

WORKGROUP ON WOMEN ENTREPRENEURSHIP FINAL DOCUMENT



Medugorje, 15th May 2013

The Workgroup on Women Entrepreneurship chaired by Jadranka Radovanić, i.e. the President of the Split Chamber of the Economy where the secretariat of the Workgroup is based, met within the framework of the 13th edition of the Forum of the Chambers of Commerce of the Adriatic and Ionian Area.

The Workgroup on Women Entrepreneurship was attended by a very large number of participants in this edition of the AIC Forum: about 70 female entrepreneurs, businesswomen and representatives from the five countries of the Adriatic-Ionian Area (Croatia, Bosnia-Herzegovina, Montenegro, Albania and Italy). The Workgroup made and analysed a “Presentation of best practices - a possible way to reinforce the economic activity of the region”.

In opening the works, President Jadranka Radovanić shortly illustrated the activities that the Workgroup has carried out in its 13 years of activity, specifically in the 10 years since its official establishment, and listed the main activities performed since the AIC Forum last edition. In Tirana, for example, the support and present of the Albanian president Sali Berisha allowed for the successful organization of the 7th Congress of Women's Enterprises of the Adriatic and Ionian Area.

With reference to the European Commission proposal to introduce quotas for women on company boards of public companies to guarantee equal opportunities, the President expressed the position of the Croatian association of business women Krug, who consider this intervention particularly appropriate with special reference to the lists of political parties and boards of directors of companies with majority public shareholding. The Association does not agree, instead, on the application of the European directive on the introduction of quotas for women on company boards in the private sector, setting a 40% quota on the boards of directors of listed companies at a European level.

Again in the introductory proceedings, the Workgroup welcomed the Member of Parliament of the Federation of Bosnia-Herzegovina Selma Jakupović, the Director of the Gender Centre of the Federation of Bosnia-Herzegovina Ana Vuković and the Vicepresident of the Croatian Chamber of the Economy Jasminka Trzun.

With reference to the setting up of the Club of MPs of the Lower House of the Federation of Bosnia-Herzegovina, Selma Jakupović pointed out that this Club aims at promoting several activities, e.g. drafting and approving legislation, solving problems already highlighted in the past, collaborating with non-governmental organizations and other clubs and councils. The Club will commit itself to make women's role more powerful, as so far women do not play the roles they deserve. To discuss these topics, a meeting specifically devoted to women entrepreneurship will be organized in a relatively short period of time.

Ana Vuković reported on the activities of the Gender Centre and informed participants on the situation of women entrepreneurship in the Federation of Bosnia-Herzegovina, thereby

explaining how difficult it is to work as an entrepreneur in the country and how much more difficult to act as such for a woman entrepreneur, given the countless political, administrative and traditional obstacles that need to be overcome. The second national strategy on gender equality is currently being prepared. It identifies 5 priorities, which comprise work and employment, including female employment. Ms Vuković also pointed out the two projects the Gender Centre is dealing with. The first project, which is being implemented at the Chamber of Commerce of the Federation of Bosnia-Herzegovina, analyses the conditions where female employment takes place in order to draw up adequate measures for it to develop. The second project, which the Gender Centre is currently developing in collaboration with the federal Ministry for the environment and tourism, is called TEGO. It is a *concept project*, whose objective is environmental protection through the creation of objects that can be used for tourist promotion and are derived by packaging waste lost in the environment. The TEGO project also aims at offering the largest number of jobs to people belonging to social groups in difficulties and thus contributing to poverty reduction.

Jasminka Trzun reported on the activities that the Croatian Chamber of the Economy is currently implementing to favour the development of female entrepreneurship, of the Croatian association of business women Krug and of the results achieved so far: Croatia has developed a strategy for the development of female entrepreneurship in the 2010-2013 period and the action plan for its implementation. For nine years the Croatian Chamber of the Economy could make use of a fund, through which it was possible to finance female entrepreneurship, participate in several projects and provide consultancy services.

The contribution by the Vice-Secretary-General of Unioncamere Tiziana Pompei on women entrepreneurship in the Adriatic-Ionian Area and its results and opportunities focused on the topics of the network of Committees for the promotion of women entrepreneurship within the Italian system of chambers of commerce, of the good practices experimented within the Committees (i.e. application of good practices) and of the future opportunities and possibilities of collaboration.

In Italy, out of a total of 6 million businesses, 1.4 million are enterprises run by women, 600,000 of which are the female enterprises of the Adriatic-Ionian basin. This realization paves the way for common projects. In the Italian Parliament, 30% of the seats are held by women.

Ms Pompei also highlighted the need to have a real database on women entrepreneurs. In Italy, a project on "The Women Entrepreneurship Observatory" has been implemented since 2003 for the collection and gathering of data on female enterprises in Italy.

Furthermore, she made reference to the *Giro d'Italia* of women entrepreneurs, which has been organized for five years and is a good example of how women entrepreneurs have committed themselves to become increasingly visible. Ms Pompei proposed to involve the AIC Forum in this initiative.

Patrizia Casagrande Esposto from the Province of Ancona identified in female entrepreneurship the key answer to the crisis that is currently affecting Europe. Right because of the crisis women's role and their participation in networks, first and foremost in the Adriatic-Ionian Macroregion, must grow.

The Secretary-General of the Chamber of the Economy of Bosnia-Herzegovina Željana Bevanda presented the country's plan to support female entrepreneurship. Women account for 40.1% of the total number of those employed in Bosnia-Herzegovina. The resources made available to support Women Entrepreneurship in 2005 registered an increase in the first years, to then go start decreasing and be completely cut for three years. In 2012 resources for female entrepreneurship were made available again for a total amount of 215,000 euros (423,642.00 km). However, a number of problems exist when it comes to apply for and obtain the funds, e.g.

no application can be submitted if the exact documentation testifying the ownership by a woman is missing. All too often women own the business, but only by title. Ms Bevanda illustrated the activities and projects of the Chamber of the Economy in these areas, thereby highlighting the need to further develop the network and financing mechanisms, establish a closer collaboration with training institutions and carrying out activities of similar importance.

Branka Vukasinović illustrated very similar problems with reference to female entrepreneurship in Montenegro, where only 9.6% of women owns and runs a business.

Satber Drishti from Albania reported that the Albanian legislation foresees a 30% quota for women in state bodies and public institutions in order to guarantee equal opportunities. 27% is the percentage of women businesses in Albania out of the total number of registered enterprises.

Nand Shani from the Council for Regional Collaboration of Bosnia-Herzegovina illustrated the activities of the Council, which is currently working for the implementation of the Strategy for South-Eastern Europe 2020. The regional project on Women Entrepreneurship, which was started in 2012, aims at harmonizing all initiatives in favour of female entrepreneurship and focuses on gender equality and poverty reduction.

The executive director of the GTF Centre for equal opportunities from Zagreb Mary Ann Rukavina Cipetić illustrated the project on Women Entrepreneurship as a driver for job creation in South-East Europe. The project started in autumn 2012 and involves 9 participating countries. It is targeted to women entrepreneurs who are already working and aims at supporting them and promoting new job creation.

Rukavina Cipetić presented the first data for the Bosnian database on women-run enterprises. A sample of 10,000 enterprises from Bosnia-Herzegovina was analysed, i.e. about half of the businesses registered in the Federation. The analysis of 2011 data shows that in 25% of said businesses the majority shareholdings are held by women. These enterprises have a volume of sales worth over 1 billion euros, employ 20,847 people (about 8 employees per business) and generated a profit of about 30 million euros.

The second part of the meeting was devoted to the self-introduction of women entrepreneurs and the presentation of good practices.

The Croatian association of business women Krug, which has already been active for 18 years, was presented by its president Terezina Orlić, who briefly illustrated the several activities carried out and the results achieved and announced the following two important meetings, which will be soon held in Dubrovnik, thereby inviting participants to attend:

- congress of women entrepreneurs in the Adriatic-Ionian area, which will be held in the second half of October 2013;
- meeting of the FCEM World Organization of female entrepreneurs, which will be organized in April 2014.

Both events are important occasions to meet, exchange views and ideas and establish networks for the exchange experiences and good practices.

The President of the Split office of the Croatian association of business women Krug Morella Build informed participants on the project on the “Development of Women Entrepreneurship in the Split-Dalmatian County“, which the Split branch of the association is currently implementing together with the City of Split, the Split-Dalmatian County and the Croatian Chamber of the Economy, County Chamber of Split. This project provides businesses in the county mainly owned by women with grants: the overall fund made available by the City and County is about 27,000 euros (200,000 kune), while the maximum amount of each contribution is about 1,300



euros (10,000 kune). The call for proposals lasted one month (from 14th March to 15th April 2013) and the enterprises that will benefit from these grants are currently being decided upon.

The Director of the Sinj Entrepreneurship Centre Ana Barać illustrated the activities of the centre, in particular the initiative of the Ham Fair, which has been organized in Sinj for eight years. The member of the Board of Governors Amna Popovac, who is also one of the founders of the young association of women entrepreneurs ONE based in Sarajevo, presented the association and outlined the main problems that female entrepreneurs, who are business owners only by title, and the activities the association would like to focus on (tutoring, legislation, promotion of Women Entrepreneurship, among other issues).

Ružica Žurković presented the Attivo Association from Kupres and the UPIP Association of Female Entrepreneurs and Employers from Žepče, while the President of the Chamber of Crafts of Split Marija Crmarić took the opportunity to invite participants to the international contest of young florists, which will be held in Split from 5th to 8th September 2013.

Francesca Gironi from the Ancona Chamber of Commerce presented the Association of woman entrepreneurs of the Marche Region, which involves about 13,000 agricultural businesses owned and run by women.

The Workgroup reached the following conclusions:

- a strategy for the development of Women Entrepreneurship in the countries, where this has not yet been developed, must be developed;
- the priorities of Women Entrepreneurship must be flown in the Strategy for the Adriatic-Ionian Macroregion, which will be finalized by the end of 2014;
- the databases of enterprises owned by women in the countries, where these are not yet present, must be finalized;
- the working modalities of the Workgroup must be standardized, hence the decision to use only simultaneous interpretation.