

ERASMUS+ Programme 2015 – KA2 Adult Education Project n°: 2015-1-ES01-KA204-015937  
Document name: Workshop Summary  
Partner: DAFNI KEK  
Author: Vassiliki Tsekoura

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

Interviewing Entrepreneurial Women

Anna Dakoli

Cooking house “MassaRoom”

Industry: Food and catering services

Introductory Message

Entrepreneurship in its nature is not only a creative but a communicative action, too. Keeping this in mind, the DAFNI KEK staff within the MUPYME project were in search of those women entrepreneurs not only speak but COMMUNICATING effectively their vision behind their decision to become entrepreneurs – considering also that this decision keeps them active in several roles in parallel, the role of mother, of wife or partner.

Besides the focus objective of the task of interviewing “to bring light to the routes and lives as are perceived by the entrepreneurs themselves” in order to learn and get inspired by them, we were in serious consideration what exactly role model of entrepreneur we wanted to promote –especially considering the time of crisis and the various deficits the target group of housewives are facing daily.

Keeping in mind the profile of the housewives (age, location, educational background, personal and social status) we decided to reach to those entrepreneurs who are not far from the selected housewives’ cultural and educational background, or even in age terms.

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After the prior research in our context of reference (Achaia Prefecture, mainly in Patras area) and taking into account the dominate job industries of the city, we came in contact with the first 5 of the about 15 women entrepreneurs found.

### The Identification

Anna is of Albanian origin. She has studied Economics and speaks fluently 3 languages. She lives in Patras after deciding to leave her country...

Together with her husband, they took their first entrepreneurial step in the culinary field a few years ago by running an event place for weddings, general celebrations etc. She used also to work individually as mediator between Albanians who live in Patras and Greeks in order to facilitate their legal residence in Greece. She was responsible for a bureau as information desk about all issues concerning Greek residency and citizenship.

The last 7 months she decided to support her daughter's startup related to food industry/catering services. Her daughter is currently studying to become a chef and food industry/catering services manager, and she is already partly involved in the running of this new tavern/cookhouse called MassaRoom

We met her in her workplace where after welcoming *us she requested not to take any photos of her personally as she had been working (cleaning and preparing the kitchen for the cooking scheduled)*

### Location

Patras, Capital of Western Greece. Points of reference: the Main industry is Services. Due to connection directly via Port with rest of Europe, the citizens are influenced by all trends and despite the economic crisis the fashion market is very competitive and pluralistic. Dubbed as Greece's *Gate to the West*, Patras is a

commercial hub, while its busy port is a nodal point for trade and communication with Italy and the rest of [Western Europe](#).

Patras is home to one of the biggest universities in Greece which results to an increasing number of inhabitants throughout the year, excluding the summer months (middle of July to August). That has led to an increase in the demand of ready cooked meals. The last years, apart from the traditional taverns and fast food restaurants, a new form of food services has emerged, the cook houses that offer meals that are like home made ones.

### The beginning

As it has already been referred, Anna is already active in the field of self managed working field for years either supporting - in equal terms of responsibility with her husband - the mass event enterprise, or by her own, working as a cultural mediator for Albanian residences in Achaia Prefecture. She was always active and familiar with socializing and personal relations in an entrepreneurial way of reference. Her ability to speak languages and her intercultural skills were her personal empowerment strategy together with studies in economics (before she left Albania and becoming an economic migrant in Greece). She also likes cooking and whatever is connected with restaurant/event services for special occasions where people are happy to be together and share experiences. Due to her involvement in legalization procedures regarding documented residence of Albanians in Achaia, she was in connection with all these people who needed a place to meet each other, to celebrate family reunions and on the other side they kept strong willingness to get integrated into greek society, to meet people and secure jobs in connection to that.

After years, and despite the crisis, she decided to make use of the previous experience in developing a small, well organized modern tavern adapted to the new crisis situation and replying to a very concrete need: Good, homemade food,

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traditional tastes and low prices. This vision was reflecting also the decision of her young daughter to become a food services professional - and combine her updated knowledge and studies with (her) family's experience and social relations already established with the broader community of Patras city.

### The consolidation

The startup of MassaRoom cook house was set up 7 months ago in the center of the city, close to main traffic roads and Bus Intercity Stations. A beautiful, light although simple in its elements restaurant is already here with a variety of different dishes precooked and promoted to the clients to select the preferred ones.

The concept behind is: Quality and Low Cost traditional dishes with modern way of delivering "A concept which was against fast food (junk food) and replied to a recent trend of quality food in low prices"

To keep such a kind of enterprise vital and flourished in a daily basis isn't an easy task at all: *"it needs a lot of effort, time consuming... especially thinking a family running business, you are responsible to monitor all activities yourself."*

A daily running restaurant has a lot of expenses to cover in order to keep the promised quality. *"A combination of good services, quality ingredients, skillful cooks and a background of economic knowledge is more than needed"*.

Within crisis you are not thinking about making profit. You are a winner if you can manage covering all expenses, to pay your staff, to pay your insurances and keep your enterprise active in a daily basis. *"A good control of income and expenses with reliable staff as well as significant load of personal work, is the best combination to manage and have a job that satisfies you"*, Anna said.

### The future

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As Anna already mentioned, we need to be optimistic but realistic the same time. It is not possible to keep low and quality services and at the same time to make a profit. Your profit is to remain ‘alive’ and be reliable to what you advertise and offer.

To keep a business in the food sector despite the competition and crisis limitations is a multi competent task with a lot of risk taking.

*“Our personal and family story is a proof that people can manage when they know what they are doing and in which context they address their services.”*

Knowledge and updated skills are needed in several aspects. Knowledge in Basic Economics and Business Administration is important – not only to make your strategy but also to understand the rules and legal framework, to hire additional experts to deal with it but to be ready to think through the decisions you need to make to manage the economic aspect which reflects to the main work plans and selections.

The fact of multicultural reality makes the language skills a necessary tool for communication, understanding of a culture and broadening the spectrum of services to more clients from different cultures and preferences .

The message is: Try and be positive. A lot of work, update knowledge and skills in management, marketing and human resources (new staff, competent staff, etc), reliability and much of love for the subject of work are essential elements for a good professional life despite the difficulties – which are a lot and are challenging your plans and mood.

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### These difficulties/ challenges are

- Unstable economic environment
- Competition
- Prejudices or/and skepticism
- Junk food vs traditional cooking
- Tax, insurance and running obligatory expenses is an enormous cost disproportionate to the income

### Strengths

- Knowledge of economics and BA
- Speaking foreign languages
- Strong connection with community - either ethno-cultural minority or/and broader community (cultural empathy and intercultural communication skills)
- Keep low cost but good quality
- Not envisioning profit but good name and reliability
- Keep credits in services and such a way select the right staff
- Select a place for your enterprise accessible and functional (f.e close to transportation or visible enough, etc)

### Need and suggestion

- Friendlier legal framework for start ups





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