

ERASMUS+ Programme 2015 – KA2 Adult Education

Project n°: 2015-1-ES01-KA204-015937

Document name: **Interviewing entrepreneurial women - Macedonia**

Partner: Alliance for Development of Adult Education and Lifelong Learning (ADAE)

Author: Jelena Peroska

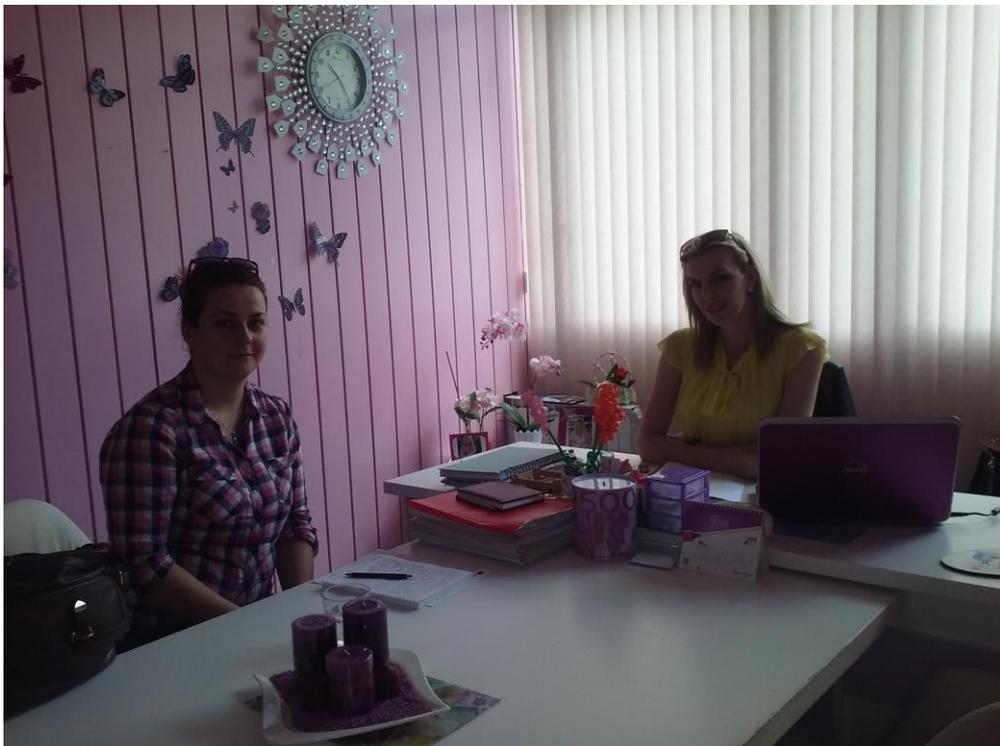
Employment and Women on the 21st century in Europe: From Household economy to SME economy (Small and Medium enterprises) – MUPYME Project

INTERVIEWING ENTREPRENEURIAL WOMEN

Qanije (Selimi)

The interview took place at the private kindergarten Rea, on Thursday the 21th April.

The interview will follow the 29 questions divided in 5 themes: the identification, the beginning, the consolidation, the future, the enterprising woman.



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1. The identification

Qanije lives in Tetovo, a city located in the Polog region in the North-Western part of Macedonia, 42 km from the capital Skopje. It is a multicultural developed city with two Universities and a lot of successful companies.

Qanije has 2 children; the older one is 5 years old and the younger one is 4 years old. She is 32 years old.

Her business is a private kindergarten for pre-school children. She is the director and the owner of the business. They offer different activities for children, different programs and learning methods.

Qanije is full time employed at the company and owner and she has plenty of employees now because the number of children that are enrolled in the kindergarten has increased now. All of her employees are women and she thinks that she helps women to get employed directly and indirectly because the women that have the opportunity to leave their child in the kindergarten can get employed because they don't have to be at home all the time.

She had the idea to establish the business when she became a mother herself and faced with the problem. But also at her previous job (she was working at a private school for languages) she realized that the parents bring their children to the school because they needed someone to look after them in certain period of the day when they are working.

Qanije now has 95 children that are enrolled in the kindergarten and has offers to open similar facilities in other cities, such as Skopje and Gostivar.

2. The beginning

2.1 The business started in 2013 in an old house which she renovated. After one year they had 60 children enrolled so she had to rent another bigger space which was also renovated. They now have large space with different rooms for different activities. For the establishment of the business, in the first year she had financial support from the Agency for Employment with the self-employment measures and after that she also applied for an USAID support for entrepreneurial women. From the grants she managed to equip the facility and to renovate

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the space. She mentioned that the procedure for opening a kindergarten is very complicated because you have to get license from the Ministry for labour and social policy.

2.2 She was the only person that decided to start the business. Nobody thought that she will succeed. Even her family, her mother and her husband told her that it is impossible to do that and that she will fail. But she was determined to go through with the idea and eventually she succeeded.

2.3 Before she started the business she was working at the private language school for children, Neting School. She was a teacher there and she knew how to work with children and she progressed to a director's position. She was working in the school for 7 years and she had the chance to identify the need of the parents and the situation with the capacity of the kindergartens in the city and the area.

2.4 She is a university educated woman so she learned a lot during the studies and also after through her experience in the workplace. She had problems at the beginning:

- She had to go through procedures to get licence to start working
- She had no equipment
- She had no adequate space
- She had no support from the family
- She marketed herself through social media
- The business was very risky

2.5 Even though the family was afraid that she would not make it, after the first critical period, they started to support her and believe in her. She was feeling motivated when she saw the positive reactions of the clients. The parents of the children that were attending the kindergarten were very satisfied and that was what kept her going forward.

2.6 At the beginning, the things that really helped her were her determination and perseverance to accomplish what she had planned. People recognized the value and quality of the service and the number of children enrolled in the kindergarten increased. The satisfied parents told other parents about their experience and the number of interested clients increased.

2.7 The most important decision she made was to move to a bigger space and try to apply for other financial support projects. When she found the other bigger place and had a positive answer to her application she was happy because she had the opportunity to expand the capacity of the kindergarten and offer more services.

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3. The consolidation

3.1 Qanije thinks that the most important quality that contributed in maintaining the business was her determination and a strong desire to change something in the community. She recognized the need of the parents and offered them an alternative something they did not have.

3.2 The future success was determined by moving in a new bigger space that offered more opportunities. They had more learning space, spaces for physical activities and a big garden where they organize birthday parties for the children and other outdoor activities. Also, they improve their offer with different programs for talented children, for learning languages and other activities. The clients are satisfied because not only their children are safe and they have someone to take care of them, but they are also developing and learning new things. The business was responding to a growing need in the community and that is why from the beginning there were a lot of parents, who were interested in enrolling their children there.

3.3 The progress of the company was delayed at the beginning because there were a lot of procedures and paperwork that had to be done before they even got the permission from the Ministry. Once they got the permission and the licence to operate, they had no problem with anything.

3.4 The most important decision was to expand the business by moving to a different place and apply for additional support. There are measures and projects that support the establishment of women businesses but you have to be pro-active and informed on how to apply and use them.

3.5 The most crucial issue which a business person should anticipate is the failure to fulfil the clients expectations. Qanije feared that she will not be able to be on time with the preparations of the space and renovations for the start of the business but she managed to arrange everything and succeeded to fulfil the expectations of the customers.

4. The future

4.1 She has plans to expand the business in other towns, because she has offers to do that but for now she is not planning an expansion. She thinks that is better to stabilize for a while and decide for expansion when the conditions will be more suitable.

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4.2 The quality of the service determines the future of the business. They treat clients very well and they adapt the programs individually and they are concentrating on the needs of every child.

4.3 Qanije is willing to expand her business because there is a demand of the services she offers in other cities also. The lack of capacities of the public kindergartens is a problem that many regions in the country are facing with. There are a lot of satisfied parents that live in different areas not just from Tetovo and they are willing to travel to bring their children to the kindergarten. They trust the quality of the service and are willing to invest a little more just for the benefit of their children. But the expansion will have to wait for a while, because Qanije invested a lot in the business and it is not ready to undergo on more expenses just now.

4.4. At the moment there are no changes. The business is doing well. There is a need on the services market and they are going with a great offer which is affordable for the clients and it pays off.

4.5 The new phase will follow the preferences of the clients. The business addresses people's needs for childcare and education in the pre-school ages.

5. Enterprising women

5.1 The work that Qanije is doing is very sensitive and she says it is ideal for a woman. She has children on her own that are in this age also, and that is why she likes doing her job. The work with children is always delicate. You have to find qualified employees that will be good with children. She is also active in the North-Western Chamber of Commerce and she had an initiative to establish a business women association in Chamber. She is working on promotion of women entrepreneurship and motivating other women to establish their own businesses.

5.2 Qanije was an experienced manager before she started the business. She was working as a director of a private school for many years. She learned a lot about leadership, management and decision making processes on her previous job. She also had experience with raising her own children and taking care of their development and education.

5.3 Qanije says that lately the things are changing for women in business. There are positive examples of women that started their own companies and are working successfully. There are a lot of women that are employed and pursue their careers without any criticism from the surroundings that they are not good housewives. Qanije manages to be a business women and

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to take care of her small children. She learned a lot in the household on raising and educating children.

5.4 Qanije is a modern woman. She manages to balance between her work and the household. She is very busy now that her children are small but she has everything under control and tries to keep track of the progress they are making.

5.5 Qanije likes to get involved in activities that promote women entrepreneurship and she is willing to help women establish their own businesses. She believes that before women were underrepresented in the business sector but now there are entrepreneurial women that are members of the Chambers of Commerce and can influence in the decision making processes. They are organizing events and Qanije thinks that when women see other women that do those things they feel like they can do it too.

5.6 Qanije considers that the most important thing is to be determined in something that you want to do and to be persistent in achieving that. Everyone has ideas but not everyone has the courage to turn them into reality. It is very important to have courage and to believe in your goals. Then you will achieve great things. Even when everyone says that you need to quit, that you will fail, you need to keep going and you will get what you want to achieve.

5.7 The most important factors are to be determined and courageous. Also you have to be proactive and to be involved in different projects and institutions that concern you. You have to show initiative and respond to the demand of the community. As for the personal side, you need to be a stable, sensitive, caring person that is aware of other people's feeling and needs.