

Notions of gender in contextual interviews

(DRAFT)

Data collected in qualitative interviews conducted by WP4 in May-June 2010. 19 entrepreneurs – 6 from Estonia, 8 from Finland and 5 from Sweden. 18 women, 1 man.

The main **purpose** of this text is to:

- receive a perception of how the entrepreneurs consider themselves affected by the gender difference
- To communicate results with other WPs

Focus on the significance the entrepreneurs give gender.

Three different explanations for entrepreneurship

- **Entrepreneurship as a self-evident choice**
 - had always wanted to start up a business
 - would have difficulties working in any other way than with their own business
 - the need to make their own decisions
- **Entrepreneurship as a change of life-style**
 - unhappy with their previous occupation (in a different field)
 - felt signs of an approaching burnout
- **The perceived necessity of entrepreneurship**
 - starting their own business seemed like the only way to turn their product into profit
 - unemployment or lack of suitable work opportunities

Time spent on the business:

- Much of the work within the tourism sector is seasonal
 - Part-time work or another source of a more stable income are means to work the uncertainty

Many spend very much time working, including evenings and weekends, yet the attitudes towards their business differ

- Some considered growth in their business very important
- some described their enterprise as something similar to handicraft or a hobby

Collaboration

Most of the collaboration is local and consists of small networks of female entrepreneurs, often within the same field

- Value = increased visibility
- Many wish to increase either the level of collaboration or expanding into different fields. Transnational collaboration!
- Problematic for some is that there are not very many entrepreneurs who they could form a cluster with
 - their business idea was so unique that they have no competition and therefore no “natural” partners for clustering
- The environment is not very open to collaboration

Gender and financial support

Women considered the difficulty to receive financial support as the main, and often even the only, obstacle for being female entrepreneur

- a structural problem → the system does not support fields where women work or does not give starting money to seasonal entrepreneurs.
- female entrepreneurs are not taken seriously when starting companies.
- Need to learn how to “work the system”

Social and cultural implication of gender

Social and cultural differences in expected gendered behavior. Different approaches to meet this interpretation, so they would not be affected (negatively) by gendered expectations.

- Women acknowledged that discrimination based gender does exist in their society, yet, they themselves are not affected by it
- Discrimination seems as individual (connected to the personality of the discriminator) rather than structural
- Different but equal: women as different from men, but still equal to men → and knowing one's own spheres and tasks becomes important
- Women do not WANT to see different treatment based on gender