

ERASMUS+ Programme 2015 – KA2 Adult Education
Project n°: 2015-1-ES01-KA204-015937
Document name: Synthesis Report _ Interviews Business Women
Partner: DAFNI KEK
Author: Angeliki Giannakopoulou / Vassiliki Tsekoura

Employment and Women on the 21st century in Europe: From Household economy to SME economy (Small and Medium enterprises) – MUPYME Project

Synthesis Report

Interviewing Business Women

Introduction

This report gives an overview of the total of 5 interviews DAFNI KEK researchers conducted within MUPYME project prior to the research activity. The aim of this qualitative approach of analysis is to provide the main attitudes, core messages and self identification of the women selected via their role as SME Managers and Self Employed.

To be more in concrete, the aim of the Overview (Synthesis Report) is to illustrate the findings, respecting their reflection on **self identification, the beginning, the consolidation and the future of their enterprise in the light of the economic crisis** and regarding the reasoning to be SME owners.

To answer these questions we collected what Business women report about their decision to make a start-up, about their experiences in running a SME so far and about the impact this decision has had on their lives.

We want to know how becoming a SME manager/leader affects and changes their attitudes, self concepts, professional biographies and their job behaviour as well as their everyday lives and how the business women assess this.

This approach allows us to provide evidence on the Business women reflections and in such a way to justify the necessary content of a possible training course targeting to offer accelerating learning to those interested to transform their personal biography of the housewife to a SMEs manager.

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Methodology

This report presents the findings of the qualitative component of MUPYME project that consists of a series of semi-structured interviews with women who run a SME in Patras city as capital of Achaia Prefecture and of the Western Greece Region. All of these women are around the age of forties (early 30s - late 40s) and from secondary to tertiary educational levels (NQF: 4-6).

Another factor/criteria taken into account is that we identified them as successful ones due to their decision to operate their business under the newly established conditions of the last 7 years dominated by financial crisis and austerity, and having made so with respect to economic profiles of the region.

We also concentrated to those that characterize the dominant target group which is affected by the economic crisis: young women (early 30s - late 40s) with a university degree (3) or upper secondary education diploma (2), migration background (f.e. coming from Albania the most crowded migrant population in Greece the last 20 years) (1), with children of ages between 7 and 18 years old (4) or single (1).

Research ethics

All interviewees gave their explicit consent to being interviewed, either video or audio recorded. They were informed of the context of the study and the use that would be made of their data.

The background

Step 1: By announcing the beginning of the Research to various Associations of reference (Chamber of Commerce, Soroptimistic Union of Women in Education and Business in Achaia, etc), we identified a time framework for the respondents.

Step 2: After receiving the first 15 replies, we came in contact with the 5 ones available to become our interviewees. We described the framework and the purpose of the research and their significant role to the articulation of a training course afterwards replying to the learning needs identified directly or indirectly by them or the housewives in comparison

Step 3: We arranged an individual meeting with each of the 5 identified as respondents, and respecting their choice to get videotaped or not, we made the interviews.

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The Socio economical context of reference

The current municipality of Patras was formed by the 2011 local government reform by merging the 5 municipalities (rural or urban ones) that made up the Patras Urban Area.

The economy of the city largely depends on a thriving service sector. Its main economic activities include retailing, logistics, financial and public sector services. Patras suffered a severe problem of deindustrialization in the late 1980s and 1990s; a number of major productive units shut down in successive order. As a result, a considerable portion of the city's workforce and the city's economic planning in its entirety had to be re-evaluated and restructured by the authorities. The University of Patras contributed by working towards this goal, using its widely respected service and technology sectors. The area still retains some of its traditional winemaking and foodstuff industries as well as a small agricultural sector.

Most Greek Banks have their regional headquarters for Western Greece in Patras. Numerous small local companies are involved in the construction sector.

Most of the large retail and super-market chains operate in the city. Patras is also home to some local but dynamic companies.

There has been a significant development in the [R&D](#) sector, in the last few years, as a result of the many research institutes and the University impact in the area.

Research Findings

The beginning

Concerning the reasons which addressed the decisions of the respected women to make their own business, we can refer the following:

- The support of the family - and in more specifically the support of their partner (in several terms, financial, psychological, practically)
- Capitalizing experience through years of working as employees or freelancers
- The status and psychological aspects of unemployment
- The willingness to bring a new or innovative approach

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The Consolidation

- Formulating the main idea - The concept
- Networking with other professionals active in the field in complementary way
- Getting into the legal and normative context of what means to operate a business in crisis era
- Continuous reflection
- Identifying the 'clients' target group profile and special needs
- Active listening
- 'Win – win' approach adoption

Necessary Knowledge - Skills and Competences

a) Knowledge

- The field of specification (wherever you need to provide special expertise, f.e. Architecture) or recognized experiential knowledge through years resulting to vast knowledge about f.e. Cooking or Services in Sales Sector
- Marketing (how market works & client psychology)
- Financial Management / Basic Economics
- Networking in modern era via Social Media & Internet
- Business Development & Management Skills: Scheduling, selecting employees, finding the right providers, risk taking and pre assessing, Language & Communication in formal way whenever needed

b) Skills

- Active listening
- Good communication & negotiation skills
- ICT basic skills or connected to management
- Organizational skills: time management, tasks sharing, skills assessment
- Decision making

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c) Attitudes / personality traits

- Strong motivation
- Clear vision and mission (what I can do and how I want to do)
- Reliability
- Persistence
- Self knowledge and self reflection within the local of reference (spatial skills)
- Life long learner
- Be creative and search for solutions
- Openess - thinking out of stereotypes

Conclusion

As conclusion we can justify that it is very important to have a supportive environment - the close one or broader - and an open culture towards a business initiative. Very important is the personal motivation, the need to share with others in a 'win - win' approach, the persistence which reflects the strong belief in the idea. Practically speaking: it is very important for a woman, as for every human being in 21st century - in modern age, to be able communicate via technology, to get organized by using time management tools and also to be ready to confront problems and taking risks ready to confront to the challenges that appear.