasion, the delegation will attempt to identify/define actions, projects and European loans to support the area's female entrepreneurs.

Attached: *Charter of Values of Women Enterprises*



FORUM

delle Camere di Commercio dell'Adriatico e dello Ionio
of the Adriatic and Ionian Chambers of Commerce
Gospodarskih Komora Jadransko-jonskog područja



CHARTER OF VALUES

FOR WOMEN ENTERPRISES

FORUM of the Adriatic and Ionian Chambers of Commerce
c/o Ancona Chamber of Commerce Phone +39 071 5898.249/266
Piazza XXIV Maggio, 1 Fax +39 071 5898.255
60124 Ancona (Italy) segreteria@forum.an.camcom.it
Fiscal code 93096320424 www.forumaic.org

Brussels Office
c/o Unioncamere Brussels
Rue de l'Industrie, 22
1040 Brussels (Belgium)



FORUM

delle Camere di Commercio dell'Adriatico e dello Ionio
of the Adriatic and Ionian Chambers of Commerce
Gospodarskih Komora Jadransko-jonskog područja



Foreword

WOMEN ENTREPRENEURSHIP and SOCIAL RESPONSIBILITY

“Responsibility is a female noun”

The Forum of the Chambers of Commerce of the Adriatic and Ionian Area considers women entrepreneurship as one of the fundamental values for the social and economic development of the whole area.

With the Charter of Values, the Workgroup for Women Entrepreneurship intends to recognize and enhance the potential and values expressed by female enterprises.

The document is a proposal for the drafting of a future Code of Ethics that each individual firm or company can draw up, as well as a starting point for the identification of undertakings and behaviours and a guarantee of growth and social cohesion in line with the model of the European Union.

Social Responsibility principles¹ can give a significant impulse to the recognition of women's role by favouring their participation in public debate and the decision-making process that guarantees the harmonious coexistence of enterprises and society.

¹ European Union Green Paper on “Promoting a European framework for Corporate Social Responsibility”. Corporate Social Responsibility is the *integration by companies of social and environmental concerns in their business operations and in their interaction with their stakeholders on a voluntary basis*”. COM (2001) 366



FORUM

delle Camere di Commercio dell'Adriatico e dello Ionio
of the Adriatic and Ionian Chambers of Commerce
Gospodarskih Komora Jadransko-jonskog područja



The context

THE INTERNATIONAL FRAMEWORK

1997 – Social Accountability 8000: This is the first International standard promoted by the Council on Economic Priorities Accreditation Agency (CEEPAA) on Social Responsibility; (www.cepaa.org)

2000 – Tripartite Declaration of principles on multinationals and social policies of the International Labour Organization (ILO); (<http://www.ilo.org>)

Global Compact of the United Nations: This calls upon all companies of the world to create an economic, social and environmental framework for the promotion of a sound and sustainable world economy, which guarantees everybody the opportunity to share its benefits; (<http://www.unglobalcompact.org>)

Guidelines of the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD): they provide a series of recommendations for multinational companies; these are the first exhaustive behavioural norms provided to companies in order to guide them towards Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR); (<http://www.oecd.org>)

2003 – Declaration adopted by the Subcommittee for the Promotion and Protection of Human Rights of the United Nations Human Rights Commission; (<http://www.ohchr.org>)

2004 – Decision by the United Nations Human Rights Commission: the decision clarifies the legal status of the Norms on the responsibilities of transnational corporations and other business enterprises with regard to human rights; (<http://www.ohchr.org>)

2009/10 – ISO 26000: the norm provides guidelines on the fundamental issues and topics of social responsibility. (<http://www.iso.org>)



FORUM

delle Camere di Commercio dell'Adriatico e dello Ionio
of the Adriatic and Ionian Chambers of Commerce
Gospodarskih Komora Jadransko-jonskog područja



THE EUROPEAN FRAMEWORK

2000 – Lisbon strategy – Council of the Heads of State and Government of the European Union. The Commission of the European Union proposed the European Council and Parliament the Programme on the Community Framework Strategy on Equality between Women and Men for 2001-2005. *COM (2000) 335*

2001 – Green Paper on "*Promoting a European framework for Corporate Social Responsibility*" of the European Commission for corporate social responsibility. First intervention by the European Commission on the issue of Corporate Social Responsibility, within the framework of the promotion of a European framework of corporate social responsibility. *COM (2001) 366*

2002 - Communication by the European Commission on Corporate Social Responsibility, within the debate opened by the Green paper, with which the European Commission outlines its strategy of promotion of Corporate Social Responsibility. *COM (2002) 347*

2004 – Green Paper of the European Commission on "*Equality and non-discrimination in an enlarged European Union*". *COM (2004) 379*

2006 – Communication by the European Commission to the European Council, the European Parliament, the European Economic and Social Committee and the Committee of the Regions – *Schedule for the promotion of equality between women and men - 2006-2010. COM(2006) 92*

The European Union Council of March 2006 adopted the *European Pact for Gender Equality* to further highlight the issue of equality and support the objectives of the schedule.

Communication of the European Commission on the issue of Corporate Social Responsibility, with which the European Commission intends to increase the attention/interest towards the issue of corporate social responsibility. *COM (2006) 136*

Regulation of the European Parliament and Council setting up a European Institute for gender equality. *EC no. 1922/2006*

The Charter of Values

✓ *What it is*

The Charter of Values is a **declaration of intentions** for the diffusion of a new business culture based on corporate social and environmental responsibility as a possible sustainable development model.

The Charter provides a reference framework of values to support women enterprises in the choices made and the behaviours adopted in the management of their activities and relations with the various stakeholders within and outside the enterprise.

This is a voluntary tool available for the female enterprises of the Adriatic and Ionian Area that reinforces and integrates the principles of the laws in force.

The Charter of Values is a **tool of Corporate Social Responsibility** to “guide” women entrepreneurs towards a new approach in the evaluation of an enterprise, based not only in terms of economic production and the capacity of generating profits, but also in social and environmental terms. The focus is thus on ethics, responsibility and quality as factors of competitiveness, growth and development of enterprises.

Socially responsible enterprises can therefore take advantage of the following **advantages and benefits** in the long run:

- Improvement of business image and reputation;
- More transparency and improvement in their relations towards banks and financial performance in general;
- Reduction of corporate risks;
- Development of new markets and business activities through the anticipation of emerging needs;
- Increased satisfaction of collaborators, better working climate in the company and following reduction of internal tensions;
- Promotion of individual skills and creation of a more favourable context for creativity and innovation;
- Rationalisation of the organization and possible cost reductions, with special reference in environmental management.

✓ *Objectives*

This Charter aims at contributing at the attainment of the following shared objectives:

- **Recognizing the “strength of differences”**: the aim is to affirm and promote a female entrepreneurial style, which does not only pay attention to the market and economic growth, but is also oriented to the improvement of the quality of people and the environment;
- **Promoting women entrepreneurship** as a good practice in terms of integration and equal opportunities at all levels (hiring, pay, positions of responsibility, training, health and safety), as well as for the application of programmes/initiatives that help women better combine their professional life with their family life;
- **Enhancing the added value represented by “women entrepreneurship”** as an important resource for the sustainable development of the socio-economic system of the entire AIC area and as a contribution to increasingly spread a culture based on social inclusion;
- **Offering women enterprises new “management tools”**, which can contribute to combine ethical and social issues, e.g. equity and cohesion, with economic and competition related considerations.

✓ *Guiding principles and values*

*In order to best carry out actions and implement undertakings, it is furthermore necessary that women enterprises act on the basis of shared **values and principles**:*

CORE ROLE OF THE INDIVIDUAL

- *Ensuring impartiality, equity and integrity;*
- *Guaranteeing equity and equal opportunities between men and women in the access to the training and vocational training market;*
- *Favouring initiatives aimed at combining work and family life;*
- *Promoting human resources through professional growth and participation in managerial decisions;*
- *Maintaining a working environment and organization based on the principles of correctness, human dignity, equality and respect for “diversities”;*
- *Promoting organizational wellbeing, i.e. elimination the information gaps that might originate conflicts and psychological unrest.*

CONSIDERATION/INVOLVEMENT

- *Paying attention to the legitimate needs and expectations of internal and external interlocutors (stakeholders) to improve their sense of belonging and the degree of satisfaction;*
- *Promoting constant dialogue with stakeholders and their consideration and participation in corporate life in order to establish lasting relations and choose solutions that can favour results and increase the value of the enterprises with continuity.*

SUSTAINABILITY

- *Considering environmental sustainability as a strategy that should be developed and invested in, in order to contribute to the creation of a more sustainable environment;*
- *Integrating the full respect for the environment in strategic planning processes and daily activities;*
- *Acting as promoters of sustainable behaviours.*

EFFICIENCY/QUALITY/INNOVATION

- *Favouring the highest degree of innovation at all levels, ranging from technology to management, with a constant commitment to research and development;*
- *Searching for and developing energy efficiency and inexpensive management systems to constantly increase profitability and competitiveness;*
- *Creating value over time to reach the most effective degree of stability; the fundamental aim of the company is to continue to exist over time and this can be achieved by going beyond the logic of achieving immediate results.*

CORRECTNESS/TRASPARENCY/RELIABILITY

- *Providing true, clear and verifiable information on the company in compliance with the norms in force;*
- *Refraining from any form of unfair competition;*
- *Establishing a relation based on trust, professionalism, diligence, transparency, legality and correctness with stakeholders.*

TERRITORY

- *The enterprise is strong and competitive if it is deeply rooted in the territory both from a cultural and an operational viewpoint;*
- *Maintaining links with the territory and preserving the enterprise historical and cultural heritage are fundamental to convey stakeholders the trust needed for the growth of the company.*

COMMUNITY/SOCIETY

- *Increasing/enhancing links with the community and its most representative components to promote a dialogue based on exchange and social enrichment and aimed at a better quality of life.*

ACTING AS A SYSTEM

- *The creation of a community of enterprises is increasingly a need, as well as an opportunity, as competition requires that the value chain is extended to include increasingly broader and transversal relations.*



CREATING A SUSTAINABLE NETWORK OF WOMEN ENTERPRISES