

WORKGROUP ON WOMEN ENTREPRENEURSHIP FINAL DOCUMENT



Corfu, 11th June 2014

Introduction

The meeting of the work group for Women's Entrepreneurship was held as part of the 14th Forum of the Chambers of Commerce of the Adriatic and Ionian area on the 11th of June 2014 in Corfu, Greece.

43 business women, women entrepreneurs and representatives of institutions from seven countries – Italy, Croatia, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Montenegro, Serbia, Albania and Greece – participated in this work group.

The work group was coordinated by Terezina Orlić, president of the CCE County Chamber Dubrovnik in the absence of its coordinator Jadranka Radovanić, who was absent due to illness. The work group theme was „Research, innovation and development of SME's/ Capacity building“, and the key speaker was Sophia Economacos from Eurochambers – women's network EWN.

Strategic guidelines

Since this year's Forum was dedicated to the Adriatic-Ionian Macroregion and the role of Chambers of Commerce in the new economic scenario, and it was held couple of days prior to the announcement of the Macroregion Action Plan, the work group themes were therefore connected to the corresponding EUSAIR Pillars. The Women's Entrepreneurship Workgroup dealt with the thematic context of the cross priorities of the EUSAIR: „Research, innovation and development of SME's / Capacity Building.”

Introductory presentation was held by Sophia Economacos showing indicators regarding women's entrepreneurship with all the obstacles they often meet (percentage of women in management; difference in wages between men and women which has even increased in the private sector; lack of legal visibility etc.) as well as possibilities of creating employment opportunities and new jobs (for example the so called social economy cooperatives which are not profitable but create new jobs; programme Erasmus and project “Entrepreneurship for Innovative Change” giving young women an opportunity to improve their entrepreneurial knowledge in other EU countries).

Joanna Mouliou from the European Commission spoke of the possibilities open at the moment for women's entrepreneurship, as well as the importance and the opportunities which will be brought forward to the economy of the involved countries and with it the women's entrepreneurship by the strategy of the Adriatic and Ionian Macroregion. Although there is no separate section for women's entrepreneurship within the Commission there are possibilities and there has been financing for it. Participants of the women's group took the advantage of the presence of the European Commission representatives for questions, advice and suggestions.

Terezina Orlić reported, in regards to the conclusion of the 8th Congress of the Women entrepreneurs of the Adriatic and Ionian Area, that all the representatives of the participating countries of this work group were sent a questionnaire



regarding financing of women's entrepreneurship in their countries with suggestions on the matter. The questionnaire was answered by representatives of Italy, Croatia, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Montenegro and Greece, and the answer has not yet arrived from Albania. Summarizing the received responses she singled out that all agree that there is a need for an integral approach to women's entrepreneurship, from raising awareness to financing (lines of credit) and developing logistics for women entrepreneurs. Orlić then allowed the representatives of Chambers, Associations and institutions from various countries to say a few words, in order to elaborate on the condition of women's entrepreneurship regarding each separate country – statistical data, financing, initiatives and projects, including their suggestions.

Patrizia Casagrande Esposto in her speech regarding the state of matters in Italy said that during the period 2009-2013 the number of women entrepreneurs decreased, but still less than the entrepreneurs all together. She pointed towards mutual issues and changes in regards to the sea connecting our countries (pollution, emigration...) which also needs the attention and contribution of women.

Željana Bevanda presented her overview of the women's entrepreneurship in Bosnia and Herzegovina since the last Forum. The Federation of Bosnia and Herzegovina is working on the women entrepreneurs' database. More than 10 000 business entities have been processed of which in slightly more than 2450 entities women are in the ownership structure, while in 2150 entities women are in major ownership. Chamber of Commerce of the Federation of Bosnia and Herzegovina supports business women in many ways, among other things by participating in projects such as the regional project "Women Entrepreneurship – A Job Creation Engine for South Eastern Europe" conducted by the GTF. The Institutional financial support is mostly visible through the Ministry activities. The Ministry of development, entrepreneurship and crafts of the Federation of Bosnia and Herzegovina has been awarding grants for women entrepreneurs in the Federation of Bosnia and Herzegovina for couple of years, and in 2014 within the project "Incentive to women's entrepreneurship" 62 users received funds, while for the project "Incentives to innovators – individuals" of six innovations in total, three were realized by women.

Ksenija Đukanović reported of the current condition in Montenegro. Of the total amount of business entities in Montenegro in 2011, 90.4% are owned by men and only 9.6% by women, making Montenegro, in comparison to other European countries, the country with the least women in the ownership structure of business activities. Montenegro Chamber of Commerce is also one of the partners in the project "Women Entrepreneurship – A Job Creation Engine for South Eastern Europe", and the 14th meeting of the Cetinje Parliamentary Forum was dedicated to women in business. Montenegro is in process of preparing the Strategy for the development of women's entrepreneurship, it should be finished by the end of 2014.

Flutura Xhabija has, in the name of the SHGPAZ association, reported on the condition in Albania. Albania uses mostly regional experiences, hence their involvement in the project "Women Entrepreneurship – A Job Creation Engine for South Eastern Europe". She emphasised the importance of information, education, credit line possibilities / financing.

Dragica Karajić from the Croatian Ministry of Entrepreneurship and Crafts shared with the participants of the work group the experience of the Danube strategy, and has also presented the Strategy of the development of women's entrepreneurship for the Republic of Croatia 2014-2020.

Jasna Jaklin Majetić presented the activities of the CCE County Chamber Pula regarding the incentives for women's entrepreneurship and innovation, and has also stressed the importance of networking for women.



She has also represented a group of women entrepreneurs from Istria and Rijeka, who have arrived to Corfu in a respectable number and offered their innovative, unique and quality products.

Mary Ann Rukvina Cipetić spoke more of the regional project “Women Entrepreneurship – A Job Creation Engine for South Eastern Europe” financed by the Kingdom of Sweden through the SIDA development agency, and implemented by GTF in cooperation with SEECCEL. Project will last three years (2012-2015), and the area of implementation is within 9 countries (Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Montenegro, Croatia, Kosovo, Macedonia, Moldavia, Serbia, Turkey). She warned of the generally bad perception of entrepreneurship, including women’s, and suggested stronger involvement in the research, science concept as well as greater involvement of male colleagues in the work group activities.

In the second part of the meeting, in terms of best practice examples and in connection with the main subject of the work group, Croatian women entrepreneurs from Istria and Rijeka represented themselves in an admirable number. Didactic children’s toy was presented by Petra Juračić, products made of herbs by Dubravka Bašlin Orlić (Svijet Biljaka d.o.o.), games “Osvoji Jadran” and “Mediterranaut” by Sanja Vale Čupić (Adrianaut d.o.o.), wet wipes for cleaning cell phones by Marina Črnac (M.oresencia d.o.o.), filigree jewellery by Jasminka Benazić (Claudia Zlato d.o.o.) textile products by Marija Ribarić (Marytess d.o.o.), sparkling wines by Katarina Peršurić (Pjenušci Peršurić d.o.o.) and institution “Zlatne ruke” in-house health care by Vesna Plavšić. Vesna Rusić (cluster RE:Crafts) from Serbia presented the project “Women for women”, aiming at setting up the cooperation between women entrepreneurs through the exchange of know-how and experience.

Conclusions

- The Workgroup stressed the need for Chambers of Commerce of the Adriatic and Ionian Area to try and identify themes and priorities of the greatest interest for women owned companies (such as: access to financing, education, technological innovations) in line with the new Action plan of the Adriatic and Ionian Macroregion, and advance immediately towards specific projects in accordance with determined priorities of the new European Programs 2014-2020 available for the Macroregion.
- At the same time the Workgroup suggests taking action in order to emphasise, in the ongoing programming phase of the new financial instruments that will be available for the Adriatic and Ionian area during the next seven years, especially in the planning documents dedicated to the Strategy of the Macroregion, the importance of the support to women’s entrepreneurship and related issues
- An integrated approach is needed for the ongoing dissemination of the culture of the women’s entrepreneurship through all kinds of financial measures and infrastructure as well as through raising awareness of the need and importance of including women in the economic activities of individual countries, as well as the Macroregion.
- In order to rationalise expenses the work group has accepted the conclusion from the 8th Congress of Women entrepreneurs to hold the Congresses every second year in the future.
- Due to the implementation of the Strategy of the Adriatic and Ionian Macroregion it is suggested to all the Chambers of Commerce, members of the Forum, to invite their entrepreneurs to the Exhibition of food and drink HISTRIA, which will be held in February 2015 in Pula, Croatia. Participation at the exhibition will be enabled for the Chambers and their entrepreneurs, individually or through joint Adriatic – Ionian exhibition, free of charge.



- Continue working on the statistical monitoring of women in entrepreneurship in individual countries, creating a key base for future projects in women's entrepreneurship of the Adriatic-Ionian Macroregion.
- Work towards the adoption of the Strategy of the development of the women's entrepreneurship in the countries which still do not have it.

Agreed activities

The Secretariat of the work group will send to each representative of the individual country the received completed surveys regarding the financing of Women's entrepreneurship for each country, for assessment and information/ idea exchange possibilities.

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