

The influence of institutional context on women's entrepreneurship in the Baltics

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IMPACT STATEMENT

This dissertation contributes to our knowledge of the development of female entrepreneurship, particularly in the Baltics. An important factor for female entrepreneurship to develop to its full potential is the understanding of the aspects that could be limiting or hindering, be it social, economic, or individual aspects. Female entrepreneurship is important for the economic and social growth of every society as it creates job opportunities and wealth. Moreover, women entrepreneurs invest their profits in the education and health of the family more frequently than their male counterparts. The motivation for this dissertation is the importance of obtaining knowledge on and insight into the different aspects of the development of female entrepreneurship and addressing the need for more evidence to support policies that intend to achieve.

This dissertation shows that women, such as those in the Baltics, are underrepresented among the population of entrepreneurs and are segregated in low-profit margin and low-growth potential sectors, like services, education, and health care. Women also feel that they do not have the necessary experience, knowledge, and skills to start a business and run a successful business. This is despite quite favourable business climates in the Baltics and high education level and high work participation of women. The dissertation argues that this situation is due to the gendered norms that imply that women are the main child carers and are not suited for top management and entrepreneurial positions. These norms existed during the Soviet period and are similar to gendered norms that existed in the West. Despite the broad discussion about gender norms in the West, there is no recognition of gendered assumptions and gendered inequalities in the Baltics. Several stakeholder groups could benefit from the results of this dissertation.

The dissertation recommends that policymakers focus on female entrepreneurship as it facilitates economic and social development. The specific challenges of potential women entrepreneurs should be taken into account when developing social and entrepreneurship policies. The policymakers could use the results of this research to develop short and long-term social and entrepreneurial policies to address the gendered norms and support female entrepreneurship.

The entrepreneurship educators could use the conclusions of the dissertation when designing entrepreneurial programs at schools and universities, increasing awareness that the lower participation rates of females in entrepreneurship and lower performance indicators of women entrepreneurs are not due to the fact that women do not possess the inherent skills necessary for entrepreneurship. It is the result of differing socialisation practices and social expectations for men and women.

Women entrepreneurship associations could apply the outcomes of this dissertation to increase awareness of socially constructed barriers and limitations for potential and existing women entrepreneurs among their members and in communication with media and government representatives.

Entrepreneurship researchers should continue further research on gendered norms, stereotypes and women entrepreneurship in transition economies would be necessary. This would generate deeper insights into factors that have an impact on the development of female

entrepreneurship as well as provide recommendations on how to justify the situation. The focus should be on informal rules interplaying alongside and in conjunction with formal institutions, shaping their actors and outcomes.

The dissertation argues that scientific research in Central and Eastern Europe construct women entrepreneurs as less entrepreneurial than their male counterparts. The basis for such an assumption is the underlying traditional norms that still exist in society. To account for this bias, future research should take into account the context and abandon the assumption that entrepreneurship is an individual endeavour with the main goal of enriching the entrepreneur. The methodological repertoire should be widened, including various qualitative methods.