

ERASMUS+ Programme 2015 – KA2 Adult Education

Project n°: 2015-1-ES01-KA204-015937

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

Partner: Cyprus Adult Education Association – Syndesmos Ekpedevsis Enilikon Kyprou (CAEA)

Author: Klitos Symeonides

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

## **INTERVIEWING ENTREPRENEURIAL WOMEN**

### **ELLI FILOKYPROU (GOURI)**



Elli Filokyprou at Gouri village, a business woman,  
in front of traditional weaving machine

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## 1. The identification

Elli lives in the picturesque village Gouri. She has 2 children ages 31 and 29, one is agricultural specialist and the other is hair dresser. Elli is 55 years old.

Gouri is a low mountains village with 300 villagers, 40 kilometres from the capital Nicosia. It is a picturesque village with traditional economy, with many farmers, it is very green, with some of the villagers to have family business for tourism oriented as many tourist are visiting the village.

There is no elementary School. Young persons are not many. Is a touristic place. Many inhabitants are manual workers. They produce local wine, smoke meat etc.

The community is very progressive and dynamic due to the long running adult education centre. Women and men came together and they cooperate closely. Women emancipation is a reality due to the efforts of all citizens. There is rich culture which was developed through the many years of isolation due to bad roads. Household culture with traditional clothes, traditional food, art and crafts, traditional building materials, the language and the values of the village developed from generation to generation all now are taking attention for preservation.

Elli is secondary education graduate and was working in the capital Nicosia. In 2002 she was without work and started thinking to work by herself on weaving textiles establishing an informal business at the village. At that time the German Embassy offers funds to be used for traditional crafts and arts in the village. The village council bought eight traditional weaving machines.

Elli with few other women attended a two weeks training course offered by the Cyprus Handicraft Centre of the Ministry of Commerce. This was organised and offered free of charge with the obligation of the trainees to produce weaving materials and give the Centre to sell giving trainees a remuneration. Five persons attended the course including Elli.

They have learned to produce Hand woven cushion covers, hand woven bed, table clothes, curtains, bed covers, bed sheets, priests' dresses etc.

Those products are of high demand from tourists but also from Cypriots. In most tourist shops those products are popular.

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The business of weaving textiles is popular especially in small remote villages where the women have no jobs and the will to preserve the traditional arts and crafts.

## **2. The beginning**

**2.1** Elli was working for some years in Nicosia and when children were small she was not working. For many years she was a good housewife.

This business was the first that she undertook 13 years ago.

**2.2.** The decision came to her mind when the traditional weaving machines came to the village and the Cyprus Handicraft Centres offered the training.

**2.3** She was in favour of the traditional art and crafts and her parents and grandparents gave her some training how to make needlework. She was seeing old people in the village mainly women to use the traditional weaving machines to repair men and women clothes and to supply home with many items for bed covering, for table covering etc.

**2.4** Weaving in the traditional weaving machine is a very sensitive and difficult work. Needs long training. We're not ready to produce.

After the two weeks official training their skills were not enough to start work. They requested old women in the village to assist and to train them something that the old ladies did it happily.

**2.5** The village council offered the ladies and of course to Elli free of charge the materials like the needed thread to work on the weaving machines.

**2.6** The Cyprus handicraft Centre of the Government was purchasing the products of Elli and the others and the ladies started having an income. The village council opened a small exhibition in the centre of the village where the products of them were exhibited for the tourists visiting the village.

## **3. The consolidation**

**3.1** The Cyprus Handicraft Centre was paying very little and Elli was not happy. Her will to continue, the strength to keep the business, gave Elli and others new ideas.

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**3.2** Marketing of the products, new markets for new type of products maintained the project alive.

**3.3.** Marketing was at primitive levels. Only few tourists visiting the village were aware about the project and the products. Consolidation process could be much more successful if marketing was at good levels.

**3.4** The adaptation of the project by the community council gave a progressive level to the project. Marketing started giving a push to the project. Activities at the village were organised with the participation of people from other places. The small exhibition at the village was a good step forward.

**3.5** Elli and other ladies are worrying about the future of the project as young women are not interested to continue the project. Very few young ladies are living in the village and the full time work for the project or even part time is not productive.

## **4. The future**

**4.1** Elli and the other few ladies who are working individually and not as company, have no advices or consultation of what is good to do. An idea is to create a website and be able to sell on line. The project needs more energy to survive because this depend on individual will.

**4.2** The future depends if the ladies have the strength to continue even with low prices of their products. Depends of incentives that may have for the Government services.

**4.3** The future of the project depends on the will of the women. They have at the moment the strong will. They are very happy to meet at the workshop almost every day and have fun and happy time talking and developing more friendship while working on the weaving machines. They fell very proud as they feel that they do something important for their community and for their country.

**4.4** They are thinking of new ideas that might take less time and income could be higher.

**4.5** The project has a future if new, younger persons come in, get training and work even part time –at their free time. This will be ban offer to the village which has a bright future. Ladies and the village council could look for new markets even abroad and find ways to sell the products.

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## 5. Enterprising women

**5.1** Women in the village grew up near weaving machines where their grandparents were contributing to the household economy by working on the weaving machines.

Elli is a determinant person with strong will. Her motives to work for the project, are her great love to the community, the love to preserve the traditional crafts, to have an extra income to contribute to the household economy. Elli believes that women are weaving is very close to women nature.

A woman to become a business person was not usual some decades ago. Women were at home for children, with low self-esteem, were seen by themselves and by others as not capable to decide on important issues, to succeed in projects.

The emancipation of women and the changes in socioeconomic life gave women the opportunity to realize their potentials and to start slowly to come to economic life by establishing small traditional mainly businesses, related to the household products in order to contribute to the household economy and budget. The changing social and economic life by the establishment of babies and children caring facilities gave women the opportunity to discover their strengths.

This happen to Elli who discovered that many women conditions were hidden. Elli is taking the right decisions in the business trained herself in serious decision at the household related to children education, to family relations, in social life, in her work. The project needs to be patient at high levels. Mainly as Elli said needs to be multitasking and multitask person and a housewife acquired many skills from many tasks.

**5.2** Elli says that household is like a “University: offering so many knowledge, skills and attitudes. Leadership skills are necessary for a successful business, leadership skills are acquired at high levels working at the household. Every day the housewife is taking many decisions and deals with many different kind of decisions. The work at the business demands also decision making. The household demands high levels of coordination, coordination of persons, of tasks, of activities at various levels. The enterprise needs also high levels of coordination of activities, of personnel etc. The housewife is trying every day for quality work at home, everything to be in order, to be at the right place, to function like a clock. The successful company depends on quality products.

**5.3** Elli has learned so many at the household that correspond to the business. The performance of the business depends on lot of tasks that she is executing at household. So many bills to be settled in both areas. The multitasking nature of both the enterprise and the

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household make smooth the work at the business. The physical and psychological strength which is practiced at the household makes easier the work at the business.

Very useful was the levels of responsibility at both placement, household and business. Household demands a lot of responsibilities, administration, and organization, everyday something transferred and practiced in the business on the above. Creativity and persistence are helpful to Elli when running the business.

Elli supported that multitasking nature of the household gives a lot of equipment to the business person to run the project in a better way.

**5.4** Elli believes that with the write training, women at household could modernise the activities. The 20 and more tasks that a housewife experiences every day or very often, could be more productive by keeping simple documents such time tables, notes, records. These will limit tension, expenses, time. The principles of project management could follow a training module for housewives ( aims–objectives, milestones, team building, budget, risk management, transaction, quality, planning, marketing, leadership, innovation, time management, stakeholders, environment, etc.)

**5.5** Elli says that there are many types of enterprises which suits women nature, sensitivities, skills etc. In rural areas where one role of the business is to use the local products,( agricultural , art, crafts, fruits, ) women are ideal in supervising business of these kind. Also small workshops to preserve local traditions can successfully run by women. Women support that are able to run any kind of small or medium size enterprise. Considering the qualities, skills and knowledge acquired at household there is no doubt about this if of course have the right training.

**5.6** To be an enterprise woman should have high levels of consistency, quality of products, trust, sensitivity , respect of the client, high levels of decision making, marketing skills, management and organizational skills, time management, pleasant personality, risk management , executive skills, able to choose priorities, love of her tasks, respect the environment, motivation. Intuition and fantasy was mentioned as main qualities of women in business.

**5.7** Education and training could give housewife more confidence and the necessary self-esteem in order to do the tasks with more productive way. To do the work in a better methodical way and everything to in order. To feel calm, happy, optimistic for the future.