interview with business support organizations _ 3

name: Pinelopi Theodorakakou

position: Co-founder

organization name/type, location: Women on Top

site: https://womenontop.gr/en/

e-mail: pinelopi@womenontop.gr

Pinelopi is one of the co-founder members of Women on Top. Women On Top is an organization for the professional empowerment of women and for equality at the workplace. Using mentoring, lifelong learning, consulting and content creation as tools, they seek to support working and unemployed women and their environment so that together they can create a more equal future for all.
At this step, I asked her to fill in the following questionnaire:

S. *Hi Pinelopi, thank you very much for accepting to take part in PEAK research and sharing your entrepreneurship experience with us. Can you please answer the following questions?*

1. How a young person wishing to start his/her own business in a mountainous area can be supported, in order to come up with the idea in the first place?

In order for someone to find an entrepreneurship idea he/she needs to come in contact with entrepreneurship means, with the involved challenges and the advantages. A programme aiming at the development of entrepreneurial skills can support someone to understand why he/she wants to become an entrepreneur, what his/her vision is and mainly to seek for his/her talents, skills, interests that can be transformed into a business idea. Discovering what motivates me, what interests me, what change I want to bring in the world, I can discover a whole new world of ideas that I may had in mind and, some of them, can be turned into business.

2. If a young person has a good entrepreneurship idea how can he/she be supported in order to actualize and implement this idea?

The first step is to define what a good business idea means. The second involves the connection of a person with the entrepreneurship in real time and in two steps: a. A development programme that would support young people to investigate their idea, its sustainability and it will give them tools to contact a market survey, a business plan, to learn how to seek for funding and to digitally support their business. b. The networking of these entrepreneurs with others in order for knowledge, knowhow and experience exchange.

3. According to your experience are there any gaps, problems, etc. in the support, funding, etc. of a business activity? If yes, how could they be eliminated?

Many times the implementation of the programmes doesn't take under consideration the needs of young entrepreneurs. Before the creation of each programme, the real needs should be estimated

and evaluated, as well as, the continuous feedback during the implementation of the programme. This enables a clear view of what worked, what didn't, what went wrong, what needs to be changed.

4. What kind of support/funding opportunities are there for young people willing to start a business in a mountainous area?

I am not aware of programmes specific targeted in mountain areas (apart from the well know, like EU PA programme). However, there are many local organizations and others, like ours, which organize several entrepreneurial programmes.

5. Can you describe me some successful case studies of enterprises of young people in mountains, from your experience?

From our experience, the businesses we would call as successful case studies are those of which their teams devoted a lot of time in preparation (marker survey and business plan) but weren't rest and were constantly asking for feedback from their customers in order to know what to change. In my opinion, a successful case study is also a business that had a model in mind but saw it wouldn't work out (at the preparation phase) or wouldn't be sustainable and didn't went on with the investment. Also, many successful businesses (even if this sounds like a cliché) are those whose motive is not only the profit but an internal need to caver a gap, to offer something to people. Thus, when the motive is also personal.

6. Can you describe me some unsuccessful case studies of enterprises of young people in mountains, from your experience?

Unsuccessful businesses are those that usually the business plan is not aligned with the values and the wishes of the team or the person behind the enterprise. Enterprises that start based on wrong motivation, i.e. the copy paste of another idea because it seems profitable while the object of the business doesn't interest the person who starts it. Other reasons that lead to non-success, are, the lack of preparation, the lack of funding despite seeking for it and the lack of access to entrepreneurial skills' development tools. These, no matter how good an idea is, are essential in current competitive environment.

7. Can you describe me some good practices of your organization (regarding youth entrepreneurship in mountains)?

We, at Women on Top, implement programmes that aim at the development of entrepreneurial skills and for these we take under consideration the remarks, the mentions, the feedback and the needs of the people benefited from these. We plan our progammes based on our experience and our contact with women from all around Greece during the last 10 years. We also take under consideration new practices and trends.

8. can you describe me some special difficulties/obstacles that young women face when they start a business, in general, and in mountain areas, in specific, through your experience?

The new enterprises with one, at least, woman in their founding team have absorbed only the 6% of the total funding that has been allocated at the Greek start-up ecosystem, while the 62% of women fund their own business themselves.

This and many other findings regarding the gender gap in the funding of enterprises in Greece are depicted in the recent survey that Women on Top did with the support of the British Embassy in Athens.

The gender funding gap is a global phenomenon. However, it holds different levels in each economy. In Greece, the relative data remain few, non-complete and occasional. However, we know that the majority of women support financially their business themselves in their start and make use of loans in far less percentage than men.

Through interviews with representatives of funding organizations, credit institutions, research organizations and incubators, the survey of Women on Top comes in useful conclusions regarding the characteristics and the causes and the possible measures that could deal with this gap. These measures could increase by 26% the annual global GDP, by 15% the total return of businesses and by $5.9 trillion their stock-market value and they could also add $160 trillion in additional human capital in international economy.