

Are there any role models for female entrepreneurs?.

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Hilde Hoefnagels
Inge Verhaegen



ARTESIS PLANTIJN
HOGESCHOOL ANTWERPEN

Semi-structured research:

2015: AP Hogeschool, Belgie
Hogskolen Ålesund, Noorwegen

In 3 countries: Belgium
Italy
Norway

Entrepreneur



Entrepreneur

Stereotypical = a male

- In media
- In business articles
- In didactical material

Methodology

- **Literature review**
 - Statistics and research literature
- **Interview guide**
 - Drivers, Barriers, Role models, Education, Mentors and networks

Female entrepreneurs

Three countries:

1. Belgium
2. Italy
3. Norway



Choice of these three countries is that they represent the North, Center and South of Europe. Three different cultures with different attitudes towards female entrepreneurship.

Female entrepreneurs

- **Interview guide**

- What were your drivers?
- What were your barriers?
- Do you have any role models?
- What is the highest level of education you had?
- How do you approach networking?

Drivers

- Belgium : a combination of **external** elements (market situation) and **internal** ones (family situation and self-realisation)
- Italy : **internal** element (dissatisfaction with the current work or unemployment situation)
- Norway : a combination of **external** elements (economic situation) and **internal** ones (self-realisation)

Why do women start up a business?

- They want to have control over their **work/family** life balance
- They want to combine the **flexibility** of an entrepreneur with the feeling of **self-realisation** and a **sufficient income**

Gender equality

2014 GEM report	Female entrepreneurs as percentage of the total active labour force	Female part- time entrepreneurs	Percentage of female entrepreneurs (main employment) with a second job
Belgium	9%	19%	5.0%
Italy	16%	26%	2.3%
Norway	4%	36%	18.1%

Barriers

- **contextual obstacles:** educational choices, traditional views and stereotypes about women, science and innovation
- **economic obstacles:** innovation sector requiring substantial investment and women being seen less credible financially than men
- **soft obstacles:** lack of access to technical scientific and general business networks, lack of business training, role models and entrepreneurship skills

Female entrepreneurs within EC:

- averagely all some kind of higher education – not necessarily in the sphere of their enterprise

- In all three countries:
 - 1/2 bachelor diploma
 - 1/3 master diploma

Networking and mentoring

- Belgium:
 - no business mentors: support from husband and family is strongly appreciated, free on line courses, other courses too expensive
- Italy:
 - no business mentors: support family is strongly appreciated, very small offer of courses
- Norway:
 - regional business incubators, local networking, financial support from local government, free course materials offered by incubators

Role models

Female entrepreneurs interviewed:

- have clear goals
- don't follow any role model or example
- don't copy anyone, not even a male role model
- don't have to make a choice between work or family life, they feel they can have both!

Why do females start a business?

Round up

- take active control over the work/life balance
- combine the flexibility of self-employment with self-realization, family life, and a “sufficient” income
- minimize the financial risk through various strategies
- combine available resources such as living or owning a farm with competences, business skills and the families’ need for someone to take main responsibility for the children
- use the new possibilities available by low cost ICT and broadband solutions to run their businesses from home

Possible further research

- Study self-employment using “a family with an entrepreneur” as the unit of analysis
- Study national policies for female entrepreneurship
- Study more respondents from more European countries, in order to get a wider overview of data.
- Study the conditions per nation of employees and self-employed people: countries that offer a higher quality of life tend to have less entrepreneurs, since the benefits in the society / economic life are developed for the employees.

