

## ENHANCING WOMEN'S ENGAGEMENT IN ENTREPRENEURIAL BUSINESS ACTIVITIES

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### **Abstract**

Women have a great influence in all spheres of the society that is continuously growing nowadays, with their significant professional achievements even in certain sectors that were reserved for men. The development of women entrepreneurship varies in different parts of the world depending on the economic development of the region. However, the engagement of women in entrepreneurial activities strengthens their economic power. The purpose of this paper is to elaborate the motivation for women to start their own businesses, focusing on specific problems and challenges they need to face and overcome, as well as to analyse the development of women position in business and society. The importance of entrepreneurial education, changing stereotypes for women and support from successful women by sharing their story and experience, is also highlighted. A situation analysis based on comparison of women holding leading managerial positions and their business involvement in different countries is provided. The research is supported by survey conducted in North Macedonia on representative number of 50 women entrepreneurs in order to identify the most important factors for enhancing the development of women entrepreneurship.

**Keywords:** entrepreneurship, business development, woman, empowerment

*JEL classification:* M13; L26

### **INTRODUCTION**

The rapid technological development and increasing globalization have contributed to the change in the economic structure in the last two decades. The literature review and empirical evidence provide insight into the situation in which the overflow of labor from the primary to the secondary and tertiary economic sector is detected. The consequence of this situation is the fast development of entrepreneurship and the emergence of a large number of entrepreneurs which with their innovations manage to turn opportunities into successful business ventures. These opportunities also brought changes in society, giving women a chance to use their experience and education to gain managerial positions and take on the role of a successful entrepreneurs.

Statistics show that today the rate of women-owned businesses is growing rapidly. Over the last few decades, women have slowly but surely turned their interests and hobbies into successful businesses, the sustainability of which has not been called into question even during several global economic crises. The fashion industry, the cosmetics industry and the various types of services that enhance the living conditions

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of women have become one of the most lucrative businesses in recent years, and many of them are founded by women. Women realized that the new conditions and the growing female economic independence also affected the changes in the movement of capital and the growing consumption of money in sectors that are directly related to women and their needs.

Although women's entrepreneurship is at its highest level today, it needs to be promoted and supported by the society and its institutions in order for this trend to be sustainable all over the world. Constant and proper encouragement of entrepreneurial values in women and their commitment to work in bringing entrepreneurial ideas to reality through different organizations and funds that will contribute to easier financing, will definitely enable the sustainable development of women entrepreneurship and bring to light its overall economic potential.

### **1. WOMENS ENTREPRENEURSHIP**

Many studies conducted in recent years confirm that today's market economy is based on entrepreneurship. The growth of entrepreneurship in recent decades is a result of the change in the overall business environment. Entrepreneurship has proven to be a bridge between technological innovation and markets. Innovation as one of the drivers of economic development has achieved its market commercialization through entrepreneurial endeavors. Entrepreneurial activities have a great impact on the economy especially through job creation. In more developed markets, entrepreneurship is mainly a generator of new products and new jobs.

To be a successful business woman today is a dream of many young girls. According to statistics, the number of women with higher professional education in the world is increasing year by year. Young girls want to take full advantage of today's social liberalization and turn their knowledge and skills into a successful business career. Today's women managers, leaders and entrepreneurs who have achieved successful careers and high social reputation, with their hard work and constant struggle are important rolemodels whose footsteps many want to follow.

According to Radović-Marković (2005), women leaders who stood out with their success and thus formed their own "profile", have qualities and specifics that can be clearly distinguished:

- Women have significant support from the family, especially with superior and creative mothers as their idols;
- In addition to the necessary knowledge and experience they possess for running large and successful companies, their intuition and good communication, as well as understanding of co-workers and employees help them the most;
- They support rapid changes in their company's business strategy;
- They have emotional stability, have the ability to tolerate stress and frustration;
- They are well organized and enjoy overcoming various business obstacles, above all, they are dominant personalities and special in their own management style and way of thinking;
- Show enthusiasm at work and are very active and full of energy;
- They always do the best they can and strive for a high level of self-discipline;

- They are intuitive, intellect and logic cannot be used in all situations, so the most successful women leaders involve a high degree of intuition;
- All successful women leaders have personal charisma. It is a feature that allows them to have a strong impact on employees, conveying their clear vision of work and at the same time motivating them to achieve the set goals;
- Successful strong women leaders have a high level of self-control and strong will. They are very careful in making decisions and persistent in putting them into practice;
- They are very brave, reflected in their willingness to quickly and easily take the risk of doing business, not forgetting their own responsibility to all employees in the company;
- Teamwork suits them because they have shown exceptional ability to collaborate with other employees, to support and guide them in carrying out activities;
- They build a leadership style, based on the family model, and thus unite a new spirit in organizing the business;
- They are characterized by high visionary abilities, have a strong sense of ethics in society and work to homogenize people and ideas in their organizations.

According to a study by American scientist Birley (1989), the difference between successful business women and men is minimal. Both women and men generally have the same character traits and ambitions to succeed in business. According to the same author, the differences between women and men entrepreneurs can be classified into the following categories:

- Men and women have similar motives to start a career in entrepreneurship;
- They are very similar in terms of marital status (women are under pressure from family problems when making business start-up decisions);
- Problems in finding capital are similar, although there are some indications that women, with their charm and communicativeness, can easily reach the required capital; and
- Women prefer service and trade businesses rather than men.

In 1948, the International Labor Organization adopted the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women. Prior to the adoption of this Convention, women had no rights compared to men, and this convention led to a change in the position of women in the world. Women's participation in the total workforce has increased, women in many countries have rights and protection from the state, then they have similar conditions and opportunities for education, career advancement as men. Today it is no longer rare to see a successful business woman at the helm of a company. However, there are a number of studies that explore the differences in men's and women's labor market participation rates and wages. Some of these differences have been linked to gender disparities in education access and attainment (Islam and Amin 2016).

The constant struggle of women for gender equality has led to the emergence of women entrepreneurship as a separate economic concept. Many of today's women entrepreneurs are so successful that it is hard to believe that previous generations of women went through a difficult struggle to approximate their status as women and to

be equal to men. Women were constantly challenged by socially predetermined roles, which limited their professional freedom and advancement. This struggle has resulted in the fact that today in many countries gender equality has been established, and in countries that are not yet at that level, is still ongoing.

However, a correlation analysis results characterizing the relationship between gender-related development indices (introduced by the United Nations) and different stages of women entrepreneurial activity (created by Global Entrepreneurship Monitor, GEM) suggest that female entrepreneurial activity is not significantly correlated with gender equality (Sarfraz, Faghih, and Majd 2014).

Many women have proven themselves in professions that have long been considered male, but it must be emphasized that mostly women who today are considered successful entrepreneurs and leaders, have achieved success in areas related to women, as fashion, cosmetics, different types of services and spheres of entertainment, rarely a woman owns a large construction company or a large industrial conglomerate. Enterprises owned by men on the one hand and women on the other are generally concentrated in different sectors, women entrepreneurs being better represented in labor intensive sectors such as trade and services rather than capital intensive manufacturing industries (Klapper and Parker 2011). Women still face difficulties in many areas of business, and the biggest problem still comes from a social environment that is not yet fully ready to accept a successful and independent woman as part of everyday life.

## **2. KEY DRIVERS FOR WOMAN TO START A BUSINESS**

Motivation is the driving force behind individual's personal, economic, and social needs. Motivation for progress is what characterizes a woman entrepreneur. Above all, survival instinct is a motive that pushes a woman to start a business. According to many studies, the motivations for woman to start a business can be summarized as follows:

- As only chance to find a job, do not have a better choice for work;
- Inability to advance in the workplace;
- Desire for good earnings and above average;
- Autonomy in business;
- Business opportunity they do not want to miss.

American authors Moore and Butner (1999) have expressed their views on the motives of women entrepreneurship, namely, that women start their company out of a desire for self-affirmation and a career challenge, expecting appropriate respect from the environment, proper recognition and increased self-esteem. According to study on sample comprising 153 women that started their own businesses, the main factors identified to have spurred women to leave employment for business ownership are: the need to achieve personal growth, independence and the economic payoff (Xaviera, Ahmadb, Nora, and Yusof 2012).

An interdisciplinary research on a sample of 345 entrepreneurs operating in Poland shows statistically significant correlation between the motives to take up economic activities and the choice of the source of the initial capital. People who undertake

business activity to generate greater earnings/accumulate wealth are more likely to use their own capital or repayable funds (Staniewski, Szopiński, and Awruk 2016).

Capital alone, as a small cash loan or grant, is not sufficient to grow women-owned subsistence-level firms. However, it can work if it is delivered in-kind to more successful women microentrepreneurs, and it should boost the performance of women's larger-sized SMEs (Buvinić and Furst-Nichols 2016).

According to Hughes (1995) there are two types of factors that motivate women to start and run their own business. These factors can be divided into:

- Push factors - factors that force or pressure a woman to start her own business. These factors basically have a negative connotation, because women are forced to start a business. Also, these factors are most often a consequence of the poor position of women and their dissatisfaction with current employment. Push factors can be: low wages, unemployment, inflexible management, limited perspective, job dissatisfaction.
- Pull factors - factors that lead a woman to start her own business. These factors usually have a positive connotation, business start-up is considered as a positive business opportunity for economic and personal autonomy. In pool factors can be classified: personal development, self-expression, realization of dreams, motive for profit, creativity, innovation, challenge, higher social status.

As mentioned, women's motivations for starting their own business can be varied, but the moment a woman decides to enter in an entrepreneurial venture, she will do everything possible to balance her career and family responsibilities, because business success will be the motivation for successful role of mother and wife.

### 3. CHALLENGES AND ISSUES FOR WOMEN IN BUSINESS

The constant increase in the number of women entrepreneurs and managers in small businesses is due to their need and desire for independence, change, due to their self-determination and ability for risk-taking, as well as possession of the necessary knowledge and skills.

Women entrepreneurs have the opportunity and possibilities to develop entrepreneurial activities in many areas of the economy.

The skill and ability of women in handicrafts is an idea for entrepreneurship, if they are skilled in: knitting, sewing, cooking, making sweets, they can start a business by opening: pastry shops, hairdressing salons, tailoring workshops and other types of crafts. If they have the appropriate education, they can start law and accounting firms, kindergartens, computer schools. In rural areas, women entrepreneurs start businesses engaged in: growing crops, gardening, floriculture, mushrooms, beekeeping and everything else where they can use benefits from nature. Livestock, poultry, processing of meat, milk and other animal products are also opportunities for farming businesses.

New technology offers many business opportunities through online services, sales or advertising that women entrepreneurs see as good business ideas. Apart from these examples, there are many others in which women entrepreneurs can be successful depending on the skills and education they possess.

Running a small business requires full commitment and engagement if the woman entrepreneur wants to ensure an economic security. The challenge for women entrepreneurs is bigger due to the need to establish necessary balance through successful management of tasks and responsibilities between their private and professional life. Although motherhood is really the biggest obstacle for a woman to fully engage in business, still technology, science and the increasing availability of the Internet in developed countries help running a home-based businesses. All of this goes in favor of women entrepreneurs being successful as mothers, wives and entrepreneurs.

There is an increasing need by researchers and policy makers to better understand the existing barriers for women entrepreneurs and to be able to benchmark change (Aidis and Weeks 2016). The new millennium witnessed a significant growth in the number of published empirical studies on women's entrepreneurship, with a notable expansion into emerging economies and those regions previously (relatively) under-represented in the field, highlighting the complexity of the female entrepreneurship experience in particular contexts and illustrating the influence of specific cultural, legislative and economic frameworks on women's entrepreneurial endeavours (Henry, Foss, and Ahl 2016).

Women face many barriers in the business world that can be categorized in four main group of factors, such as (Lewis, Henry, Gatewood, and Watson 2014):

- Access to financial resources;
- Education and consulting;
- Legislation;
- Traditional family upbringing.

In most countries today at least one of these factors has a very negative effect on women entrepreneurship, if not all. As a result of these unfavorable factors, women in the process of self-employment and later in managing their own businesses often hinder their lack of experience in international business, lack of proper business education and often do not have access to international business networks, which is not the case with male entrepreneurs.

**Financing:** When it comes to the problems of women entrepreneurs in accessing sources of funding, credit barriers are the most important. Raising funds through lending is one of the basic ways in which women entrepreneurs provide the necessary resources to finance their business venture. Due to the great importance of credit, access to credit has been identified as a leading barrier to entry into the process of self-employment among women around the world. Women entrepreneurs, who often run micro, small and medium-sized enterprises, face varying degrees of difficulty in raising capital, obtaining a mortgage or fair credit terms, as banks and banking practices often do not approve of the concept of micro-loans because they do not bring much profit. Most banks tend to invest in jobs with lower risk levels, and women consider this to be insufficiently respected by financial institutions. Entrepreneurs often find themselves in situations where financial institutions put them at a disadvantage, treating them with a dose of discrimination, and the pessimistic banking view of women's creditworthiness results in great caution in granting loans, and with this behavior they create one of the biggest obstacles for women entrepreneurship.

**Education and consulting;** The main problems that women face in trying to become and remain successful entrepreneurs are knowledge of technology, appropriate level of education and training. Continuous education and improvement of technical skills is fundamental to a company's growth. Problems arising from insufficient knowledge of technology or deficiencies in education and training are closely intertwined and can slow it down, and in some cases prevent women entrepreneurs from reaching their full potential for profitability. Training for business, management and communication skills, training related to new technological skills are essential for strengthening female entrepreneurship. Based on research and real needs of women entrepreneurs for specific skills, a framework for designing and implementing effective programs for women should be prepared (Bullough, de Luque, Abdelzaher, and Heim 2015). In order to follow all the changes taking place in the market, women entrepreneurs come together for easier exchange of knowledge and experience through women's entrepreneurship associations as a source of necessary information for starting and running new businesses and great support for women who are at the very beginning of an entrepreneurial career.

**Legislation;** There are many problems faced by women entrepreneurs, which are conditioned by the regulations. Problems arise when the laws are not sufficiently adapted for the survival and development of entrepreneurship in general, and thus female entrepreneurship. Among the most important legal regulations for women entrepreneurs are the laws related to women's rights to raise and care for children. With the availability of childcare, a woman's ability to increase her productivity and to extend the time to dedicate to her business arises. Another type of obstacle that depends on the legislation is the tax system. The willingness to enter into entrepreneurial activities depends on a number of different taxes, there are taxes that encourage entrepreneurship, but also those that discourage it. Factors influencing women's entrepreneurship also include professional closure and professional segregation. These phenomena often occur due to the failure of the legislature to legally regulate the distortion of women's professional inequality. Occupational closure is defined as the exclusion of a certain group of people from certain professions. There are a huge number of (historically) cases from almost every country in the world of such practices, where women are barred from doing any business.

**Traditional family upbringing;** A combination of two jobs or the so-called dual careers, one at work and the other at home, require hard work and dedication by women, no matter what country they come from. Today, the modern society encourages women around the world to have a successful career that creates funds for their family, and at the same time, women are expected to form families and take care of them. As a result of this trend, women are subject to the double burden of full-time work and all household responsibilities. In many ways, this effect has its roots in patriarchal traditions, which still extend and support the belief that the primary role of women is to be housewives and mothers. Needless to say, the situation is worse for women in transition economies and developing economies, where poverty and lack of infrastructure can make even the simplest everyday obligations much more time consuming.

#### 4. SITUATION ANALYSIS OF WOMAN POSITION IN BUSINESS AND SOCIETY

The emergence and development of women's entrepreneurship in recent years is closely linked to the process of equalization of men's and women's rights and the liberalization of society as a whole. The first women's entrepreneurial association was founded by Yvonne Foinant in 1945 in France. This association grew into a world network of 5 million women entrepreneurs from more than 120 countries. The gap between men and women in terms of their rights and freedoms is decreased today, and women, encouraged by these positive changes, are now taking the initiative in all areas of life, as well as in business.

By creating new jobs, both for themselves and for others, women entrepreneurs are recognized as a significant contributors to overall economic development. In addition, by taking advantage of entrepreneurial opportunities, they contribute to innovative approaches in management. However, they still make up a minority of entrepreneurs. There are many obstacles that women face on their way to achieve their entrepreneurial ideas. Although the economic influence of women in the world exists, serious studies for its recognition in society have started only at the beginning of this century. Even though women entrepreneurs are of growing importance and making significant contributions to world economies, they are understudied (Brush and Cooper 2012). In the field of female entrepreneurship studies focus on examining particular geographical contexts, industrial sectors, or different psychological features that distinguish women from men entrepreneurs (Paoloni and Demartini 2016).

The historical undervalue of women as entrepreneurs has led to the fact that women in most cases are forming and running companies that do not have much impact on economic growth. Usually, they are engaged in retailing and service companies, and the areas of manufacturing, construction and technology are still reserved for male entrepreneurs. This shows that inequality between women and men entrepreneurs is still prevalent, and that women entrepreneurship needs support in financing, consulting, easier access to the international market, new technologies and innovations.

The gap in female entrepreneurship is especially apparent in low-income economies, where women are much less likely than men to start a new business. The relationship between female entrepreneurship and various institutional factors, including women's financial inclusion, the gender gap in education, and legal rights disparities should be highlighted (Meunier, Krylova, and Ramalho 2017).

The Global Entrepreneurship and Development Institute (GEDI) is conducting detailed research of the Female Entrepreneurship Index (FEI). GEDI's women's entrepreneurship index measures the development of high potential female entrepreneurship worldwide. Women who own and manage business entities that are innovative, constantly expanding in the market and export-oriented from 77 countries around the world are included in the survey for this gender specific index that captures the multi-dimensional aspects of entrepreneurial development. The FEI framework contain three main sub-indices that measure the quality of: 1) the entrepreneurial environment; 2) the entrepreneurial eco-system; and 3) women's entrepreneurial aspirations.



According to GEDI research, the global trends that characterize the conditions for development of women entrepreneurship in the world are the following (Terjesen and Lloyd 2015):

- Improved technology transfer and reduced business risk: Survey results in all 77 countries show 18% progress in the process of "technology transfer" which includes: research and development of technology in the private sector, the presence of high quality research institutions, active cooperation in research between universities and industry and protection of intellectual property rights. Also, at the macro level in all 77 countries, business risk is reduced by an average of 13%, in terms of better availability and security of corporate financial information, protection of creditors by law and institutional support for mutual transaction.
- Growth of female business gazelles has been observed: Overall there has been an increase of 7% in the percentage of highly potential female entrepreneurs, who intend to grow their business by 50% and additionally employ up to 10 people within 5 years.
- Women entrepreneurs have a higher level of education: the percentage of highly educated women - those who have participated in some form of higher education - has grown by 9%.
- Innovation among women entrepreneurs and participation in the technology sector is declining: the innovation of an economy is reflected in the percentage of entrepreneurs who are engaged in the same business and offer the same type of product, and this percentage is reduced by 13% among women entrepreneurs. Even more disturbing is the fact that the percentage of women engaged in technology is lower by 19%. With the global increase in technology transfer, this indicates that the use and transfer of technology has increased, while the number of companies producing new technology has decreased.
- Improvements still needed: Despite the progress of many countries, 61% of countries are below 50 of the possible 100 points in measuring the female entrepreneurship index. In the countries of the European continent, it is necessary to improve the recognition of opportunities, the ability of women to recognize the good opportunities for starting a business in the area where they live. In Latin American countries, it is necessary to focus more on exports and look for buyers coming from other countries. Sub-Saharan African countries need to improve women's access to bank accounts and financial training programs, while East Asian countries need to improve women's perceptions of their skills and to upgrade women's awareness and their belief that they possess the necessary knowledge and skills to start a business.

Recognizing the importance of women entrepreneurship in recent decades, which is the result of the success and hard work of successful business women in all spheres of a society, has contributed to the creation of programs that help and improve the position of women entrepreneurs. These programs are usually supported by state governments and focus on assisting women start-ups, both in financing and expertise as well as in providing professional assistance, knowledge and experience transfer needed This

practice is present today everywhere in the world, both in developed and developing countries.

Today there are associations, governmental and non-governmental organizations that are established precisely to support women entrepreneurship, and they hold various seminars, trainings and meetings for the growing economic empowerment of women. Hopefully, the growing and deepening networks of transnational collaboration and exchange, will bring a “new direction” that can immeasurably enrich women's collective work to promote entrepreneurship (Hughes, Jennings, Brush, Carter, and Welter 2012).

Some of the mechanisms for supporting female entrepreneurship are:

- Establishing funds for the development of women entrepreneurship;
- Creating special credit lines for women businesses;
- Lobbying with foreign and domestic donors to support projects for development of women entrepreneurship;
- Establishment of business incubators for women;
- Training of women entrepreneurs on gender equality and overcoming the obstacles and barriers they face when starting a business;
- Tax relief related to the marital and parental status of the woman entrepreneur;
- Public promotion of successful women entrepreneurs;
- Encouraging the development of clubs and networks of women entrepreneurs.

The analysis show that there are more women than men in Europe, but women entrepreneurs represent only a third of the self-employed in the EU. According to the EU official data, women are 52% of the total European population but they represent only 34.4% of the EU self-employed and 30% of EU start-up entrepreneurs. The European Commission is working with EU countries to encourage more women to start their own businesses due to the fact that female entrepreneurial potential can be an important source of economic growth, innovation and jobs.

The Entrepreneurship 2020 Action Plan of European Commission aims to create favorable and supportive environment for the creation of new businesses and the grow of the existing entrepreneurial businesses through fostering the entrepreneurial education and training; removing existing administrative barriers and supporting entrepreneurs in crucial phases of the business lifecycle; and reviving the entrepreneurial culture in Europe bringing up new generations of entrepreneurs.

In the European Union, the European Network to Promote Women's Entrepreneurship (WES) plays a significant role in the development and promotion of women entrepreneurship. This body was set up by the European Commission and consists of representatives of national governments and institutions responsible for promoting female entrepreneurship in 31 European countries (EU members, Iceland, Norway and Turkey). The members in this network provide advice, support, information and contacts for female entrepreneurs, and help in the identification of good practices. The EU is dedicated to promote this concept in its policies and by creating different support tools and networks:

- The European on-line Platform for women entrepreneurs WEgate that provides information and links on access to training, mentoring, advice and business networking opportunities.

- The European Community of Women Business Angels and women entrepreneurs, funded by the European Parliament to support women entrepreneurs in accessing alternative sources of funding.
- The European Network of Female Entrepreneurship Ambassadors, inaugurated in 2009, made up of around 270 entrepreneurs from 22 European countries, which act as role models by telling their story to raise awareness and encourage entrepreneurship as a career option for women of all ages.
- The European Network of Mentors for Women Entrepreneurs, inaugurated in 2011, and North Macedonia as one of the seventeen European countries that belong to this network that provides advice and support to women entrepreneurs on the start-up, management and growth of their businesses in the early phases.

##### **5. IDENTIFYING KEY FACTORS FOR DEVELOPMENT OF WOMEN ENTREPRENEURSHIP IN NORTH MACEDONIA**

The changes that are taking place in parallel with the change of society, culture and economy in terms of women's rights and freedoms, bring new statistics and new changes in the global business picture. These changes are reflected in the business environment in the Republic of North Macedonia, where is significantly increased number of women entrepreneurs and women in key positions in domestic companies in relation to the situation at the end of the last century.

According to the Enterprise Surveys data 2019 by the World Bank was determined that in North Macedonia 29,3% of firms have female participation in ownership and 21,3% of firms have a female top manager, which indicates that female entrepreneurship is tending to grow.

However, the problem in Macedonia is the lower percentage of women in the labor market, which is a result of unfavorable social and economic environment. This situation also negatively affects women's entrepreneurship. Statistical data from 2017 show that 55,7% of the total number of women in North Macedonia are inactive, and the unemployment rate among women of working age is 9,7% (Labor Force Survey 2017, 28).

One of the reasons that leads to the low participation of women in the labor market it is not the woman's lower education or believes that woman's place is unique in the home but the fact that they are generally discouraged and discriminated, but not aware of it at all. In addition to the poor economic conditions that cause a lack of job opportunities, there is also a gender gap, which greatly affects the motivation of women to persistently seek and find employment. The unpaid work of women in the household also contributes to gender segmentation in the labor market. Insufficient availability and quality of care services for adults and children of preschool age makes it difficult for women to enter or return to the labor market, and in a large percentage reduces the opportunity for Macedonian women to enter in entrepreneurial venture. Women are still forced to choose between career and family, and there is a lack of real support from their environment in the process of creating awareness among women that they are capable of both having a successful career and having a successful family life.

Furthermore, most women who choose to start entrepreneurial businesses as a source of income, run smaller and family businesses that require less work, and are much less engaged in large companies and institutions.

However, the increased number of women business owners is currently a global trend, especially in developing countries, and so in North Macedonia.

Women entrepreneurs significantly contribute to poverty reduction, to the mobilization of entrepreneurial initiatives, and to a better overall state of the Macedonian economy but their contribution and success depends on various factors.

In order to identify the key factors for development of women's entrepreneurship in North Macedonia, research survey was conducted.

The population of the research was 50 women entrepreneurs from North Macedonia who have established their own business or hold a managerial position in a company. The survey was conducted by questionnaire that contains 25 claims for measuring respondents' opinions on the same basis.

The general assumptions for creating the questionnaire were: how women are encouraged and motivated to start their own business, is there still a discrimination against women present in our society, is there a division between male and female professions, is funding accessible to women, do governmental and non-governmental agencies invest in women entrepreneurship, is there information available about grants and training, are women entrepreneurs sufficiently involved in local and international business networks, to what extent is education, continuous upgrading and training crucial for successful running a business, is there institutional support for women entrepreneurship.

The analysis of the questionnaires gave the following results:

On the claim: *There is still a real division between male and female professions in the society*, out of 50 respondents, with Yes replied 9 respondents, with Partially 34 respondents answered, with No replied 7 respondents. The percentage of these answers is presented in Figure 1.

There is still a real division between male and female professions in the society

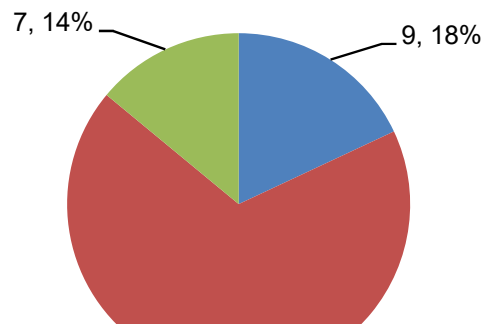
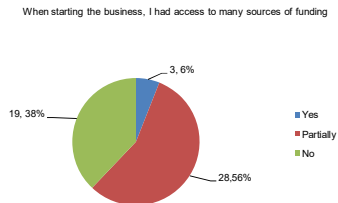


Figure 1. Male and female professions

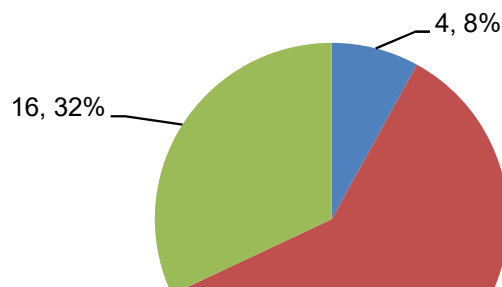
On the claim: *When starting the business, I had access to many sources of funding*, out of 50 respondents, with Yes replied 3 respondents, with Partially 28 respondents answered, with No replied 19 respondents. The percentage of these answers is presented in Figure 2.



**Figure 2.** Access to funding for starting new businesses

On the claim: *Training and workshops for women entrepreneurs are sufficiently organized*, out of 50 respondents, with Yes replied 4 respondents, with Partially 30 respondents answered, with No replied 16 respondents. The percentage of these answers is presented in Figure 3.

Workshops and training for women entrepreneurs are sufficiently organized



**Figure 3.** Workshops and trainings for development of entrepreneurial skills

On the claim: *There is adequate business women networking in the country*, out of 50 respondents, with Yes replied 2 respondents, with Partially 31 respondents answered, with No replied 17 respondents. The percentage of these answers is presented in Figure 4.

There is adequate business women networking in the c

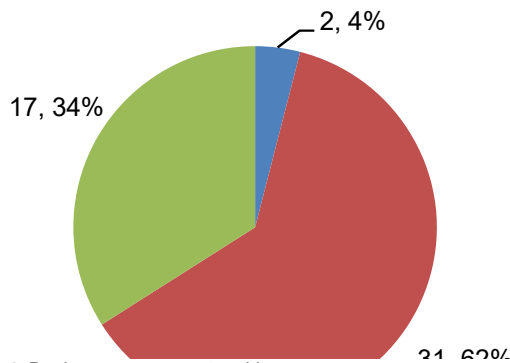


Figure 4. Business women networking

On the claim: *When starting my own business, I received appropriate help and support from government institutions*, out of 50 respondents, with Yes replied 0 respondents, with Partially 15 respondents answered, with No replied 35 respondents. The percentage of these answers is presented in Figure 5.

When starting my own business, I received appropriate I  
support from government institutions

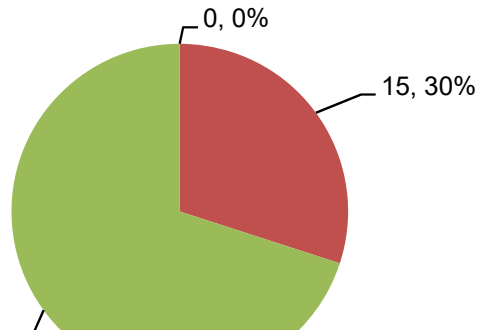


Figure 5. Institutional support for starting a business

On the claim: *Non-governmental institutions have an important role in supporting women's entrepreneurship*, out of 50 respondents, with Yes replied 14 respondents, with Partially 34 respondents answered, with No replied 2 respondents. The percentage of these answers is presented in Figure 6.

Non-governmental institutions have an important role in supporting women's entrepreneurship

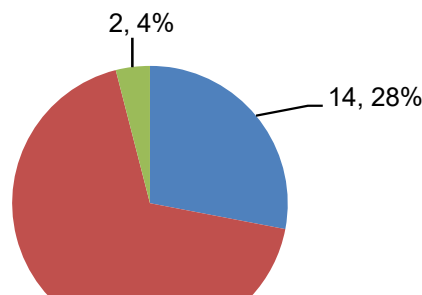


Figure 6. Support from non-governmental sector in starting businesses

In the Republic of Northern Macedonia, entrepreneurship is generally associated with micro, small and medium enterprises. With the creation of a favorable business climate by the institutions, there is a greater development of women entrepreneurship.

In the research process, five separate hypotheses were set in order to identify the key factors related to the development of women entrepreneurship, namely: the position of women in business, the availability of funding sources, investing in women entrepreneurs through education and skills training, need for networking and institutional support.

The results of the research indicate a great influence of governmental and non-governmental associations for raising public awareness in all stages of development of entrepreneurial businesses run by women, as well as in the process of eliminating gender stereotypes and discrimination against women in order to improve conditions for the work of women entrepreneurs.

Based on the results of the conducted research, women entrepreneurs face inaccessibility to the sources of financing, where they most often use personal funds to start their own business, but if the accessibility is higher, the number of women entrepreneurs will increase.

The analysis of the answers from the respondents proves the need to invest in women's entrepreneurship and its stimulation through workshops, trainings and specialized education for the improvement of competencies and skills.

The results of the research indicate the need for inclusion of women entrepreneurs in regional, national and local networks in order to promote business through contacts and exchange of information and experiences.

The analysis of the answers given by women entrepreneurs indicates the need for greater real institutional support and assistance in the promotion of women entrepreneurship.

## CONCLUSION

Women entrepreneurs represent a great potential for business and economic growth. The development of women entrepreneurship in the last decade is booming due to the emancipation of women, the greater participation of women in public, political life and business. As a result of the opportunities created by political and economic change, more and more women are getting involved in running companies and deciding to start their own business. Women have a significant role and influence in all segments of society. When observing women in a professional sense, the increasing achievement in all fields is noticeable, especially in entrepreneurship.

Entrepreneurial education is important for encouraging female entrepreneurship at all stages of the educational process because women entrepreneurs will increase their knowledge, skills and entrepreneurial. Fostering the entrepreneurial spirit in primary education is one of the preconditions for future success in business of new generations of women and their ability to earn money on their own.

Promoting women entrepreneurship through entrepreneurship education is another factor for development, as women entrepreneurs through the educational process increase their knowledge, skills and entrepreneurial competencies. The level of education of women entrepreneurs is generally high, so their businesses are successful, because the higher it is, the more developed the awareness for further development, use of professional assistance and attending trainings for business development.

The representation of women in advanced economies compared to men is one half, but it should be noted that women are hidden in official statistics because they participate in business as employers or partners in family businesses registered by men.

The managerial and leadership role in running a business has long been attributed exclusively to men. But modern business management has a different approach and non-traditional style of doing business, which is the reason for the increase in the number of businesses run by women. When it comes to women's governance, there are a number of economic, social and gender constraints.

Access to finance is one of the key factors for the development of women entrepreneurship, because women entrepreneurs have less personal funds than men as start-up capital to start a business and banks approach their business ventures with distrust, although they are more courageous in investing.

Generally, there should be no difference between male and female entrepreneurs, as both sexes have similar psychological characteristics and specific abilities to run their own business successfully. One of the reasons that did not allow a woman to achieve greater success in business and greater breakthrough in all important segments of society are the stereotypes she faces, in terms of gaining education and work experience.

When starting and developing their own business, women face cultural, institutional and social constraints compared to men. Women entrepreneurs face greater constraints



than men, such as inaccessibility to formal sources of funding, formal and informal business networks.

Women entrepreneurs still face discrimination despite legal regulations, apart from stereotypes, they are also discriminated by state institutions. In addition, it is necessary to fully exclude discrimination against women in society, create equal working conditions, financial measures, support from the Government and institutions.

Equally important for the development of women entrepreneurship is the networking of women entrepreneurs at the international and national level, as they are the primary source of knowledge, cooperation, partnerships and promotion of women entrepreneurship in the global economy.

The support for women entrepreneurs from government institutions and NGOs can be effectuated by organizing various programs designed to educate women about entrepreneurship, helping to connect women to exchange experiences and helping in gaining favorable sources of finance that can lead to the creation of successful and economically viable businesses.

In the Republic of North Macedonia, many changes have been made and incorporated in national policy, legislation and on institutional level, regarding the development of small and medium businesses and support programs for entrepreneurship, but there are still issues that need to be solved.

The results obtained from the research can be used by all relevant institutions, in order to adequately create and implement strategies and measures that include real support of the state and society which will be able to equalize the rate of successful businesses run by women entrepreneurs in North Macedonia with those in developed countries around the world.

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