

Regional Symposium On Gender Mainstreaming Into Economic Policies

Geneva, 28-30 January 2004

Women's Access to Self-employment and Entrepreneurship

Dear Ladies and Gentlemen, dear participants of the symposium. Thank you for giving me the opportunity to speak in such distinguished audience, especially in the times when the countries in Central and Eastern Europe are faced with great changes.

In recent years, Slovenia has experienced many changes, political and economic. In accordance with these changes, a global goal of the Slovene economy has been set: to become an active and successful, globally competitive member of the European Union, to keep and develop its competitive advantages based on a high added value of products and services.

To achieve this goal and make real the vision of Slovenia as an internationally competitive and dynamic country, the Ministry of the Economy created the Entrepreneurship and Competitiveness Policy. It is oriented into giving effect to a new concept of a quality economic growth, based on ideas, knowledge, information and new technology. This concept has been integrated into the National Development Plan until the year 2006 and into Strategy of the Development of Slovenia as well as into the Programme for Efficient Accession of Slovenia into the EU.

One of the crucial Slovene, as well as EU orientations, lies in the field of Women Entrepreneurship. Women in Slovenia formally have equal rights and opportunities in the labour market as men, but there are some barriers and disadvantages for women on the labour market in Slovenia.

The employment rate of women decreased in past years, but gender labour activity gap in Slovenia is close to 10 percentage points. Slovenia has been a country with a high female activity rate, and particularly high female employment rate for more than fifty years. Besides the political reasons, the economic necessity and desire to attain a higher standard of living have stimulated mothers to enter the labour market and not to leave it after childbirth.

Even though employed women are more educated than men and have higher education and training than men, as explained in labour market analysis, women are present far below the average in the top and best paid jobs: legislators, senior officials and managers (31.8%). In the Slovene Government, 20 % are women (3 among 15) and about 5 % of women in Slovenia hold top manager positions. The share of women among the persons in employment according to the Labour Force Survey Results in 2001 is above the average in the following occupations: clerks (66.6%), service workers and market sales workers (62.8%), professionals (59.3%) and elementary occupations (59.9%). Female labour force is prevailing in health and social care, education and culture, tourism, trade and financial services.

According to the results of statistical annual sample survey of wages by professional level and activities data clearly present the gender pay gap -12.2% (2000) and -10.8% (2001) to

the prejudice of women. Taking into consideration the higher education of women than men the actual gender pay gap, measured by gender human capital gap, is even bigger -16.8%.

Table 1: Employment rates by gender and age groups, in %

Year	1998	1999	2000	2001	2002	EU-15
Total						
15-64	62.9	62.2	62.8	63.8	63.4	64.3
15-24	37.5	34.3	32.8	30.5	30.6	40.6
25-54	81.6	81.7	82.6	83.6	83.4	77.2
55-64	23.9	22.0	22.7	25.5	24.5	40.1
Men						
15-64	67.2	66.6	67.2	68.6	68.2	72.8
15-24	39.5	36.3	35.7	34.1	34.4	43.7
25-54	85.2	85.2	85.7	87.0	86.7	86.8
55-64	31.8	31.3	32.3	35.9	35.4	50.1
Women						
15-64	58.6	57.6	58.4	58.8	58.6	55.6
15-24	35.4	32.4	29.7	26.8	26.5	37.4
25-54	77.8	78.1	79.3	80.1	80.0	67.4
55-64	16.1	13.2	13.8	15.8	14.2	30.5

Source: Eurostat

Among unemployed people, registered at the Employment Service of Slovenia in April 2002, 52.5% were women.

Acknowledging all the obstacles and barriers that women face when entering the labour market the Programme of Promoting Entrepreneurship Among Women was created. It is financed by three Ministries: Ministry of the Economy, Ministry of Labour, Family and Social Affairs and Ministry of Agriculture, Forestry and Food and it is carried out by the Slovene Small Business Development Centre.

The programme aims at:

- young women entering the labour market (women with unsuitable education and those who consider self-employment as a part of their career),
- women re-entering the labour market (the unemployed, women in rural areas, women in urban areas),
- women start-ups,
- enterprises in the phase of growth.

The objectives of this Programme are opening up new professional and employment opportunities for women, improving their economic status, training promoters and securing assistance for them at the local level, preparing a comprehensive overview and monitoring of women on the labour market and asserting a policy of equality between the sexes.

It is divided into:

1. Implementation on the national level, performed by the Information Centre META:
 - free of charge telephone counseling (1033 contacts in 2003),
 - counseling through the subsidized voucher system,
 - linking with international networks and similar institutions for exchange of best practice and establishing business contacts, participation in international events,

- maintenance of the web-site www.podjetnost.org (15.359 visits in 2003),
 - national and international promotion by organizing and participating in international and national conferences.
2. Implementation on the local level:
- support to the projects, chosen in public tenders. In 2003 the title of the tender was Co-financing of the Gender-equality projects on the Local level. The programme's objectives are improving the economic position of women and gender equality and it is aimed at giving effect to gender equality, opening new employment opportunities for women, opening new professional horizons, encouraging and qualifying women planning of their careers.
3. Coordination of promoters of women entrepreneurship, organizing seminars and workshops.

We are very proud to be recognized as a country, playing a leading role region in this field. Each year, we organize the conference Bridges of Cooperation, where similar institutions and associations in the region of Southern and Eastern Europe meet. In May of last year we hosted the annual meeting of the World Association of Women Entrepreneurs in Ljubljana, in December, the Ministry of Economy, the OECD LEED programme and the Central European Initiative co-organized a Seminar on Women Entrepreneurship and Social Innovation and we are proud to have a Slovene representative, Ms. Marta Turk, a Vice President of the World Association of Women Entrepreneurs.

In addition, the Slovene women entrepreneurs are very active in taking part at exhibitions called Creativity and Entrepreneurship and at seminars Women with Energy, organized under the auspices of the Municipality of Ljubljana.

We are exercising promotion of women entrepreneurship through many international and regional organizations like the OECD LEED Programme, the OECD Working Party on SMEs, the Central European Initiative and the Adriatic Ionian Initiative.

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