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A Comparative Analysis on the Required Commercial Competences for Women Entrepreneurship Development in Selected Countries

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Abstract

This scientific report presents findings derived from comprehensive desk research and an extensive online survey conducted under the auspices of an Erasmus+ Key Action 2 project, specifically tailored for Cooperation for Innovation and the Exchange of Good Practices within the Higher Education Sector, entitled "European Partnership for Social Inclusion and Creation of Skills for Women Entrepreneurship E-learning." Realized through a strategic collaboration among three distinct partner countries, this project focuses intently on the social inclusion of women who aspire to establish and scale their own businesses within the highly competitive sectors of international trade and logistics. By facilitating their integration into the entrepreneurial ecosystem, the initiative aims to equip these women with the practical skills and core competencies necessary to generate sustainable financial, cultural, and social value within their local and regional communities. A central component of this study is a meticulous comparative analysis of the specific trade competencies required to effectively foster women's entrepreneurship across the three participating nations. To construct a rigorous theoretical and methodological framework, the researchers initially conducted a thorough review of the existing academic and institutional literature. By systematically examining established competency models within the field of commerce, the study successfully isolated the key professional competencies essential for the successful realization of a modern trader. Ultimately, these identified variables directly informed the development of a structured survey questionnaire, providing a robust empirical foundation for the subsequent

comparative analysis between the partner countries to optimize future e-learning frameworks.[1]

Keywords: women's entrepreneurship, trade competences, comparative analysis.

1. Introduction

The purpose of the scientific report is to derive and analyze the key commercial competences necessary for starting a business of low-skilled women in the selected countries on theoretical, methodological and practical analysis. The stated goal requires the following tasks to be solved: theoretical clarification of the skills and competencies of women entrepreneurs and characterization of the woman entrepreneur; adaptation of the methodological framework of the study and comparative analysis of the results obtained by the respondents from the selected countries.

2. Theoretical and methodological aspects of the business competencies of women entrepreneurs

R. D. Hisrich and C. Brush (Hisrich & Brush, 1984) analyze the management skills of women entrepreneurs. According to them management skills consist in:

Finance: providing capital, forecasting, budgeting.

Communication with staff: management, development and training.

Marketing: marketing research, promotions, sales.

Creating ideas / product innovations.

Business operations: inventory, production, daily operations.

Organization and planning: business strategy, policies and organization.

M. Sonfield, R. Lussier, J. Corman, and M. McKinney (Sonfield, Lussier, Corman, & McKinney, 2001, pp. 165-173) examine gender differences through the prism of the Entrepreneurial Strategic Matrix (see Fig. 1.). It is a situational model that suggests appropriate strategies for new and ongoing endeavors in response to identifying different levels of innovations and risk (Sonfield, Lussier, Corman, & McKinney, 2001, p. 166).

[1] The research was carried out within the framework of a project „European Partnership for Social Inclusion and Creation of Skills for Women Entrepreneurship E-learning", Project 2018-1-BG01-KA203-048016 under ERASMUS + Programme, Key Action 2, Higher Education Sector

High level of innovation / low risk • Creating multiple innovations • Normative protection of innovation • Limiting investment and operating costs through control systems, contracts, etc.	High level of innovations / high risk • Reducing risk by reduction investment and operating costs • Maintaining innovations • Outsourcing of operations that require significant investment • Choosing forms for a joint venture
Low level of innovation / low risk • Protection of current position • Limited return allowance • Assumption of limited growth / potential	Low level of innovation / high risk • Increasing the innovations who provide competitively advantage • Risk reduction • Using a business plan and objective analysis • Minimize investment • Optimization of financing costs • Choosing other business methods, such as franchising • Reject business idea

High Innovation *Low*

Low Risk *High*

Figure. 1. Entrepreneurial strategic matrix

Source: M. Sonfield, R. Lussier, J. Corman, M. McKinney, Gender Comparisons in Strategic Decision-Making: An Empirical Analysis ofthe Entrepreneurial Strategy Matrix, Journal of Small Business Management 2001,39(2), p. 166.

A brief description of the Bulgarian female entrepreneur is made after the identification of possible options for choosing entrepreneurial activity in women's society.

In the Annual Report on the Status and Development of SMEs in Bulgaria 2008, the Bulgarian female entrepreneur has the following profile (Ministry of Economy, Energy and Tourism, 2010, p. 146):

• active age (30–49 years);

• with higher and secondary specialized education, mainly economic and humanitarian;

• runs a small business in the services, hospitality and catering and trade sectors

• use of foreign languages;

• works with a computer and uses the internet;

• prefers working outside home;

• successfully combines work and family care.

National surveys in Bulgaria indicate that women entrepreneurs are running businesses that are in the services sector, including commerce. For this reason, in the identification of trade competencies, 26 posts were analyzed, developed by the Bulgarian Chamber of Commerce and presented in the National Competence Assessment System at https://mycompetence.bg/. They serve as the basis for the development of key commercial competencies, and also examines the curricula of leading economics universities in the country and abroad.

The research is of interest to the in-depth study of women's entrepreneurship in Bulgaria, conducted in 2012 by G. Gerganov and R. Nenova (Gerganov & Nenova, 2012). The authors outline the profile, motivation and best practices for female entrepreneurs in a specific sector of the economy - agriculture.

Based on the entrepreneurial theoretical framework outlined by Schumpeter and Kirzner, the author formulates adequate conclusions regarding the initiation of innovation in the studied sectors (Perkov, 2008).

The methodological toolkit used in this report has the following sequence:

Develop a survey based on existing theoretical assumptions about the competencies of women entrepreneurs.

Choice of a scale to measure the level of competence of the respondents - 5-point type Likert scale 1 - completely disagree, 2 - rather disagree, 3 - neither agree / disagree, 4 - rather agree, 5 - completely agree.

Conducting a survey.

Processing of questionnaires.

Results analysis.

3. Comparative analysis of the logistical competencies of women seeking business in Italy and Bulgaria

The respondents from Bulgaria indicate that their knowledge of leasing and leasing schemes is a competence with the highest average coefficient in services (3.00), and the lowest level is reported in women starting a business in industrial production (2, 25) and logistics (2,33). Data from Italy show us that women in the trade are the highest rated in this indicator (3.39). The lowest average level of knowledge of leasing is among women employed in industrial production (2,33).

The knowledge of factoring and the application of factoring operations are most strongly present in Bulgarian women starting businesses in the field of agriculture -

2.57. The lowest average coefficient for women in Bulgaria is 2.00 and refers to those wishing to develop activity in the industrial production. Italian respondents indicated that they had the highest average knowledge of factoring and the application of factoring operations when operating in the logistics sector (3,30). The lowest score for this competence is female entrepreneurs in agriculture (2.50). The great advantage of factoring is the fast availability of funds, which should be known to potential entrepreneurs (Pencheva, 2014, p. 110).

Consensus knowledge is most prevalent among Bulgarian women starting a business in the services sector (3,13). The lowest average coefficient for women in Bulgaria is 2.00 and refers to those wishing to develop activity in the industrial production. Respondents from Italy indicated that they had the highest average knowledge of consignment in the field of logistics (3.50) and the lowest score for this competence were women entrepreneurs in services (2.22).

The knowledge of commission mediation is the highest average among Bulgarian women entrepreneurs who wish to develop business in the field of trade and industrial production with equal value of 3.00. The surveyed Bulgarian women indicate that the lowest is the start-up in the Agriculture sector - 2.57. Results of a survey of women in Italy indicate that logistics professionals (3.50) have the highest average score, and women with e-commerce have the lowest average score for commission mediation competencies - 1,89.

Forwarding mediation competencies are the highest average among Bulgarian female entrepreneurs wishing to develop a business in the trade sector with a value of 2.90. Bulgarian women surveyed indicate that the lowest is the startup in the Agriculture sector - 2.28, followed by E-Commerce by 2.38. Respondents from Italy indicated that they had the highest average knowledge of freight forwarding in trade (3.00) and the lowest score for this competence were women entrepreneurs in services (2.09), followed by e-commerce by 2.22.

The competencies for exercising control over the execution of the mediation contracts are the highest average among Bulgarian female entrepreneurs wishing to develop a business in the field of logistics with a value of 3.00, and the lowest are the start-ups in the field of electronic trade (2.40). Respondents from Italy indicated that they had the highest average knowledge of exercising control over the execution of the concluded mediation contracts in the field of logistics (3.60), with the lowest score for this competence being women entrepreneurs in the field of e-commerce (1.89). Determining the effects of mediation operations is the highest competence average in the agricultural sector (3.14) and the lowest level is reported for women starting an e-commerce business (2.28). Data from Italy show us that women in logistics are the highest rated in this indicator (3.20). The lowest average level of detection of the effects of mediation operations is women employed in services (2.09).

Conclusion

The empirical results presented summarize the comparative aspects of the necessary trade competencies for the development of women's entrepreneurship in Italy and Bulgaria, the following could be identified as more important:

Both of the target groups from Italy and Bulgaria, regardless of the economic activity in which they intend to do business, need training to enhance their trade competences, due to their low average knowledge levels ranging from 1.89 to 3.60.

With the lowest average levels of knowledge of individual trading competencies are Bulgarian women wishing to develop businesses in the fields of industrial production, logistics, trade and agriculture.

The conclusion is similar for the Italian respondents, where the lowest average levels are in economic activities - industrial production, services, e-commerce, agriculture.

The highest average levels for individual competencies were indicated by Bulgarian women wishing to start a business in the services and trade sector, while trade and logistics were at similarly high levels in Italy.

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