



FORUM

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



VII. CONGRESS OF WOMEN'S ENTREPRENEURSHIP OF THE ADRIATIC AND IONIAN REGION

15TH OF OCTOBER 2012

Tirana (Albania)

Seventh congress of women's entrepreneurship of the Adriatic and Ionian region on the subject "Women's entrepreneurship: challenges and successes in the Albanian economy" held on the 15th of October 2012 in Tirana (Albania).

Secretariat and the organization:

The congress of women's entrepreneurship was organized for the Forum of the Chambers of the Adriatic and Ionian region by the Secretariat of the Forum in cooperation with the round table for women's entrepreneurship and the Association of business women of Albania SHGPAZ and the Chambers of Commerce in Tirana and Drač.

Congress was organized under the auspices of the AIDDA (Association of business women and entrepreneurs), GIZ (*Deutsche Gesellschaft für Internationale Zusammenarbeit*), UN Women (*United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women*), and with the support of the Ministry of Economy, Trade and Energy of the Republic of Albania. It was also enlisted on the 17th of October 2012 as a part of the programme named "Women's entrepreneurship" in the European SME week in Bruxelles.

The aims of this European initiative are:

- provide information about the availability of support by the EU and national, regional and local authorities for the micro, small and medium sized enterprises.
- promote entrepreneurship and encourage people, especially young ones, to choose a carrier in entrepreneurship.
- give credit to entrepreneurs for their contribution to the prosperity, employment, innovation and competitiveness in Europe.

Forum member states – participants of the Congress:

Albania, Croatia, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Montenegro, Italy, Serbia

Forum non- member states –participants of the Congress:

Republic of Macedonia and Kosovo.



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Participants:

Congress was very successful due to the current subject of the congress. Around two hundred women entrepreneurs participated in the Congress from the countries of the Adriatic and Ionian region. This significant number testifies to the efforts made during the years in regards to the emancipation of women, also in regards to the undisputed need for women to become aware of their uniqueness and for their ideas to gain importance. The highest representatives of the authorities participated in the work of the Congress, which was an additional incentive and it also reinforces the value of the Congress, meaning an important step forward in relation to the Forum AIC 2012 activities, it also represents a new driving force for the future Adriatic and Ionian macro region.

CONGRESS AGENDA

Congress started with the opening words of the president of the AIC Forum, Mrs Jadranka Radovanić and the president of the Association SHGPAZ from Albania, Fluture Xhabija.

The Prime Minister of Albania H.E. Sali Berisha participated in the introductory part of the Congress during which he described the entire social and economic situation in his country, highlighting the still insufficient participation of women in the decision making process on all levels despite the cultural and professional potential of Albanian women. Albanian Prime Minister has confirmed his own and the efforts of his government to rectify this disparity by, among other measures, financial ones, and efforts to offer women an equal status through their profession and the possibilities to use the financial resources.

The same efforts were confirmed by the Minister of Economy, Trade and Energy Edmond Haxhinasto, who gave very detailed data, efficiency indicators of women in the trade and tourism sector, emphasizing the number of projects (80 of them) managed by women. In his speech, he also indicated the need for greater involvement of women in the Albanian political scene.

The presentation of Zineb Touimi-Benjelloun was also important as she is the coordinator and representative of the development programme UN Women (United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women) residing in Albania, and she emphasised that women are, due to their competences and cultural features, those who can offer a sustainable development. Legal and financial barriers, lack of work experience and family commitments are elements which distance women from the production and world of politics.

The challenge is in defeating the disparities, and in targeted institutional interventions, promotion of the women's entrepreneurship potential which can on the other hand help the entire country and the growth of the GDP. Global economy must be based on mutual efforts and aims in implementing intelligent policies.



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Women's entrepreneurship
of the Adriatic and Ionian Area

The importance of this subject was also emphasized by Martin Marschke, the national representative of the German Association GIZ (Deutsche Gesellschaft für Internationale Zusammenarbeit), which deals in international cooperation and provides services and measures for sustainable development with the aim of facilitating change and enabling people to gain the awareness regarding their own development, taking into consideration the political, economic, social and ecological factors.

In the conclusion of his speech, the speaker pointed out that the equality of men and women in the world is an economic and social imperative.

The president of the Chamber in Drač, Andrea Xhavara, also spoke of these topics. He emphasized that in Drač the number of women-owned companies has grown and that these companies use the network to grow and develop, and that this network facilitates the exchange of ideas and experiences in an atmosphere of strong cooperation.

In the conclusion of the first working session, the main secretary of the Croatian Chamber of Commerce, Martina Velnić-Župić spoke of the competitiveness of companies and of the Croatian experiences in the networking of women entrepreneurs which brought about opening of new women-owned companies. The activities of the Forum greatly contributed to this, and the president of the Forum, Jadranka Radovanić, has strongly supported the idea, during all these years, that women should become aware of their potential, create a network, cooperate with the chambers of commerce in the countries of the Adriatic and Ionian areas that they come from.

The second session was opened with the presentation of Fluture Xhabije, president of the Albanian Association SHGPAZ, who spoke with pride of the twenty year old work of the Association, about the progress women from the Association achieved and of the efforts the women entrepreneurs invested in the work of the Association. The support of the president of the AIC Forum, Jadranka Radovanić was also emphasized; as she has helped the women entrepreneurs start their own companies all these years. Today the Albanian Association counts 100 women with an income of 100 million Euros, and their activities were mainly in trade, tourism and crafts and they are mainly micro and family owned companies.

The strength of this Association and its history despite all the numerous difficulties shows that with a mutual cooperation progress is possible even in a social emancipation. The president also stressed the need to build a portal with all the data, in order to recognise the phenomenon of women's entrepreneurship in Albania, as well as the need for the government institutions to recognise special projects for women and support the social structures in the service of women's entrepreneurship.

Tefta Demeti, national representative for the Albanian SME's has proposed a vote of procedures and faster ways of registering a company on –line, payment of taxes and obtaining of all the necessary permits to start a business.



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The number of small and medium sized companies in Tirana and Drač rose by 50%. The presenter spoke of the activities of AIDDA (Association of women entrepreneurs and business women) over the web site.

The work of the Congress was continued by the presentation of Edmonde Sheshi, the main partner on projects PROMOALBANIA & NEMEWEA with the aim of establishing networks of successful and business women, and with the aim of organizing mentorships for female small and medium companies.

Many women entrepreneurs from the region and presidents of the Italian boards, founded within the Chambers of Commerce with the aim of facilitating women's entrepreneurship, spoke in the concluding session of the Congress dedicated to the current condition and the situation in women's entrepreneurship in the countries of the Adriatic and Ionian region. The speakers were: Adriana Brandoni from the Board in Ancona and Maria Malorzo from the Board in Brindisi, and their presentations are available on the web page of the round table for the women's entrepreneurship (<http://womeninbusiness.forumaic.org>).

The speeches were followed by presentations of some successful women entrepreneurs from the countries in the region (Croatia, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Kosovo, Montenegro, Macedonia, and Serbia). The presenters emphasized the urgent need for the construction of social services and structures (day-care centres, etc.) and also the financial and credit measures, together with tax reliefs that can be incentives for companies owned by women. Numerous presenters spoke of the need for networking and cooperation in the EU funded projects.

CONCLUSIONS

Exchange of experiences and suggestions presented during the Congress confirmed that there is, in this economic situation, an even greater need for women-owned companies to use the advantages of the network, as networking showed to be a flexible instrument for enhancing development procedures of growth for women. This way of work can, in the Adriatic and Ionian region, really represent the transnational network transcending the national borders, guaranteeing the competencies and individual uniqueness.

Proposals have been presented, taking into consideration territorial differences, and they were all directed towards the same goal, creating the necessary conditions for the promotion of equality and equal opportunities at all levels, particularly at the level from which it is possible to influence the decisions of the government with the aim of obtaining special projects dedicated to women, their emancipation and the evaluation of their skills and experiences.

President, Jadranka Radovanić, emphasized that a lot has been done, but that more is necessary so that women would get used to the so called, leadership, and new competencies, like for example financial management and so that they will face the crises and in such awareness head towards the sustainable growth.



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Establishment of the future Adriatic and Ionian macro region will be an excellent opportunity for all the women in the region, for the small and medium sized entrepreneurship and especially for those countries that are situated on two seas.

In this sense effective solutions can be found within the new vision and through joint management within the Adriatic and Ionian basin for the economic and social issues discussed during the congress in Drač.

The President emphasized the importance of the cooperation between the associations of women entrepreneurs and Chambers of Commerce, since the latter represents the institutional guarantee of support and development of the network of women entrepreneurs.

The congress emphasized the need to continue in this mode with the aim of promoting meetings and the exchange of experiences, and stressed the need for mutual aid and support of women in the entrepreneurial world.

Participants stressed the need to continue with the organisation of the congress in the future, as it offers the opportunity to talk and share experiences, suggestions, information, as well as informal socializing of women entrepreneurs.

The venue of the next, 8th congress of women's entrepreneurship of the Adriatic and Ionian region will be in Dubrovnik (Croatia), and the theme of the congress will be banks and their interest rates in financing entrepreneurship.

Participants have been invited to register on the web page of the AIC Forum round table for women's entrepreneurship: <http://womeninbusiness.forumaic.org> and to adopt the Declaration on corporate social responsibility.

All the presentations are available on the web page of the Round table for women's entrepreneurship.