



Center of Women's Studies and Policies

Learning Partnerships against Social Exclusion: Mentoring for Women Entrepreneurs

**Results from the
conducted
inquiry among
women
entrepreneurs**



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Purpose of the inquiry

To receive more detailed information about the problems that women entrepreneurs face in their work, about their opinion regarding opportunities for partnership and development of mentoring training programs.

Objectives

To check:

- What is the level of awareness of women business owners regarding mentoring as an approach;
- What is their attitude to it as a business training tool;
- Whether they consider that women need training in entrepreneurship and through what forms of training;

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- If they consider that women business owners are willing to partner and share their What is their experience and knowledge to other women;
 - Other questions regarding different problems of women entrepreneurs.

Socio-professional profile of the women

- Most women started their business activities during the period of 1996-2005.
- The business branch profile of the respondents shows that they are mainly realized in traditional spheres like services and trade.
- Only a few are dealing with production or businesses in more modern sectors like information and communications, and the more “masculine” like construction and transport.

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- The most popular form of business organization is the Sole Proprietor (SP); there are several partnerships and limited liability companies (LTD).
 - In the SP companies there is personnel – most often both men and women; only in 7 cases the employees are only women (mainly in trade).

Women's knowledge about, participation in and evaluation of different forms of training

- Over two thirds of the respondents have knowledge – full or partial, about the existing courses and programs for training women in entrepreneurship.
- This presupposes their interest in similar programs and following such programs and respectively over half of the women **have participated in some form of training.**

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- The women who responded that they had not participated in any forms of training, indicate as a reason on the first place the too general profile of the offered courses and programs, which do not answer their specific needs.

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- Nevertheless they had or had not passed any program or training course, more than half of the women consider, that there should be **special** training for women in entrepreneurship.

Women's opinions about what could be learnt from a training course in entrepreneurship for women:

- Acquiring most general knowledge about starting up a business;
- Acquiring concrete knowledge and practical skills;
- Introduction to the legal regulations and standards in the country.

Mentoring as a form of training

- **What is training through mentoring** is clear for less than one third of the respondents;
- Just this number admit that they do not at all understand the meaning of mentoring;
- The rest just get the idea or assume what is hidden behind this type of training.

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- Even though the women are not acquainted with the essence of mentoring as an approach and practice, to the question ***“Do you consider that women are willing to share their experience and knowledge with other women?”*** most respondents answer positively.

The opinions have been grouped in several types of answers:

1. Pragmatic, oriented to business;
2. Underlining the communicative skills and sociability of women;
3. Emphasizing women's qualities of value like: talent, care, ambition, positive thinking;
4. Bringing women's solidarity to the front.

Very small number of women expressed the opinion, that women entrepreneurs **are not willing to share** their experience and knowledge with other women, as the most stressed reasons can be divided in two groups of statements:

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- Women are envious and are afraid of competition. By sharing their experience they create potential competition. To avoid that, they would not share their knowledge and experience.
 - Women entrepreneurs have no free time – they balance between family and business responsibilities.

Other reasons given:

- *„Lack of programs and money to pay for the time spent by the women-mentors for training“;*
- *„Lack of business culture on the part of the trainees and the attitude that somebody is obliged to train them“;*
- *„Women have complexes.“*

An important conclusion from the inquiry is that nevertheless the women entrepreneurs are aware or not, have participated or not in courses and training programs, most of them are willing to:

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- Be mentors of other women through new forms of training like:
 - 1) on the job training
 - 2) individual coaching
 - 3) training through Internet

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- They would like to be involved in new forms of training for women like:
 - 1) training through Internet
 - 2) individual coaching
 - 3) on the job training
 - 4) psychotraining.

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- To learn from the experience from other successful business women (100% of the respondents answer “definitely yes”).

The results show that women face more difficulties and obstacles if they decide to start up their own business in comparison to men. This is admitted by two thirds of the respondents.

Main reasons for the difficulties and the problems in starting up the business:

1. Responsibilities to the family and the children
2. Lack of own financial resources
3. Difficult access to credits
4. The fact they are women (business is for men)
5. Women are more passive