

ERASMUS+ Programme 2015 – KA2 Adult Education

Project n°: 2015-1-ES01-KA204-015937

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

Partner: Alliance for Development of Adult Education and Lifelong Learning (ADAE)

Author: Jelena Peroska

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

INTERVIEWING ENTREPRENEURIAL WOMEN

Verica (Timosieska)

The interview took place at Verica's office, on Tuesday the 26th April.

The interview will follow the 29 questions divided in 5 themes: the identification, the beginning, the consolidation, the future, the enterprising woman



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1. The identification

Verica lives in Tetovo, a city located in the Polog region in the North-Western part of Macedonia, 42 km from the capital Skopje. It is a multicultural developed city with two Universities and a lot of successful companies.

Verica has 3 children; the oldest one is 34 years old and the youngest one is 24 years old. She is 59 years old.

Her business is a private lawyer's office. She is the director and the owner of the business. She practices civil law and mostly she deals with divorce matters, especially working with women victims of domestic violence.

Verica is full time employed at the company and the owner. She works on her own and her work depends on the client needs and on the institutions. At the moment of the interview she had free time because the court administration was on strike so she couldn't do much work.

She had the idea to establish the business when she was a child and becoming a lawyer was her wish from a long time ago. But she was working at a state owned business (socialistic Yugoslavia period) so she was providing for her family and postponed the realization of her dream.

Verica now has 25 cases per year and she works also in an NGO providing legal advice to women victims of domestic violence.

2. The beginning

2.1 The business started in 2000 in an office that she rented. After two years, from the women's NGO contacted her and she started getting involved in projects. Today she is a successful lawyer and she is proud to say that she never lost a case. Every lawsuit she started was successfully finished.

2.2 She had strong support from the family to start the business, both moral and financial. Her husband was the one who was supporting her in her actions and helping her in the house and with the children. Her daughters were grown up also and they helped her and supported her to achieve her goals.

2.3 Before she started the business she was working at the state owned business for 15 years. After she lost the job during the privatization period, she started volunteering in the Primary Court in Tetovo and she worked there for 2 years. This experience helped her to learn

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a lot about practising the law and to establish contacts that she could need later when she opened her own office.

2.4 She is a university educated woman so she learned a lot during the studies and also after through her experience in the workplace. She had problems at the beginning:

- Building a reputation
- Security (she had to deal with all kinds of people, aggressive, threatening)
- She had no adequate space
- Financial problems
- Lack of clients
- Lack of marketing
- Taking risks

2.5 The family was very supportive of her. Her husband and the children were helping a lot in the household. Also she started working with the women's NGO and they also encouraged her to continue working and helping women.

2.6 At the beginning, the things that really helped her were her attitude towards the clients and the empathy she possessed. She treated every client with respect and compassion. The rate of success of 100% shows that she really knows how to do her job and she can estimate what needs to be done.

2.7 The most important decision she made was to collaborate with the NGO and to specialize in dealing with women victims of domestic violence. She after had a chance to undergo a lot of training in the area and also to train others on how to deal with this vulnerable group of women. She managed alongside the NGO to bring the work on a higher level, on policy level. Together with the NGO they managed to put pressure on the institutions to enact a new law on prevention and protection of domestic violence.

3. The consolidation

3.1 Verica thinks that the most important quality that contributed in maintaining the business was her ability to establish good relations with people and to be very realistic and stand firmly on the ground. Also, as a very active person she showed a lot of initiative an interest in involving in the community and helping other people.

3.2 The future success was determined by the success she had with her work. She says that the empathy is the most important thing, to be able to treat people equal to you and to feel their pain and understand their problems. Her personal qualities and abilities were recognized by her clients and other organizations she collaborates with.

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3.3 The progress of the company was delayed because there were expenses in maintaining the office. She had to move to a smaller office closer to her home so that she does not have a lot of expenses for traveling and for rent.

3.4 The most important decision she made was to specialize in working with women victims of domestic violence. She had a lot of contacts through the work in this area and she started collaborating with different institutions and organizations.

3.5 The most crucial issue which a business person should anticipate is the financial issue. Most of the small companies in Macedonia are being closed because they have a lot of expenses and they cannot make it without financial support. Verica cut her expenses and got involved in other activities also just to be able to sustain her office and continue to work with the same progress.

4. The future

4.1 She does not plan to expand. She thinks that according to the need of the community and the population that is the amount of cases she can work on. Statistically, there are limited amount of lawsuits which is proportional to the number of the population. She thinks that she does not need to expand, because she will have double expenses and the same amount of work.

4.2 The future of the business depends on the needs of clients and the quality of the services. Verica has maintained good relations with the clients and she has a very good reputation among the people in the community. Also, she is one of the few lawyers that have experience with victims of domestic violence so she is well known for her abilities.

4.3 Verica is not willing to expand her business because there isn't a demand of the services she offers.

4.4. At the moment there are no changes. The business is doing well. There is a need for her services from the people and from the NGOs, so she is running a well-established and stable business.

4.5 The new phase will follow the political situation in the country and the progress in the area of protection of women rights.

5. Enterprising women

5.1 The work that Verica is doing is very risky and she had faced a lot of challenges. It is not ideal job for women in the traditional way but it is a job that is mostly done by men so even

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becoming a lawyer is an empowering experience. She also is involved in projects implemented by women NGOs so she is helping other women and protecting their rights.

5.2 Verica had experience in working in different environments before she started the business. She was working at a state owned firm for many years. She also volunteered in the Primary court for two years so she learned a lot about leadership, time management and administrative work. She also had to balance between the work in the household and the work at the office so she has experience with multitasking.

5.3 Verica says that there is some small progress in the environment for women entrepreneurship. There are more women that run companies. Women are more accepted as managers, directors of companies. But still there is a stigma around women entrepreneurship; women are paid less than men with the same job. There is a need of improvement of the conditions for women to be able to become self-employed.

5.4 Verica likes to use technology in her work. She uses social media and she gets information about new things constantly. She is also very modern when it comes to the work in the household. She manages to use new technologies in the house, also to communicate with her children when they are abroad.

5.5 Verica likes to get involved in activities that promote women equality and equal opportunity. She is empowering women mostly to be able to be independent and get out of an abusive marriage. She participates in workshops and seminars all in order to understand the bottom of the issue.

5.6 Verica considers that the most important thing is to be realistic and to be more active. The initiatives are very important too and it is good to share ideas with collaborators and work on implementing them.

5.7 The most important factors are to be compassionate and to have empathy for people. You have to be interested and informed of what is going on in your community so you can help whenever is needed.