



# EQUAL OPPORTUNITIES OF WOMEN AND MEN- ENTREPRENEURSHIP

Project NORDEN no. 1017680

„Equal opportunities - a way to social welfare”

prepared by Alina Stadnik

14 July 2021



In the era of equal opportunities policy, the road to business success is still more time-consuming and labour-intensive for women than it is for men. Numerous studies indicate that women are faced

with specific requirements concerning the enhancement of their role in management. However, despite the existing procedural and legal solutions, women's access to leadership positions is still difficult. Analysing the situation in Poland, a change in the situation of women in the labour market

after the accession to the European Union is practically insignificant, despite such strongly emphasised equal opportunities policy, especially in projects co-financed by the Structural Funds.

The questions are:

(1) what factors hinder women's entrepreneurial activity?

(2) does the phenomenon of discrimination against women in the labour market still exist despite the strongly emphasised principle of equal opportunities?



# WOMEN'S ROAD TO BUSINESS SUCCESS IN THE ERA OF EQUAL OPPORTUNITIES POLICY

The situation of women was examined, mainly managers and entrepreneurs to identify the factors of their professional success.

The study was divided into two phases. In the first phase, an analysis clearly indicated that women's entrepreneurial potential is not fully exploited due primarily to:

- (1) the existing external barriers hindering women's managerial careers;
- (2) a low impact of the equal opportunities policy on the improvement of the situation of women in management/business;
- (3) no change in the situation of women (a lack of improvement in the situation of women in management /business) as a result of the implementation in Poland projects co-financed by the ESF in which the principle of equal opportunities is crucial.

The study results confirmed the findings of the analysis of existing sources indicating the inhibition of women's entrepreneurial activity by the environment and its prevailing stereotypes. Attempts to improve the situation of women in business, by means of educational programmes, informational and promotional campaigns, as well as legislative solutions, etc., should therefore be continued.



## FACTORS LIMITING WOMEN'S ENTREPRENEURIAL ACTIVITY IN THE LIGHT OF INTERNATIONAL AND DOMESTIC RESEARCH

In the light of international studies, factors determining women's decision to start their own business can be divided into two groups:

1. pull factors (independence, self-realisation, an increase in income);
2. push factors (dissatisfaction with work, flexibility and family reasons, insufficient earnings).



The following factors prompt Polish women to run their own businesses:

1. striving for independence and self-reliance (to decide their own fate);
2. striving to achieve higher income and financial independence;
3. opportunity for professional development;
4. negative experiences from paid employment;
5. favourable market conditions;
6. the threat of unemployment.



Other factors – stimulants of entrepreneurial activity of Polish women – include:

1. economic factors associated with an increase in the level of wealth of the society, contributing to the development of services which constitute space for women's entrepreneurship;
2. cultural factors associated with the perception of women as entrepreneurs;
3. institutional and demographic factors, such as a fertility rate.

The barriers – de-stimulating entrepreneurial activity of Polish women – include:

1. barriers in access to financing;
2. a lack of entrepreneurial skills;
3. cultural barriers: lower self-esteem, less faith in success, a greater fear of failure, a lack of self-confidence and faith in the effectiveness of the objectives of the organisation;
4. educational barriers (a lack of information and knowledge on how to start, run and successfully develop one's own company);
5. traditional socialisation (strengthening the traditional division of social roles by gender), the difficulty of reconciling work and the role of the wife/mother;
6. institutional barriers, such as poor access to childcare.



In the framework of the policy on the equalisation of opportunities for professional development in the context of gender, there are two basic types of action taken:

1. Financial – providing funds dedicated to women.
2. Non-financial – providing various forms of support for women in the form of training, consulting, mentoring and access to international cooperation networks.



Due to the fact that the situation of equality between men and women engaged in business has not reached its “optimum” yet, it is necessary to take action to achieve it in the form of:

-Ensuring better functioning of the existing laws, raise awareness how to implement legislation in the field of equal opportunities policy in practice (e.g.: by promoting the exchange of good practices, organising appropriate training programmes and information campaigns to strengthen the role of women in own business).

-Encourage and motivate women (graduates of various types of schools) to start business activity, schools should introduce workshops/trainings (at the stage of early childhood education) which would help women overcome their own weaknesses and believe that they are able to run their own businesses in the future.

-Workshops and seminars on building women's confidence about their own self-worth, not lower than men's.

-Developing by the state in collaboration with business companies the care and educational system, as well as recreational and sports services for children and adolescents.

-Creating possibilities for shortened/flexible working time or remote work for women. Among flexible forms of work organisation, teleworking can play a significant role in professional activation of women.



Marzena Matusiak

## SUCCESSFUL BUSINESS RUN BY A WOMAN IN RZESZÓW- POLAND „MISS - FOLK COSTUMES”



### THE EXAMPLE OF GOOD PRACTICE

The small company "MISS Folk Costumes" produces folk costumes from all regions of the country and provides tailoring services. It cooperates with Polish folk groups and also exports traditional folk costumes to USA, Canada, Australia and Europe, where Polish emigrants cultivate Polish folk dances and songs. The company creates good profits. It is small business with 5 employees.

Folk costumes are decorated with hand-made artistic embroidery. All the folk costumes they create are characterized by high-quality hand embroidery and care for the accurate reproduction of preserved museum exhibits, costumes published in professional ethnographic literature, photographs or observed at folklore events.





## SUCCESSFUL BUSINESS RUN BY A WOMAN IN RZESZÓW-POLAND „DEKOSTYL-MODERN INTERIOR DECORATIONS”

### THE EXAMPLE OF GOOD PRACTICE

Dekostyl is a studio and shop offering modern indoor and outdoor decorations, such as concrete plasters, wall papers, paints and many accessories to fix the modern spaces. It collaborates with home designers, architectures. It is small size enterprise with 3 employees, but makes good profits.



Prepared by Stowarzyszenie VESUVIO from Rzeszów-  
Poland

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