

**REPUBLIKA SRPSKA**

**GOVERNMENT**

**E**

**PROPOSAL**

**WOMEN'S ENTREPRENEURSHIP DEVELOPMENT STRATEGY**

**IN REPUBLIKA SRPSKA FOR THE PERIOD 2019-2023.**

**Banja Luka, June 2019**

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## INTRODUCTION

The Small and Medium-Sized Enterprises Development Strategy of Republika Srpska for the period 2016-2020 foresaw the adoption of the Women's Entrepreneurship Development Strategy of Republika Srpska for the period 2019-2023. (hereinafter referred to as: Strategy). The need to adopt such a document was highlighted by the fact that women play a significant role in the economy, but there are still some obstacles or prejudices when it comes to women who own or manage some economic entity. The importance of adopting such a document has been recognized by both institutions and entrepreneurs, with the aim of facilitating and improving their work and business through a specific policy.

Statistical indicators point to the fact that women own almost one third of business economic. This is a very good indicator when compared with the countries in the region.

The role of women entrepreneurs in the economy has gained in importance.

The changes were made by democratization of society, applying the principle of gender equality, education of women and, generally, changing the awareness of woman's role modern society and her proven success in being a mother, a wife and a businesswoman at the same time. The creativity of women, their expertise and skills necessary for business are very important in understanding the importance of being a woman entrepreneur. Yet women still do not have the same access to finance, education and information as men. The traditional way of registering assets in men's name is a common problem in obtaining loans and doing business. Statistics show that there is a growing number of highly educated and trained women ready to take risks and start a business.

The reasons for this also lay in the fact that women entrepreneurs adapt more quickly to change, receive advice, work in teams and better understand their team and their employees. Women's private and business responsibilities are intertwined, so her role and success in the business world are certainly a greater challenge than for men. Therefore, it is necessary to create policies for women that will enable them to do business in an easier and better way and to develop programmes to effectively identify and solve their problems. This creates the conditions for women's entrepreneurship to be included in other policies, as well as for the financial support, education, promotion, and support for women's association and networking. Particular attention should be paid to the sectors in which a significant number of women operate and work, such as textile and leather production, agriculture and crafts, as well as other activities. It is necessary that the implementation of this strategic document ensure this. The achievement of objectives and programmes should facilitate and improve the business of women entrepreneurs and improve their role and importance in society.

The author of this document is the Ministry of Economy and Entrepreneurship (hereinafter: the Ministry) as the line ministry responsible for women's entrepreneurship in Republika Srpska. In this area, previous documents and activities have shown a clear commitment to supporting women entrepreneurs, and the form of support will be systematically defined through this new strategic document, with the aim of changing the awareness of the importance of women's entrepreneurship in our economy while providing concrete support for women entrepreneurs.

In addition to the Ministry, the support of the Chamber of Commerce of Republika Srpska (hereinafter: the Chamber) and its regional chambers of commerce, as representatives of the interests of all entrepreneurs, including women entrepreneurs, is also very important. In the Regional Chamber of Commerce Banja Luka, the first Women's Entrepreneurship Council for the Banja Luka area was formed in 2010. In 2014, the Council for Women's Entrepreneurship of the Republika Srpska Chamber of Commerce was formed, as well as the councils for the development of women's entrepreneurship in

the regional chambers of Bijeljina, East Sarajevo, Trebinje and Dobož. The members of the Council are women entrepreneurs, business managers and representatives of the institutions that, within their programmes, have projects designed to develop women's entrepreneurship. The councils within the system of chambers were established with the aim of improving the representation and status of women in the field of entrepreneurship, proposing legislative solutions and measures, establishing contacts among women entrepreneurs, providing necessary information, developing projects, proposing vocational education, promoting women's entrepreneurship, participating in conferences, fairs, business missions, networking of women entrepreneurs and applying the principle of gender equality (gender mainstreaming).

One of the competences of the Republic Agency for Development of Small and Medium-Sized Enterprises (hereinafter: the Agency) is also to support women's entrepreneurship. In the previous period, the Agency has also carried out a number of activities for the education and promotion of women entrepreneurs, as well as the processing of statistical indicators of the Tax Administration of Republika Srpska related to women entrepreneurship, which have been monitored since 2016. and what will certainly become a practice in the future.

In the development of women's entrepreneurship, the role of the Gender Centre of Republika Srpska, as an institution responsible not only for the equality of women in society but also for the equality of women entrepreneurs, is particularly important. The existence and activities of this centre are changing traditional attitudes about the role and position of women in society.

Representatives of the aforementioned institutions and organizations, together with the Ministry, were preparing the Strategy, but it was also possible for the women entrepreneurs themselves to contribute to the development of the Strategy through a series of workshops where the women entrepreneurs were able to propose objectives and activities whose implementation will facilitate and improve their work and business.

In the preparation phase, the document was supported by the EU ProLokal (EU ProLocal) project, implemented by GIZ - German Society for International Cooperation, as part of a joint programme of the European Union and the German Government for local self-government and economic development in BiH. Support in the form of workshop moderation and assistance in creating the document was also provided by the "Eda" Agency team from Banja Luka.

## GENERAL STATISTICAL INDICATORS FOR WOMEN AND MEN

The Republika Srpska legislation does not differentiate between employers by gender, and all laws and policies are based on gender equality, that is, on equal terms for men and women who want to do business in Republika Srpska. Differences in approach sometimes occur in practice, due to certain traditional reflections on the role and capabilities of women in society and in business. Indicators of certain differences between women and men are monitored by the Republika Srpska Institute of Statistics and published in the publication "Women and Men in Republika Srpska".

In 2017, the ninth edition of this publication was published, from which we highlight the most significant facts<sup>1</sup> about the participation of women and men in those fields for which the records have been kept or statistical surveys conducted:

- Women make up 51,2% of the total population, their average life expectancy is 80,1 years and 74,4 years for men. Out of the total number of women aged 15 and over - 56% are married, 21% are not married and 25,4% do not have children. Out of the total number of men aged 15 and over – 58,7% are married and 33% are unmarried. The average age at which women get married is 28,3 years.

When it comes to employment - women play a dominant role in **health** sector, with participation of 77,6% of the total number of employees in public institutions and 78,8% of the total number of employees in private institutions. However, of the total number of women employed in public institutions, the largest number are nurses with 51,5% and doctors 21,8%. Of the total number of doctors in all health care facilities – 62,7% are women. When looking at diseases of women, as well as men, the most common illnesses from which they die are heart diseases.

- In the area of education in Republika Srpska, data show that of the total number of women aged ten and over, 5,5% are illiterate, while 1% of men are illiterate. By educational attainment, the largest number of women aged 15 and over or 43,9% of them have a high school education, 22,6% have primary school education, and even 9,5% of women aged 15 and over have no education at all. Of the total number of masters of science, masters of art and specialists, 53,6% are women, and 42,6% of the total number of PhDs are women. In educational institutions, women account for 98,1% of preschool educators, 70,3% of primary school teachers, 62,8% of secondary school teachers and 43,1% of university education staff. Although women make up 65% of the total teaching staff in all educational institutions, the management structure in educational institutions, other than preschools, is predominantly male. Of the total number of students enrolled in the 2016/2017 school year, 56,6% are women. Female students are less represented in the areas of natural sciences, mathematics, computer science, engineering, manufacturing technologies and civil engineering.

- According to the census results, 30,4% of women aged ten and over are computer literate, while computer literacy is slightly better with men.

- Self-employed women make up 24,2% of the total number of **employed** women, and as many as 11,3% of women belong to the group of unpaid assisting members. For men, 30,4% are self-employed and only 2,8% of men are in the group of unpaid assisting members. Women are predominantly employed in service sector, with participation of 53,6%, 30,9% of them are employed in agricultural sector, while only 15,4% of women are employed in non-agricultural activities. The

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<sup>1</sup> Source: Republika Srpska Institute of Statistics „Women and Men in Republika Srpska“, 2017.

share of men is more balanced, with as many as 34,2% of men working in non-agricultural activities. Participation of men in the total number of employees in economic entities in 2016 was 56,6%.

- Greater number of men are beneficiaries of **pensions**, and the poverty rate is higher in households where a woman is a household head – 18,6% compared to 12,1% in households where a man is a household head.

### ***Gender structure of governmental bodies***

When it comes to gender structure in governmental bodies at level of Republika and local level, men are dominant as mayors and chairmen with 92,1% and councillors with 88,6%.

After the 2018 elections, for the first time in Republika Srpska, the president of Republika is a woman. Women make up 24,1% of the MPs, while in the Council of Peoples of Republika Srpska women make up 17,9% of the delegates, with a woman chairing the institution. In the Republika Srpska Government, a total of six ministries are led by women or 37,5% of the total number of ministries and that is very positive. Women account for 58,7% of state administration employees. There are 40,2% of women in the posts of assistant minister, secretary, deputy and assistant in administrative organizations, as well as among inspectors and internal auditors – 42,1% of them are women. When looking at senior consultants and associates, female participation is 60,6% of the total.

In the judiciary of Republika Srpska, the Supreme Court is led by a woman, as well as three out of five commercial courts. The Republika Srpska Trade Union is led by a woman, and the branch union presidents are mostly men.

## BUSINESS STATISTICS OF WOMEN'S ENTREPRENEURSHIP IN REPUBLIKA SRPSKA

Indicators of economic entities in Republika Srpska owned or co-owned by women were virtually not addressed until 2016, except for the issue of ownership and participation of women in total employment in the Annual Report on SMEs in Republika Srpska. This report is jointly prepared by the Ministry and the Agency, in cooperation with other institutions in Republika Srpska. The Chamber of Commerce of Republika Srpska also has some data, however, most applications and registers of institutions that monitor the business activities of economic entities are not able to extract data only on women-owned entities. The Agency processed data from the Republika Srpska Tax Administration and APIF for 2017.

The basic criterion used to classify economic entities is ownership and co-ownership of economic entities. Based on these criteria, women own 10.988 entities in Republika Srpska or 27,3% of all economic entities in Republika Srpska and co-own 761 or 1,9% of all economic entities. Thus, women own and co-own a total of 29,1% of Republika Srpska's economic entities or one-third, making them employers who deserve attention and support for further growth and development.

### *Structure of economic entities in Republika Srpska (women owners and co-owners)*

	Total	Women Owners	Participation %	Women Co-Owners	Participation %	Women Owners and Co-Owners	Participation %
Legal entities	17.643	2.590	14,7	689	3,9	3.279	18,5
Entrepreneurs	22.679	8.398	37	72	0,3	8.470	37,3
<b>Total</b>	<b>40.322</b>	<b>10.988</b>	<b>27,3</b>	<b>761</b>	<b>1,9</b>	<b>11.749</b>	<b>29,1</b>

Source: Tax Administration of Republika Srpska

When considering the legal form, more women are owners in the craft and entrepreneurial sector, while co-owners are more dominant when it comes to legal entities.

However, the majority of women-owned entities, or 97,23%, belong to the category of micro-entities, i.e. those employing up to nine employees. The picture is slightly different with co-owners, as they are family businesses owned jointly by husband and wife.

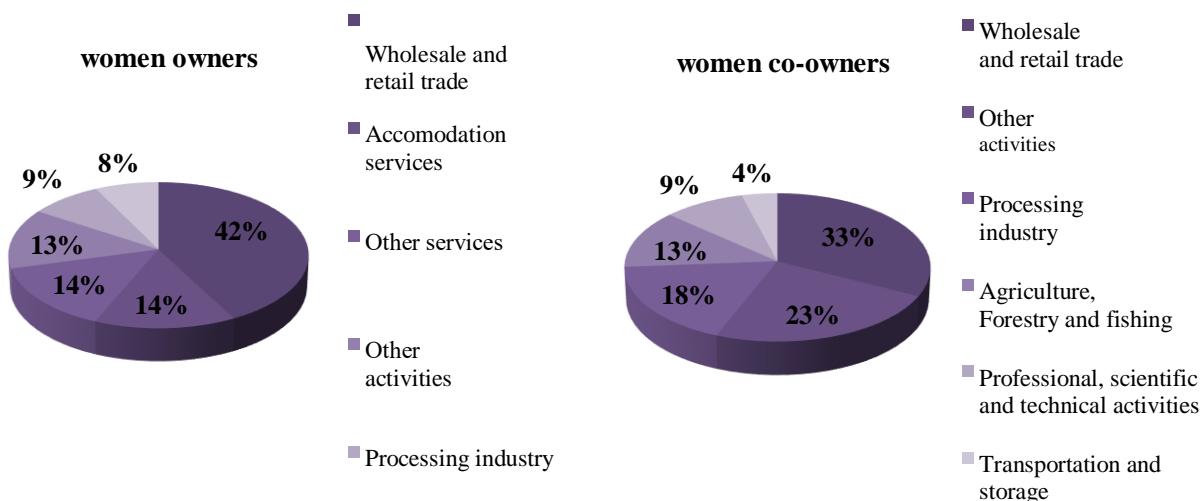
### *Structure of SMEs and entrepreneurs in 2017 - Women owners and co-owners*

WOMEN OWNERS	Legal entities	Participation %	Women entrepreneurs	Participation %	Total legal entities and women entrepreneurs	Participation %
Micro (up to 9 employees)	2.354	90,89%	8.330	99,19%	10.684	97,23%
Small (10–49 employees)	212	8,19%	66	0,79%	278	2,53%
Medium (50–249 employees)	22	0,85%	1	0,01%	23	0,21%
Big	2	0,07%	1	0,01%	3	0,03%
<b>Total:</b>	<b>2.590</b>	<b>100%</b>	<b>8.398</b>	<b>100%</b>	<b>10.988</b>	<b>100%</b>
WOMEN CO-OWNERS	Legal entities	Participation %	Women entrepreneurs	Participation %	TOTAL Legal entities and entrepreneurs	Participation %
Micro (up to 9 employees)	527	76,71%	67	93,06%	594	78,26%
Small (10–49 employees)	121	17,61%	5	6,94%	126	16,60%
Medium (50–249 employees)	39	5,68%	0	0%	39	5,14%
<b>Total:</b>	<b>687</b>	<b>100%</b>	<b>72</b>	<b>100%</b>	<b>759</b>	<b>100%</b>

Source: Tax Administration of Republika Srpska

The mentioned structure is also related to the activities in which women operate, the most common being service activities such as trade, which has 4.508 entities, catering and hospitality/ hotel industry where 1,609 entities operate, other services with 1.587 entities, processing industries with 946 entities, and professional, scientific and technical activities with 837 subjects. This structure by industry/activity applies to women owners, while for small and medium-sized enterprises and entrepreneurs where women are co-owners structure is slightly different by industry/activity. Specifically, women are co-owners mostly in the wholesale and retail trade activities - 247 entities, 135 entities are in processing industry and 97 entities operate in agriculture, forestry and fishing.

*Structure of SMEs and Entrepreneurs by Industry in 2017<sup>2</sup>*



Economic entities - legal entities owned by women, most often take the form of a limited liability company – 82,1% of them, while 0,2% of women-owned entities are joint stock companies (five entities). The situation is similar with co-owners whose entities are mostly limited liability companies.

<sup>2</sup> Source: Tax Administration of Republika Srpska

*Territorial representation of economic entities by economic areas of Republika Srpska<sup>3</sup> for 2017*

Areas and respective municipalities / cities	OWNERS				CO-OWNERS			
	SME	Entrepreneurs	Total	Participation %	SME	Entrepreneurs	Total	Participation %
<b>BANJA LUKA:</b> Banja Luka, Gradiška, Jezero, Kneževo, Kotor Varoš, Laktaši, Mrkonjić Grad, Petrovac, Prnjavor, Ribnik, Srbac, Istočni Drvar, Kupres, Čelinac, Šipovo	1.266	3.389	4.655	42,36%	351	24	375	49,41%
<b>BIJELJINA</b> Bijeljina, Bratunac, Vlasenica, Zvornik, Lopare, Milići, Osmaci, Srebrenica, Ugljevik, Šekovići	387	1.418	1.805	16,43%	150	7	157	20,69%
<b>DOBOJ</b> Vukosavlje, Derвента, Doboj, Modriča, Petrovo, Brod, Teslić, Šamac, Pelagićevo, Donji Žabar, Stanari	301	1.304	1.605	14,61%	79	13	92	12,12%
<b>EAST SARAJEVO</b> Višegrad, Pale, Rogatica, Rudo, Sokolac, East Ilidža, East Stari Grad, East Novo Sarajevo, Trnovo, Han Pijesak.	265	701	966	8,79%	41	13	54	7,11%
<b>PRIJEDOR</b> Kozarska Dubica, Krupa na Uni, Novi Grad, Prijedor, Kostajnica, Oštra Luka	236	1.019	1.255	11,42%	33	11	44	5,80%
<b>TREBINJE:</b> Berkovići, Bileća, Gacko, Ljubinje, Nevesinje, East Mostar, Trebinje, Kalinovik, Foča, Čajniče, Novo Goražde.	135	567	702	6,39%	33	4	37	4,87%
<b>TOTAL:</b>	<b>2.590</b>	<b>8.398</b>	<b>10.988</b>	<b>100%</b>	<b>687</b>	<b>72</b>	<b>759</b>	<b>100%</b>

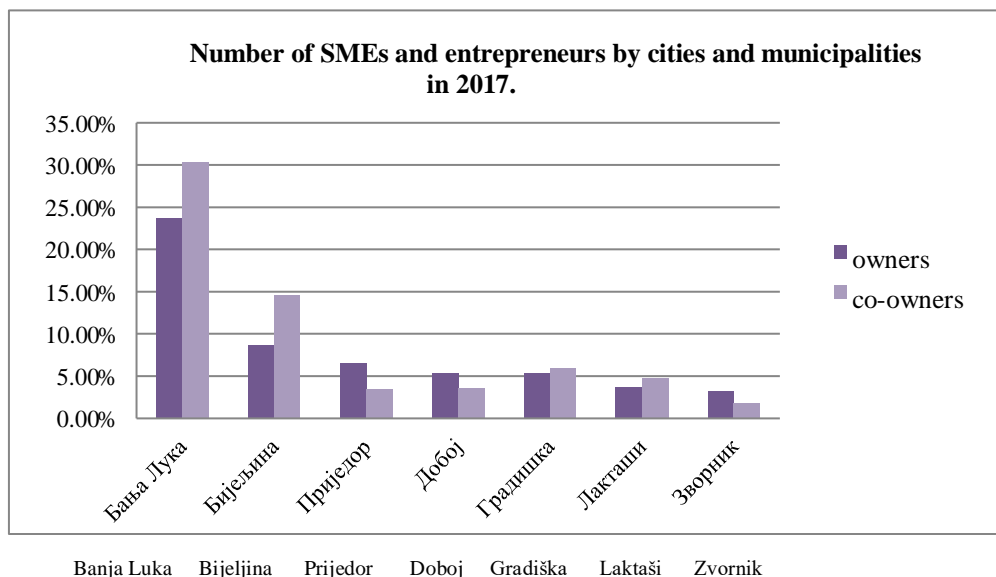
Source: Tax Administration of Republika Srpska

The Spatial Plan of Republika Srpska defines six economic areas concentrated around six cities in Republika Srpska and their respective municipalities. If we look at locations of women-owned

<sup>3</sup> Recommendations of the Spatial plan of Republika Srpska until 2025.

economic entities, it is apparent that the largest number of these entities are registered and operating in the area of Banja Luka, and the smallest number in the area of East Sarajevo and Trebinje. Economic entities co-owned by women are mostly concentrated in the area of Banja Luka and Bijeljina (over 70%).

If we analyse individually by cities and municipalities, the largest number of women entrepreneurs operate in six cities: Banja Luka (23,7%), Bijeljina (8,6%), Prijedor (6,5%), Doboj (5,4%), Gradiška (5,3%), Laktaši (3,7%) and Zvornik (3,2%).



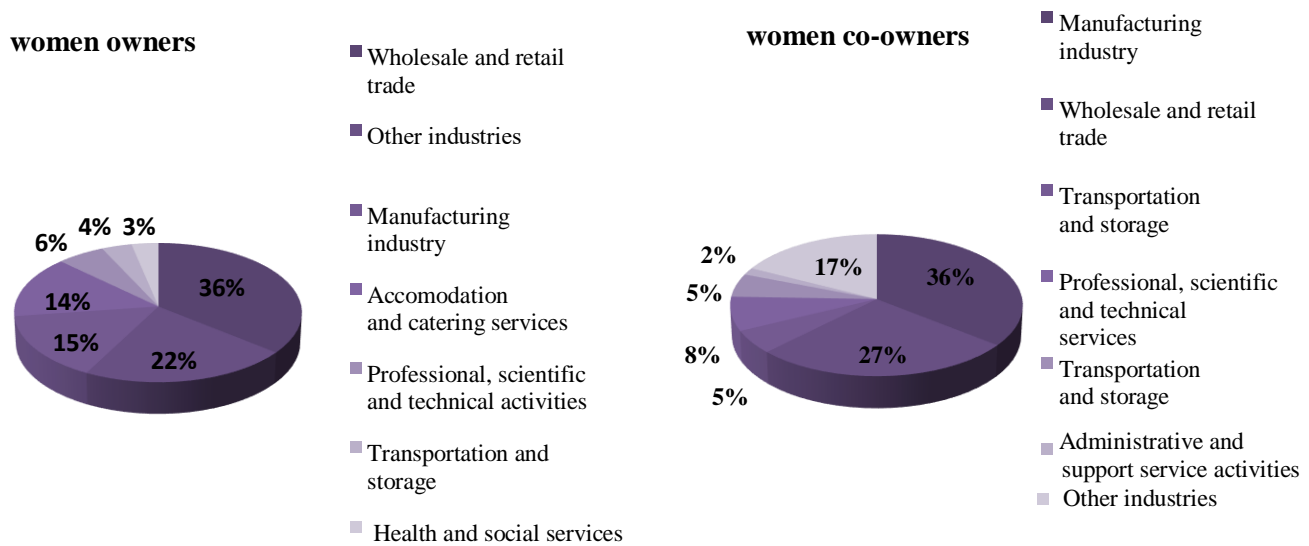
### Employment in economic entities in 2017.

Businesses owned by women employ 24.269 persons or 12,21% of the total number of employees in all economic entities, while entities co-owned by women employ 8.653 persons or 4,3%. Most employees work in micro-entities owned by women or as many as 69,79% of persons. 21,55% work in small and 8,66% in medium economic entities.

	Total	Owners	Participation %	Co-Owners	Participation %	Owners and Co-Owners	Participation %
<b>Legal entities</b>	100.439	9.641	9,60	7.536	7,50	17.177	17,1
<b>Big entities</b>	56.384	620	1,10	869	1,54	1.489	2,6
<b>Entrepreneurs</b>	41.896	14.008	33,43	248	0,6	14.256	34
<b>Total</b>	<b>198.719</b>	<b>24.269</b>	<b>12,21</b>	<b>8.653</b>	<b>4,3</b>	<b>32.922</b>	<b>16,5</b>

*Source: Tax Administration of Republika Srpska*

## Number of SME employees by industry in 2017.



The majority of employees, employed by women entrepreneurs, work in service industries, i.e. trade (36%), industry (15%), hospitality industry (14%) and professional, scientific and technical services (6%). The structure is different when it comes to employees working for women co-owners, with the highest number of employees working in industry (36%) and trade (27%).

## Number of registered and dissolved women entrepreneurs' SMEs in 2017<sup>4</sup>



## Performance indicators for SMEs in 2017

According to APIF data, a total of 9.616 SMEs submitted their final statements of accounts for 2017. Of these, 1.511 or 15,71% of SMEs are owned by women, and 517 or 5,38% SMEs are co-owned by women.

According to APIF, women-owned SMEs generated a total of 1.247.001.709 KM in 2017, accounting for 6,78% of all business income in 2017. On the other hand, women co-owned SMEs generated a total of KM 942.277.135 or 5,13% of the total business income in 2016.

<sup>4</sup> Source: Tax Administration of Republika Srpska

Furthermore, in 2017, women-owned SMEs generated 6,17% of income of foreign-market sales of own goods and services, while women co-owned SMEs generated 8,12% of their foreign-market sales of own goods and services.

In 2017, SMEs owned by women generated 8,54% of the total net profit generated by all SMEs in 2017, while co-owned SMEs achieved 8,10% of the total net profit in 2017.

## **PREVIOUS ACTIVITIES IN THE AREA OF ENTREPRENEURSHIP FOR WOMEN IN REPUBLIKA SRPSKA**

The development of women's entrepreneurship has been recognized as very important for overall economic development. However, there are still certain prejudices in business when it comes to women. Women entrepreneurs are more likely to start and run businesses in the areas that are considered as “less important” for economic growth and development (retail, services, education, etc.) than in the areas of manufacturing and high technology. Women entrepreneurship is also important for the role of women in society, because women have to maintain a balance between family and business obligations and they meet certain obstacles when it comes to owning property and contracting, employment and self-employment. In view of the above, an overview of significant institutional support activities for this type of entrepreneurship in Republika Srpska, carried out in the previous period, is given below.

In 2012, the Women's Entrepreneurship Development Programme was adopted in Republika Srpska, which facilitated easier access to funds, support for the education, training and association of women entrepreneurs in the coming period. In addition, the Ministry of Entrepreneurship, that was in charge at the time, participated in the project "Women's Entrepreneurship – Job Creating Engine in Southeast Europe", which was implemented within the project “The South East European Centre for Entrepreneurial Learning“ (SEECCEL). The Ministry and the Chamber of Commerce of Republika Srpska, in cooperation with the regional Chamber of Commerce Banja Luka, the Republika Srpska Agency for development of SMEs and the Gender Centre of the Government of Republika Srpska, with the support of the EU ProLocal Programme and the EBRD, organized the First Conference of Women Entrepreneurship in Republika Srpska. The conference was held at the Administrative Centre of Republika Srpska Government in December 2017. More than 200 women entrepreneurs participated in the conference, as well as representatives of institutions, agencies, chambers and international organizations from Republika Srpska, the Federation of BiH, Serbia, Montenegro, Croatia and Slovenia. There were two panels in the conference: „Legal Framework and Institutional Support for Women's Entrepreneurship in Republika Srpska and the Region" and "Experiences of Women Entrepreneurs in Republika Srpska and the Region", as well as B2B meetings with over 350 sessions held. The second international conference on women entrepreneurship was organised by the same team. The conference was held in 2018 in the Chamber of Commerce of Republika Srpska, with more than 150 participants from Republika Srpska and the region.

With the support of the FIGAP programme and the Gender Centre of Republika Srpska, the following projects were implemented in Republika Srpska: “Support to Women's Entrepreneurship in Republika Srpska” (by the Ministry that was then in charge), "Women's Entrepreneurship and Organizing within the Agribusiness" and "School of Cooperative Movement and the Role of Cooperatives in the Development of Women's Entrepreneurship and Organization in Agribusiness“ (Ministry of Agriculture, Forestry and Water Management), “Women as stakeholders of rural areas development”, “Mapping of entrepreneurial potential of associations and women in rural communities

in Republika Srpska, with special accent on their educational needs“ (Agency for Provision of Professional Services in Agriculture), “Empowering rural youth through education and gender sensitization” (Ministry of Family, Youth and Sports), “Women as Stakeholders of Rural Tourism Development“ (Ministry of Trade and Tourism - Programme) and “Economic Empowerment of Women in Rural Areas” (Laktaši Municipality).

The Ministry of Agriculture, Forestry and Water Management, in cooperation with the Gender Centre of Republika Srpska, with financial support of UN Women, is implementing the Project "Establishing a Gender Team and Initiating an Innovative Gender Actions for Gender Responsible Budgeting at Regional Level".

In Republika Srpska, within the system of chambers, women entrepreneurship councils were established in regional chambers as well as the Council for Women's Entrepreneurship within the Republika Srpska Chamber of Commerce, with the aim of improving the representation and status of women in the field of entrepreneurship, proposing legal solutions and measures, cooperation with other institutions in Republika Srpska and Bosnia and Herzegovina, providing necessary information, organizing vocational training programmes for women entrepreneurs, promoting women's entrepreneurship, participating in conferences, fairs, business missions, networking of women entrepreneurs, participating in projects for the development of women's entrepreneurship and applying a principle of gender equality (gender mainstreaming). At the event where the most successful economic entity in Republika Srpska is selected, one of the categories is contribution to the development of women's entrepreneurship. In the past, the Women's Entrepreneurship Council of the Regional Chamber of Commerce in Banja Luka, in cooperation with the Gender Centre of Republika Srpska, had organized several seminars on the subject of strengthening women's entrepreneurship. In 2018, two workshops were held for women entrepreneurs, with more than 50 participants, at which women entrepreneurs suggested the necessary activities for the development of women's entrepreneurship.

The Chamber, together with the Ministry, USAID and local communities, has implemented three SME support grant projects, which co-financed the introduction and certification of quality standards, training of workforce and foreign market activities. More than 100 companies have been supported through this programme. Projects of women entrepreneurs have been additionally valued in the allocation of these support funds. The Chamber of Commerce regularly cooperates with the European Bank for Reconstruction and Development (EBRD), that is, with the SME support programme, and especially with the line for development of women's entrepreneurship in the field of programme promotion, encouragement of members, organization of seminars and participation in quality services, and informs about other opportunities and benefits provided by this programme. Within the Enterprise Europe Network, the Chamber is tasked with participating in the work of the sectoral group for women's entrepreneurship of the EEN Network.

The Agency, in accordance with its responsibilities, carries out certain activities aimed at encouraging women to become more involved in economic activities, either to start their own business or to improve the activities of their businesses. Becoming a member of the Enterprise Europe Network (EEN), which is the largest business support network in Europe, numerous opportunities to support women's entrepreneurship in Republika Srpska have opened up. The Agency is leading a consortium of the Enterprise Europe Network of Republika Srpska, and members of this consortium are: the Chamber of Commerce of Republika Srpska, the Universities in Banja Luka and East Sarajevo and the Innovation Centre Banja Luka. In the past period, within the EEN activities, the Agency organized trainings in the field of business planning for women who want to start their own business, as well as

for the existing women entrepreneurs who lack this type of knowledge. The subject of the workshops was: "Testing entrepreneurs' business ideas - developing a business plan". They were held for the existing and potential entrepreneurs in July 2016. in Banja Luka and in April 2017. in Bileća. During these workshops, women entrepreneurs learned more about business planning process, and structure and content of a business plan. For the purpose of additional incentive, the best business plans received a cash prize by the Agency. These trainings are a continuous activity of the Agency and they will be also carried out in the coming years. Through the EEN, the Agency also works on connecting entrepreneurs internationally by organizing business meetings, creating business profiles, consulting and trying to further support women's entrepreneurship through the implementation of other projects.

The agency is also one of the partners in the Swedish Government-funded project "Challenge to Change", which involves direct grant support to companies and entrepreneurs with innovative projects. One of the target groups in the project is women entrepreneurs. This aims to encourage greater involvement and motivation of women to engage in business activities, and thus their economic empowerment.

At the end of 2016, the Ministry and the Agency, with the financial support of the European Bank for Reconstruction and Development, launched the Entrepreneurial Portal of Republika Srpska, as a unique online platform in this region, bringing together all relevant information on starting, growing and developing companies. In addition to all information on SME development, the portal also contains information on women's entrepreneurship. The information is available at: <http://www.preduzetnickiportalsrpske.net/socijalno-preduzetništvo/zene>

## WOMEN'S ENTREPRENEURSHIP IN THE COUNTRIES OF THE REGION AND THE EUROPEAN UNION

In the European Union, women make up 52% of the population. 34,4% are self-employed and 30% of the total number of start-up entrepreneurs are women.<sup>5</sup> In 2012, of the 40,6 millions of active entrepreneurs in the EU-27, 29% were women (11,6 millions). Liechtenstein has the highest number of women entrepreneurs<sup>6</sup> - 43%, followed by Latvia 40%, Lithuania 40% and Luxembourg 39%. The lowest number of women entrepreneurs out of the total is 15% in Turkey, 18% in Malta and 20% in Ireland. In the countries of the region, the largest percentage of women entrepreneurs is 37% in Croatia, 29% in Montenegro, 29% in Slovenia, 26% in Serbia and 21% in Northern Macedonia.

In the surrounding countries, women's entrepreneurship is supported through specific policies or specific forms of support. Thus, in Croatia, Montenegro and Northern Macedonia, strategies have been adopted for this area, while in other countries in the development strategies, women's entrepreneurship is covered by strategic objectives. Also, there are networks of women ambassadors and entrepreneurship mentors where successful women entrepreneurs promote entrepreneurship and assist women with start-ups in their business.

There is no strategy in **Serbia** exclusively related to the development of women's entrepreneurship, but the promotion and development of women's entrepreneurship is contained in strategies for the development of entrepreneurship, employment, gender equality and women's economic empowerment. When it comes to financial support, it should be noted that the Guarantee Fund of Vojvodina has a special line for women entrepreneurs and young people. The aim of the Fund is to facilitate access to the financial market and provide more favourable lending conditions than those offered by banks. The Fund issues guarantees to banks as a mean of ensuring the proper repayment of bank loans. From 2005 to 2016, 239 guarantees in the nominal amount of RSD 307.015.179,32 were granted in the name of Support to Women's Entrepreneurship, and the effect was 890 new jobs.

The Strategy for the Development of Women's Entrepreneurship in the **Republic of Croatia** for the period 2014 - 2020 defines objectives related to improving the coherence and networking of public policies, improving system support for women's entrepreneurship, introducing women's entrepreneurship into the overall institutional infrastructure and promoting women's entrepreneurship. The Ministry of Entrepreneurship and Crafts, in charge of women's entrepreneurship, granted financial support for women entrepreneurs from 2010. to 2013 in the amount of HRK 145.791.285,82 for 6.067 women entrepreneurs. In the coming period, this type of support will be provided from EU funds. The Croatian Bank for Reconstruction and Development has a loan programme for women entrepreneurs, which aims to encourage the establishment and development of businesses majority-owned by women. Most commercial banks in Croatia actively support women entrepreneurs by participating in the aforementioned programme of Croatian Bank for Reconstruction and Development, which has been implemented since 2011.

In **Montenegro**, the Women's Entrepreneurship Development Strategy 2015-2020 is in place. It has four strategic priorities: creating a favourable business environment for the development of women entrepreneurship, better access to finance, providing the necessary knowledge and skills and

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<sup>5</sup> [https://ec.europa.eu/growth/smes/promoting-entrepreneurship/we-work-for/women\\_en](https://ec.europa.eu/growth/smes/promoting-entrepreneurship/we-work-for/women_en)

<sup>6</sup> Statistical data on Women entrepreneurs in Europe.

promoting, networking and advocating for the interests of women entrepreneurs. From 2007. to 2014, the Government of Montenegro adopted a number of strategic documents and programmes aimed at strengthening the economic development of the country, recognizing the problem of the unequal position of women. Also, the specific needs and role of women in the development of entrepreneurship, strengthening the available potentials and contributing to the overall socio-economic development of the country were recognized. The Montenegrin Investment and Development Fund provides support to women entrepreneurs through several loan programmes (start-ups, through UNDP funds, etc.).

In 2018, **Northern Macedonia** adopted the Strategy for Development of Women's Entrepreneurship in the Republic of Northern Macedonia from 2019. to 2023. The main strategic priorities are: creation of a favourable environment for women's entrepreneurship, provision of system support for the development of women's entrepreneurship, creation of infrastructure for the support and development of women's entrepreneurship, promotion, networking and advocacy.

The **European Union** defines achieving gender equality in all areas of social life as one of its priorities by 2020. As of 2006, the EU has, through strategic documents, defined the principles and framework within which it expects member states to align their strategic directions, regulatory frameworks and institutional capacities to achieve gender equality. The current strategic framework for promoting women entrepreneurship in the European Union by 2020 is set out in the following documents:

**"Europe 2020"**, as the overarching strategic framework of economic development for the period 2014-2020, sets out key guidelines for economic development that should contribute to increasing the competitiveness of the European economy and generating new jobs. The specifically quantified employment objective is at the level of 75% for women and men;

**"The Small Business Act" (SBA)** as an EU document creating a framework and principles for fostering entrepreneurship with special dimension given to fostering women's entrepreneurship;

**"European Pact for Gender Equality 2011-2020"**, which monitors gender balance in all aspects of social life, such as reducing labour market disparities, enhancing work-life balance for women and men, and combating all forms of violence against women;

**"Women's Charter"** commits to strengthening gender equality through the implementation of all its policies, i.e. five specific areas of activity: economic independence, equality in earnings of women and men, equality of women in decision-making process and on management positions, respect for women's dignity and integrity - ending gender-based violence, including harmful customary or traditional practices and equality between women and men;

**"Women active in the ICT sector"** envisages greater involvement of women in the field of information and communication technologies;

**"Strategy for Equality between Women and Men 2010-2015"** which is an upgrade to the "Guidelines for Equality between Women and Men 2006-2010".

## **CRAFTS AND HOUSEHOLD INDUSTRY AS ONE FORM OF WOMEN'S ENTREPRENEURSHIP**

The modern way of life, globalization and disappearance of traditional values inevitably lead to disappearance of certain traditional knowledge and skills. When it comes to household industry, women were mostly engaged in making clothing and decorative items by weaving, knitting and embroidery. Despite a rapid development of industrial production, handmade jewellery, clothing and decorative items, unique fabrics and sumptuous carpets still hold a significant place in the tourist offer.

The experience of other countries shows that the support of governments and other stakeholders is necessary to prevent further decline and disappearance of domestic crafts. Promoting and actively developing women's entrepreneurship based on the production of products intended for sale creates preconditions for the sustainability of these elements of cultural heritage and, at the same time, enables economic development, especially in underdeveloped and rural areas.

Recognizing the importance of old crafts, artistic crafts and household industry, the Government of Republika Srpska in 2011. adopted a "Study on Preservation of Old Crafts in Republika Srpska with Recommendations for their Preservation". The study points to certain crafts that have a long tradition in our region and have products that are interesting for the market. At the same time, proposals have been made regarding the measures to preserve old crafts, artistic crafts and household industry, to create new jobs and make products intended to strengthen the tourist offer.

Pursuant to the line competence of the Ministry, the Rulebook on Activities Considered as Old and Artistic Crafts and Domestic Crafts (Official Gazette of Republika Srpska, No. 70/12) establishes a certification procedure for independent entrepreneurs who perform activities that are considered as old, artistic and domestic crafts.

Many institutions, organizations and individuals participate in the identification, documentation, protection and revitalization of traditional knowledge and skills. Unselfish work of the Museum of Republika Srpska, the homeland society "Zmijanje", the humanitarian association of women "Duga", the ethno-workshops "Radinost R", the central cultural and artistic association for youth "Veselin Masleša", the cultural and artistic society "Ribnik" as well as elementary schools operating in the area of Zmijanje, breathed a new life into the almost forgotten Zmijanje embroidery.

Zmijanje embroidery is the first element of the intangible cultural heritage from Republika Srpska and Bosnia and Herzegovina which is included on the UNESCO representative list of the intangible cultural heritage of humanity.

Today, domestic crafts are nurtured by individuals and associations who, through their selfless work, rescued from oblivion the forgotten forms of domestic crafts and secured economic benefits for those engaged in it.

There are currently 33 certified independent entrepreneurs in Republika Srpska who perform the activity in a way that preserves the authenticity of traditional products, services and skills. Of these, women own 13 economic entities. The Ministry has initiated activities to promote these entrepreneurs on the Entrepreneurship Portal of Republika Srpska and further certification process will be initiated with local self-government units.

The humanitarian association of women "Duga" is the first non-governmental organization in Republika Srpska, founded with the aim of connecting youth with experience, traditional with contemporary, preserving cultural identity as the foundation of a healthy family in contemporary living conditions. At the association "Duga", women through work and socializing make handicrafts and souvenirs in traditional knitting, embroidery and weaving techniques. Some pieces of clothing are

decorated with traditional Zmijanje embroidery. These handicrafts are sold in the ethno-gallery "Duga" as unique ethno-souvenirs and unique handicrafts.

Embroideress Radenka Jungić, the owner of the ethno-workshop "Radinost R", presents the Zmijanje embroidery in three ways: within the frame made of wild cherry wood, in the lampshade and at the bottom of a tray. Radenka Jungić is the recipient of the prestigious recognition for creativity, as a keeper and master of old crafts at the international exhibition of intellectual property, research and new technologies "Brussels Innova/ Eureka" in 2011. The importance of the authenticity of Zmijanje embroidery was also recognized at the International Film Festival "Kustendorf", where Ms. Jungić embroidered with Zmijanje embroidery the gold, silver and bronze eggs for 2011, 2012. and 2013. Festival's awards.

Embroideress Sanja Bajić, owner and creator of "Tragovi" jewellery received the award for the best authentic product in the category of women's handicraft at the Days of Women's Entrepreneurship in Sarajevo, 2017.

The work of these associations and individuals spreads awareness in society about the need to preserve, protect and promote domestic crafts as one of the factors of preserving cultural identity. At the same time, training women in the production of authentic products for sale is the hotbed of entrepreneurial spirit, which is the basis of sustainable economic development, especially in underdeveloped and rural areas.

The Ministry, through the project "European Small Business Act as a Framework of SME Strategies and Policies in BiH", funded by Swedish SIDA and implemented by the "Eda" agency Banja Luka, initiated the approval of financial support for two sub-projects of support to women entrepreneurship, total value of 105.347 KM, which will be implemented in 2019. One of these projects will support the activities of the "Duga" association from Banja Luka.

Recognizing the importance of this activity for the overall economy of Republika Srpska, it is necessary to continue supporting this activity, which is a significant source of self-employment and employment. The support should be directed to educating beginners in business, financial support for starting and improving business and promotion, as well as designing the products, with the help of experts in this field, which are a combination of modern and traditional, and thus breathe new life to traditional knowledge and skills.

## SWOT ANALYSIS

The following table gives an overview of the business environment in Republika Srpska.

<b>STRENGTHS</b>	<b>WEAKNESSES</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Existing significant capacity and experience in women entrepreneurship;</li> <li>• Women entrepreneurship is more developed in Republika Srpska than in the surrounding countries, according to statistical indicators;</li> <li>• A series of successful examples of women's entrepreneurship in Republika Srpska, institutional capacities to support women's entrepreneurship monitor and support the activities of women entrepreneurs;</li> <li>• Positive trend of women entrepreneurship development in the last five years;</li> <li>• Existing experience and potential in the development and implementation of projects, supported by foreign donors and domestic institutions.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Women entrepreneurship is most concentrated in urban areas and in the Banja Luka area;</li> <li>• Poor promotion of women's entrepreneurship and successful domestic practices;</li> <li>• Low level of networking of women entrepreneurs;</li> <li>• Low participation of women entrepreneurs in the ICT sector;</li> <li>• The formal education system does not contribute to the formation of entrepreneurial attitudes and skills;</li> <li>• Difficult development and access to financial resources;</li> <li>• Women entrepreneurship is not yet recognized as an employment tool;</li> <li>• There are not enough specific programmes to support women's entrepreneurship at the local level;</li> <li>• Insufficient support for start-up business activities;</li> <li>• Insufficient awareness of women entrepreneurs about the existing support mechanisms</li> </ul>
<b>OPPORTUNITIES</b>	<b>THREATS</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Increased international donors' focus on supporting gender equality and strengthening women's entrepreneurship;</li> <li>• Intensified networking of women entrepreneurs in order to ensure exchange of information and mutual support;</li> <li>• Better networking with women entrepreneurs and their associations in neighbouring countries;</li> <li>• Motivating potential women entrepreneurs by promoting successful examples and practices of women entrepreneurship in Republika Srpska;</li> <li>• Coherent approach to supporting women's entrepreneurship at level of Republika and local levels;</li> <li>• Preparing, applying for and implementing projects focused on development of women's entrepreneurship within cross-border, regional and European programmes (IPA, EEN, CBC, ADRION, Danube ...);</li> <li>• Introducing dual education systems and integrating entrepreneurship into the education system;</li> <li>• Adaptation and implementation of already existing good practices in support of women's entrepreneurship, developed and implemented in EU countries;</li> <li>• Introduction of venture capital instruments.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Outflow of young, skilled and capable workforce;</li> <li>• Underdeveloped instruments of financial support, in the form of venture capital, business angels and the like;</li> <li>• Existence of shadow economy;</li> <li>• Increased demographic and economic disparities between urban and rural areas;</li> <li>• Isolated treatment of women entrepreneurship in relation to entrepreneurship in general and neglect of the importance of indirect support for women entrepreneurs;</li> <li>• Longer-term adaptation of the school system to the needs of the economy in general and to the needs of women's entrepreneurship;</li> <li>• Emergence of possible new natural disasters causing major damage, especially those affecting highly agricultural oriented areas.</li> </ul>

## **STRATEGIC OBJECTIVES AND VISION OF WOMEN'S ENTREPRENEURSHIP DEVELOPMENT**

Statistical indicators of women entrepreneurship in Republika Srpska indicate a significant share of women entrepreneurs in Republika Srpska economy, but also point to the fact that women entrepreneurs in many areas of business still do not have an equal role in development.

However, the environment around women in business and the image of women entrepreneurs is changing for the better, and the previous activities to support women's entrepreneurship have certainly contributed to that, including a support programme adopted by the Government of Republika Srpska, as well as a number of activities of the Ministry, system of chambers, Agency, Gender centre and other institutions and organizations both at the level of Republika Srpska and local level, as well as donor assistance in this area.

This became clear and necessary after direct contacts with women entrepreneurs at workshops, round tables and sessions of the Council for Entrepreneurship of Women in the chamber system of Republika Srpska, where women entrepreneurs requested the adoption of a strategic document, provision of funds for women and special support for the business of women entrepreneurs in the Republika Srpska strategy documents, whose implementation includes all relevant institutions and organizations.

In this regard, given the level of development achieved, in the Strategy for Development of Small and Medium-Sized Enterprises in Republika Srpska for the period 2016-2020. it is planned to adopt the Strategy for Entrepreneurship of Women in Republika Srpska.

The Women's Entrepreneurship Development Strategy defines basic objectives, activities, stakeholders of women's entrepreneurship development, deadlines and resources necessary to support women's entrepreneurship.

The aim of this document is to achieve the following:

- Facilitate the transition from occasional and ad hoc support to system support for women's entrepreneurship, both at the level of Republika Srpska and local level,
- Contribute to greater share of women entrepreneurship in the Republika Srpska economy,
- Enable strengthening of women entrepreneurship in all parts of Republika Srpska, especially in rural areas,
- Promote the work and role of women entrepreneurs in the economy, as role models for future young women entrepreneurs who will start their own businesses,
- Provide significantly greater direct and indirect support to women entrepreneurs, from domestic and international sources.

## VISION OF WOMEN'S ENTREPRENEURSHIP DEVELOPMENT IN REPUBLIKA SRPSKA

**"Systemically Supported and Integrated Women's Entrepreneurship as a Generator of Economic Development of Republika Srpska"**

**Women's entrepreneurship** is systematically supported both at the level of Republika Srpska and local level, in all parts of Republika Srpska, and integrated into economic development of Republika Srpska as a generator of development of existing and new businesses and job creation.

### STRATEGIC OBJECTIVES OF THE DEVELOPMENT OF WOMEN'S ENTREPRENEURSHIP IN REPUBLIKA SRPSKA

<b>STRATEGIC OBJECTIVE 1: STRENGTHENING THE COMPETITIVENESS OF BUSINESS ENTITIES ESTABLISHED AND MANAGED BY WOMEN ENTREPRENEURS</b>	<b>STRATEGIC OBJECTIVE 2: IMPROVING AVAILABILITY AND ATTRACTION OF ENTREPRENEURSHIP AND BUSINESS FOR WOMEN</b>	<b>STRATEGIC OBJECTIVE 3: PROVIDING ADDITIONAL SUPPORT TO SPECIFIC AREAS OF WOMEN'S ENTREPRENEURSHIP</b>
<i>1.1 PROGRAMME OF FINANCIAL SUPPORT TO WOMEN ENTREPRENEURS</i>	<i>2.1 PROGRAMME OF ADAPTATION OF REGULATORY FRAMEWORK TO WOMEN'S ENTREPRENEURSHIP</i>	<i>3.1 PROGRAMME OF SUPPORT TO WOMEN ENTREPRENEURS IN THE FIELD OF CRAFTS</i>
<i>1.2 PROGRAMMEE OF PROFESSIONAL SUPPORT TO WOMEN ENTREPRENEURS</i>	<i>2.2 PROGRAMME OF INDIRECT SUPPORT TO WOMEN'S ENTREPRENEURSHIP</i>	<i>3.2 PROGRAMME OF DEVELOPMENT OF WOMEN'S ENTREPRENEURSHIP IN RURAL AREAS</i>
<i>1.3 PROGRAMME OF SUPPORT TO WOMEN'S ASSOCIATION AND NETWORKING</i>	<i>2.3 WOMEN ENTREPRENEURSHIP PROMOTION PROGRAMME</i>	

## **STRATEGIC OBJECTIVE 1: STRENGTHENING COMPETITIVENESS OF BUSINESS ENTITIES ESTABLISHED AND MANAGED BY WOMEN ENTREPRENEURS**

The first strategic objective is covering a part of the system support for women's entrepreneurship, which refers to targeted instruments, policies and structures that can improve the competitiveness of women-run businesses. The programmes and measures they contain should contribute to the achievement of better business results, expressed through the continuous increase in income, exports and added value, achieved in business entities run by women entrepreneurs.

Measuring the achievement of strengthening the competitiveness of business entities established and managed by women entrepreneurs, as a strategic objective, can be done through the following indicators:

- export growth,
- revenue growth,
- growth of additional value (the sum of realized profit and gross salaries),
- growth of the number of women entrepreneurs in women's business associations.

Degree to which this objective will be achieved will depend on the effectiveness of the system support that must be provided, namely: financial support, professional support and support for the association and networking of women entrepreneurs. These types of support are elaborated through appropriate programmes and activities.

### ***1.1 PROGRAMME OF FINANCIAL SUPPORT TO WOMEN ENTREPRENEURS***

#### ***1.1.1 Establishment and functioning of a special entrepreneurial grant scheme / fund for women entrepreneurs for different types of support***

Grants for women entrepreneurs are necessary to support various activities, and a grant scheme needs to be put in place to distribute funds to women entrepreneurs in accordance with their needs and requirements. Funds are necessary for the business needs of women entrepreneurs (investments in machinery and equipment, new products, export activities, innovations, ecology, marketing, distribution, promotion, digitalization, standards, licenses and other needs arising from business), participation in fairs and other events, supporting women's associations, organizing events for women entrepreneurs, developing promotional materials, websites and portals and all other forms of support for women entrepreneurs in accordance with their needs. Funds would be provided through the establishment of a fund for women entrepreneurs - financial item through which the funds from all stakeholders would be pooled. The Fund would be created by pooling funds from the Republika Srpska budget and international projects, as well as other financial sources. In addition, through participation in the preparation of other documents related to the economy, the Ministry will initiate the allocation of special funds or the creation of specific criteria for the allocation of certain incentives for women entrepreneurs.

According to the information available, there is no concrete strategic document in local government units in Republika Srpska intended to support women's entrepreneurship, but ten local self-government units provide some support for women entrepreneurs. In the coming period, it is necessary to strengthen this support and to enable it in other local self-government units.

Taking into account a significant number of international projects that are or will be implemented in the coming period, the Ministry and other stakeholders in the implementation of the Strategy will be obliged to initiate special support from donors for women entrepreneurs.

### ***1.1.2 Establish special credit lines for women in the banking and microcredit sector in Republika Srpska***

In the banking and micro-credit sector, it is necessary to initiate the introduction of special credit lines for women, similar to the "Women in Business" credit line, co-financed by Unicredit Bank Banja Luka and the European Bank for Reconstruction and Development. This EBRD credit line exists in 18 countries in Europe, Asia and Africa. So far, over € 480 million have been disbursed through this credit line for over 35.000 women entrepreneurs, which illustrates the need to create special credit lines for women entrepreneurs. Similar credit lines are provided by the Investment and Development Fund of Montenegro, which has an interest-free credit line for women entrepreneurs who are just starting business, as well as two credit lines for women entrepreneurs who are already operating. The Croatian Bank for Reconstruction and Development also has a special credit line for women entrepreneurs with more favourable conditions. Therefore, it is necessary to create special credit lines with more favourable conditions for granting loans to women entrepreneurs in all interested financial organizations operating in Republika Srpska. The aforementioned lines would greatly facilitate business activities for entrepreneurs. As for the institutions that already have lines for entrepreneurs, they need to be continuously promoted in order for women entrepreneurs to have as much information as possible.

### ***1.1.3 Initiate the establishment of guarantee lines for women entrepreneurs***

The Ministry of Economy and Entrepreneurship, in order to ensure greater accessibility and more favourable conditions for women entrepreneurs, in cooperation with the Guarantee Fund of Republika Srpska, will initiate the introduction of special guarantee-credit lines for women entrepreneurs who have already established their businesses and special guarantee-credit lines for start-up projects of women entrepreneurs. In this way, with the guarantees of the Guarantee Fund of Republika Srpska, it would be easier for this category to access credit funds and create preconditions for achieving more favourable conditions in credit arrangements with banking and micro-credit organizations. These lines could also be established with local guarantee funds.

#### ***1.1.4 Introducing venture capital instruments for women entrepreneurs***

Venture capital is a type of financial investment from investors in the share capital of non-listed companies that have the potential for growth and development. These investments create new added value. Investors most often invest in new businesses, businesses that cannot get standard credit, but are innovative and technologically advanced, high-risk businesses. With this in mind, these types of financing are also great for women entrepreneurs who mostly finance their business from loans and their own funds. In Republika Srpska, it is necessary to work on introducing women entrepreneurs to these types of financing, to make better use of such financial instruments from international projects and encouraging successful women entrepreneurs to invest in new ventures of young women entrepreneurs, as is the case in the region with women investors in the EU, so-called "business angels." Such financial instruments need to be brought closer to women entrepreneurs and their good sides presented. Also, women entrepreneurs who use these types of capital and who have invested in certain ventures need to be promoted.

### ***1.2 PROGRAMME OF PROFESSIONAL SUPPORT FOR WOMEN ENTREPRENEURS***

#### ***1.2.1 Preparing and organizing trainings for women entrepreneurs***

Entrepreneurship training is important for all young women, as well as for all other interested women of any age, who want to start a business and establish a particular business form. In order to get the right information, it is necessary to devise special programmes for women entrepreneurs that will provide the right information important for starting a business, registration, loans, financial support, employment, availability of office space etc. After the training, every woman should be able to make the right decision on starting a business and get the necessary and accessible support. Of course, it is also important for women entrepreneurs to receive training in management when taking over a family business, how to improve the management of businesses entities, and other training related to management.

#### ***1.2.2 Preparation and organization of vocational trainings in priority areas and digital transformation of business entities run by women entrepreneurs***

Women entrepreneurs who have been in business for many years also need training in all sectors in order to improve their businesses, gain new knowledge and improve their product and market appearance. Particularly important is training for women entrepreneurs who want to create their own products or export their products to foreign markets. For these purposes, it is necessary to establish specific training programmes and establish a certain infrastructure that will enable these types of training. Training related to innovation, finance and digitization is also of particular importance. The digital transformation of business entities in all business segments will, in the coming period, be one of the most important and most necessary in marketing and production, as well as in training of all employees. Using advanced technologies, it is also

necessary to develop specific online trainings that a women entrepreneur can look at when it suits her and that would be important for her business and further improvement as a manager of her business entity.

### ***1.2.3 Mentoring for women entrepreneurs who are just starting their businesses***

The mentoring system is very important as it envisages the support of experienced women entrepreneurs for beginner women entrepreneurs. It has been successfully implemented in the European Union and some countries in the region. Further, the experiences of successful women entrepreneurs, but also of those who have experienced problems in business or who relaunched their business after bankruptcy are valuable and cannot be obtained through general and vocational trainings. As projects concerning mentoring and providing second opportunities are already under way, programmes based on the experiences of the existing women entrepreneurs, need to be created. Through this programme, successful women entrepreneurs would be stimulated to become mentors and young women entrepreneurs to use mentoring services. It is especially important to promote the stories of successful women with female college students in their final years of study and to connect them.

## ***1.3 PROGRAMME OF SUPPORT TO WOMEN ENTREPRENERS' ASSOCIATION AND NETWORKING***

### ***1.3.1 Establish a database of women entrepreneurs, women entrepreneurs' associations and women's associations in Republika Srpska***

In Republika Srpska, there is currently no specific database or register of women entrepreneurs and women's associations, but the data are included in existing databases of business entities where ownership of the business entity is more or less visible. The Chamber of Commerce of Republika Srpska has a database of women entrepreneurs who are members of the Chamber, and processes information on macroeconomic indicators on the development of women's entrepreneurship based on data from the Republika Srpska Institute of Statistics and APIF. However, there is no single database of all women entrepreneurs and women's associations. The said database / register will be kept and updated by the Ministry of Economy and Entrepreneurship. Identification of women entrepreneurs and women's associations is of particular importance in order to establish a network and enable the exchange of the necessary information between institutions and organizations and women entrepreneurs, as well as the women entrepreneurs themselves. In addition, this information will serve the responsible institutions to create support for this area. Based on the information from the register, the exact status of women's associations and women entrepreneurs' associations will be determined. After that, it will be possible to determine the number of members of these associations, purpose of their establishment, activities, geographical area covered by the associations as well as other

relevant indicators. This will make it easier to create support both at the level of Republika Srpska and the local level.

### ***1.3.2 Provide professional support for the preparation and application of projects of support for women entrepreneurs and improve the networking and association of women entrepreneurs***

Specific projects to support women's entrepreneurship have been implemented through the FIGAP programme and through the project "European Small Business Act as a Framework of SME Strategies and Policies in BiH - SBA in BiH". Indirect support for women entrepreneurs and women as a target group is visible through many EU projects, as well as projects from other donors. There is a strong interest of women entrepreneurs in participating in such projects, so it is necessary that the existing support organizations provide assistance to women entrepreneurs in applying for domestic and foreign funds. A small amount of support is provided for women's associations that need to be further educated to be able to create projects and form partnerships that are necessary for applying to specific projects. In Republika Srpska, there are a number of associations of women entrepreneurs, such as the association of women entrepreneurs "Una", the women's association "Duga", and other associations. Some of these associations already use the available support, as well as the support of international projects. However, most associations are not active and their members meet only occasionally. Training should also be planned for the management structure of the associations and for the preparation of projects, to help strengthen the associations and their efficiency in the market. Training is also necessary for newly formed associations. Support should also be designed to connect and network the associations and strengthen their role in representing the interests of their members. Each type of networking and clustering of women entrepreneurs strengthens their role and enables better representation of their interests, therefore it is necessary to promote these activities.

### ***1.3.3 Strengthening the capacities and activities of the Council for Women's Entrepreneurship and other councils involving women***

The councils for women's entrepreneurship were formed at the Chamber of Commerce of Republika Srpska and the regional chambers in Republika Srpska. The councils in the chamber system have been established with the aim of improving the representation and status of women in the field of entrepreneurship, proposing legal solutions and measures, participating in projects, proposing vocational education, promoting women's entrepreneurship, participating in conferences and fairs, networking women entrepreneurs and applying the gender equality principle. The councils work on continuous business education of businesswomen, based on practical management knowledge and skills, in order to raise the level of professionalism and professional competence. The seminars and programmes focus on applicable business knowledge and skills management in the fields of: management, human resources development, marketing, finance, public relations, quality standards, environmental protection, energy efficiency, industrial design protection, project preparation and project management, etc. So far, the councils for women's entrepreneurship have organized more than 20 seminars and workshops, attended by

more than 200 women entrepreneurs. The existence and role of these councils are very important, and in the coming period, through concrete projects, it will be necessary to develop targeted capacity building trainings and moderated discussions for council members, in order to define recommendations for improving the situation in this area, as well as necessary activities. The councils will also need the support of institutions and projects.

#### ***1.3.4 Organizing events that can contribute to women's networking and association in Republika Srpska, BiH and the Western Balkans region.***

Organization of specific events attended by women entrepreneurs, women who want to start a business and associations in Republika Srpska are necessary for the members of the associations to exchange experiences and agree on cooperation and networking. The Ministry has organized two international conferences, workshops for women entrepreneurs and associations of women entrepreneurs, attended by approx. 500 women entrepreneurs and representatives of institutions and organizations. At these conferences, cooperation agreements were signed between the participants, and some of the signatories were associations and organizations from the surrounding countries. Such events have become a tradition. Their aim is to encourage organization of as many promotional events as possible for women entrepreneurs and their associations.

#### ***1.3.5 Use of the Enterprise Europe Network tools to internationalize the business of women entrepreneurs***

Internationalization of business is a very important process in terms of finding new business partners outside the borders of Republika Srpska. Considering that the Enterprise Europe Network is one of the most important tools for internationalization of business, also available in the territory of Republika Srpska, in the forthcoming period the work will be intensified on cooperation of entrepreneurs within the EEN, especially through the “EEN Women Entrepreneurship Sector Group”, which was created exclusively for the purpose of strengthening and developing women's entrepreneurship. This sector group consists of 16 members from ten different countries, and through the participation of representatives of institutions from Republika Srpska, the exchange of information and experiences of local and foreign businesswomen would be facilitated.

#### ***1.3.6 Setting up and administering a single e-platform for the exchange of information and cooperation of women entrepreneurs of Republika Srpska***

Women's entrepreneurship is presented on the Entrepreneurial portal of Republika Srpska, which provides all relevant information for entrepreneurs in Republika Srpska. There is no online platform in Republika Srpska specifically intended for women entrepreneurs, therefore, in the coming period, a special portal, platform or website for women entrepreneurs will be created. In this way, women entrepreneurs will have access to the information and contacts they need to support their businesses, but that will also create the opportunity for creating networks

and groups of women entrepreneurs. The platform will also promote successful women entrepreneurs' stories, incentives, projects, fairs, conferences, training announcements and other forms of support. All forms of electronic presentations should be linked to the Entrepreneurial Portal of Republika Srpska.

## **STRATEGIC OBJECTIVE 2: IMPROVING AVAILABILITY AND ATTRACTIVENESS OF ENTREPRENEURSHIP AND BUSINESS FOR WOMEN**

The existing socio-cultural patterns in society and their reflection on the regulation of business and social environment in Republika Srpska do not sufficiently recognize the entrepreneurial engagement of women. Women are still burdened with a number of other roles they have. On the other hand, women still do not have sufficient influence in the adoption of regulations and rules that could create more favourable preconditions for their more active entrepreneurial role and business career. Therefore, the second strategic objective includes measures and activities that should be taken to provide a more favourable business and social environment for women entrepreneurs and facilitate their business operations, thus enabling more women to start and successfully run their businesses. It is about greater influence of women entrepreneurs in creating a regulatory framework relevant to their business, as well as partial unburdening of women in other life roles, so that their potential can be more focused on business. Also, it is about making entrepreneurship, business management and economic activity more accessible and attractive to women in general, by using and promoting the successes achieved in women's entrepreneurship in Republika Srpska.

The achievement of this strategic objective can be monitored by the following indicators:

- increase of women's participation in advisory bodies concerning the economy at the level of Republika Srpska and the local level;
- increase in the number of regulatory solutions (laws, by-laws, strategies and the like, concerning the economy, women in society and family), with women entrepreneurs participating in their adoption in an organized way;
- increase in the number of business entities established and run by women;
- increase in the number of business entities where women hold key management positions.

The extent to which these indicators will be realized will depend on the implementation of a series of mutually harmonized activities that can be divided into three thematic areas: creating a supportive regulatory framework for women's entrepreneurship, indirect support through unburdening women when they perform other social roles, and promoting successful examples and practices of women entrepreneurship.

### **2.1 PROGRAMME OF ADAPTATION OF REGULATORY FRAMEWORK TO WOMEN'S ENTREPRENEURSHIP**

#### ***2.1.1 Incorporating women's entrepreneurship into strategic and legislative documents and introducing incentives for women entrepreneurs***

The Ministry of Economy and Entrepreneurship will initiate the definition of special measures for women entrepreneurs in all strategic and legislative documents concerning the economy at the level of Republika, but also in strategic documents and other policies in local self-government units. In this way, the support to women entrepreneurs would be provided horizontally through important documents, but also vertically, by defining support both at the level of Republika Srpska and the local level. So far, women's entrepreneurship has been recognized at the level of Republika Srpska only in strategic documents for small and medium-sized enterprises, and in rural and agricultural development, where some incentives have been provided. At the local level, women's entrepreneurship is supported in ten local strategies. Support for women entrepreneurs is needed in other areas as well, and that would significantly facilitate their work and functioning in society, as well as strengthen the role of women in all walks of life. Special benefits for women entrepreneurs would also be significant for women in general, and in certain areas would be particularly important for the work of women entrepreneurs (tax policy, employment incentives, etc.), as well as in the documents and policies at the local level.

### ***2.1.2 Greater involvement of women entrepreneurs in the preparation of laws and bylaws and other documents that affect their business***

The participation of women entrepreneurs is very important in public-private consultations for all important documents, laws, strategies and other documents, as well as the projects that directly or indirectly relate to women's entrepreneurship at the level of Republika Srpska and the local level. Also, it is necessary to use other tools for such consultations, such as internet tools (web pages, portals, emails, platforms...), as well as direct contacts of representatives of institutions and organizations in charge of women's entrepreneurship, through visits to business entities run by women entrepreneurs, to assess the situation on the ground and identify the changes needed to make their business easier and better. Also, it is necessary to inform women entrepreneurs with the opportunities and other businesses of women entrepreneurs in the region, in order to be better informed and aware of the benefits, legislation and incentives in the environment and the EU and thus be able to adequately formulate their needs and demand the necessary changes.

### ***2.1.3 Greater involvement of women in local business councils and other economic advisory bodies***

Economic councils and other advisory bodies are very important both at the level of Republika Srpska and the local level. The role of these councils is to review the conditions and ways of doing business in the areas under their jurisdiction, and to make recommendations to the authorities that will improve the business environment, whether it be legislation, incentives, activities of institutions and organizations, investments or anything else that will lead to the growth and development of their areas. Bearing in mind that women entrepreneurs have a

significant participation in the economy and that, by their nature, are more sensitive to understanding the problems, i.e. their causes and consequences, it is necessary to include at least one women entrepreneur in these advisory bodies, and at least 40% women of the total number of members in larger local self-government units should be part of economic councils.

## ***2.2 PROGRAMME OF INDIRECT SUPPORT FOR WOMEN ENTREPRENEURSHIP***

### ***2.2.1 Facilitate business management for women entrepreneurs who are mothers as well as work for working mothers***

Women entrepreneurs who are wives and mothers, or have family responsibilities in addition to taking care of their business, need to be allowed some benefits, such as promoting opportunities for fathers to use paternity leave, as such legal possibility does exist. This is especially important in families with multiple children where maternity leave is longer than one year. In this way, all rights related to children and maternity leave can still be exercised, and mothers can be relieved so they can sooner return to their business obligations. Also, it would be important that local governments subsidize private preschools as well, so they can also help women entrepreneurs and all other employed mothers to use public/private preschools as important childcare facilities. The lack of space in preschools, the cost of accommodation or some third problem most often make mothers decide to look for other solutions, that are not of sufficient quality or safe for their children. That, again, complicates their role as an employer because they may not have the necessary concentration and dedication to business and making quality business decisions. Apart from these possibilities, it is necessary to analyse other good practices that enable every employed woman to have a quality and well organized private and business life.

### ***2.2.2 Gender Budgeting***

When drafting budget plans, it is necessary to respect the principle of gender budgeting at the level of Republika Srpska and the local level and gradually introduce changes with an aim of eventually achieving the principle of gender equality in this area. Gender budgeting, in the context of the subject matter of this document, implies the application of gender analysis in budget planning, i.e. implementing measures, programmes and projects in the field of development of SMEs and entrepreneurship. It is necessary to consider the effects of the allocation of resources on women's and men's entrepreneurial activities and ensure that budgeting improves gender equality in this area. Gender budgeting enables women and men to have equal access to the resources necessary for entrepreneurial activity, to equally decide and benefit from their use. The Ministry of Economy and Entrepreneurship and the Gender Centre of Republika Srpska will provide the necessary training in the field of gender budgeting in order to use these principles in the preparation of the budget plan.

## **2.3 WOMEN ENTREPRENEURSHIP PROMOTION PROGRAMME**

### ***2.3.1 Prepare and publish successful stories of women entrepreneurs and businesswomen in Republika Srpska***

Successful women entrepreneurs are often not visible or recognizable in the public, or even in the environments in which they live, although their businesses may be well known to the public. Also, there are very few media reports or TV programs dedicated to women's entrepreneurship. Media appearances and presentations are important for the business of existing women entrepreneurs, but also for the establishment of new women-owned businesses. Success stories need to be promoted in all types of media. This should cover more business sectors, portray women in multiple roles and situations, with challenges and responses they take. Also, stories about problems in their business need to be told. Shooting success stories or writing articles about women entrepreneurs not only promotes women's entrepreneurship but also breaks certain stereotypes and sends a positive image to other women that they can be successful in any field. This is especially important for young people who have yet to position themselves and find their place in society and economy. In this way, successful women entrepreneurs become role models for young people, and their role is gaining more importance in society.

### ***2.3.2 Organize media attractive events /meetings focused on women's entrepreneurship (conferences, round tables, forums, fairs, etc.)***

In the previous period, a series of roundtables, seminars and other events focused on women's entrepreneurship were held. Also, in 2017. and 2018, there were women's entrepreneurship conferences attended by over 500 women entrepreneurs and representatives of institutions and organizations. At the conferences, the activities of institutions in this field and the experiences of entrepreneurs were presented, and B2B meetings were held between the participants. Conclusions and recommendations for further development of women's entrepreneurship in Republika Srpska were defined at the end. Such events promote women's entrepreneurship, enable the exchange of experiences, networking of women entrepreneurs and establishing business cooperation. With this in mind, it is necessary in the coming period to continue with such activities, such as round tables, seminars, workshops and other events, as well as with the organization of an annual conference on women's entrepreneurship.

### ***2.3.3 Promoting women's entrepreneurship in primary, secondary and higher education***

The promotion of women's entrepreneurship and entrepreneurship as a whole is necessary in all forms of education through organizing "a week" or "a day of entrepreneurship", when there would be meetings with entrepreneurs and success stories and good practices in entrepreneurship would be presented in school facilities. Also, visits to businesses entities would be organised, so students could meet successful entrepreneurs, learn about their businesses and employment

opportunities, as well as opportunities to start a business after graduation. Positive experiences would certainly influence young people and make them think about starting their own business.

### **STRATEGIC OBJECTIVE 3: PROVIDE ADDITIONAL SUPPORT TO SPECIFIC AREAS OF WOMEN'S ENTREPRENEURSHIP**

Some areas of women's entrepreneurship require additional support, primarily due to the difficult access to the market and the lack of additional business services necessary for the development of the core business. First of all, it is about the field of crafts, that is, domestic crafts, and entrepreneurship in the countryside. In both cases, access to the market, involvement in value chain activities and availability of additional business services are difficult. In the second case, it is the availability of certain infrastructure necessary for business which is often lacking in the countryside.

Progress towards this strategic objective can be monitored through the following indicators:

- growth of income of business entities and associations of women entrepreneurs in the area of crafts;
- growth of income of business entities and associations of women entrepreneurs in rural areas;
- increased number of business entities (enterprises and entrepreneurs) established and run by women in the field of crafts;
- increased number of business entities (enterprises and entrepreneurs) established and run by women in rural areas.

#### ***3.1 PROGRAMME OF SUPPORT FOR WOMEN ENTREPRENEURS IN THE AREA OF CRAFTS***

##### ***3.1.1 Support for the preservation of domestic crafts and its use for women's empowerment and their stability and independence (education, promotion and all other forms of support)***

In Republika Srpska, there is significant activity in the field of domestic crafts, and women's associations are particularly active, most often having a humanitarian character as well as a commercial component, when items for sale are made. These associations also provide training for young people and others interested in preserving and protecting our cultural heritage in this area. The activity of women who, through their work, create a livelihood for themselves, but also preserve the tradition and heritage of their region is also important. They, together with their associations, preserve our cultural heritage for future generations. Republika Srpska has a rich heritage where each local community has domestic crafts with different characteristics. It is particularly important to protect this great and varied heritage by listing it in the Republika Srpska Intangible Heritage List, as it had been done with Zmijanje embroidery, which is now protected by the international organization UNESCO. Protecting our heritage in this area enables

its promotion, as well as connection with business entities in the fields of catering, tourism and trade. This can be added to the tourist and cultural offer of an area, but also of Republika Srpska as a whole. Support is important and it can be expressed through provision of education, promotion, funding for tools and materials, support for associations, exhibitions and other activities required by the industry. It is also necessary to encourage institutions to purchase domestic handicraft products as business gifts, which would enable women to have secure and continuous orders of their products throughout the year through public procurement.

### ***3.1.2 Exhibitions of domestic crafts***

It is necessary to organize exhibitions of domestic crafts, where products of women's associations, individuals, ethno-workshops, institutions that cover these activities (museums, galleries ...), as well as other organizations, for the purpose of promotion and support, could be presented. The purpose of these exhibitions is to connect these organizations with tourist organizations and agencies, catering companies and food and beverage producers, in order to enrich the tourist offer of an area. In addition, the exhibitions are important for the citizens to get acquainted with the tradition of certain parts and the entire Republika Srpska. The sale of such products facilitates the work of these organizations, and it is necessary to consider the possibility for public institutions to use their products as business gifts i.e. for promotion of cultural heritage of Republika Srpska during visits of foreign delegations. This enables the survival and strengthening of the organizations engaged in this activity, indirectly protecting our culture and traditions in Republika Srpska. In addition to this type of presentation, special attention should be paid to web presentations and creation of web portals and product sales portals in this field, which will strengthen this area.

## ***3.2. PROGRAMME OF WOMEN'S ENTREPRENEURSHIP DEVELOPMENT IN RURAL AREAS***

### ***3.2.1 Recognizing legal restrictions on women's entrepreneurship in rural areas and advocating for their elimination and overcoming***

The role of women in the field of agriculture is special and significant, given the tradition and position of women in this field since ancient times. In this regard, it is necessary to analyse the legislation in the field of agriculture, as well as other legislation that indirectly affects the role of women in business, such as property, finances, all types of benefits, etc. After that, it is required to initiate the necessary changes of legislation, in order to facilitate women's activities and business in the agricultural sector and in rural areas.

### ***3.2.2 Preparation and organization of training for women entrepreneurs in the agricultural sector***

Women entrepreneurs in the agricultural sector need general training necessary for running a business, but also vocational targeted training in this area, such as training in vegetable

production, dairy production, fruit growing and other forms of agriculture. Such trainings should be planned from existing budgetary resources, as well as from international projects. Particularly important is to provide all available support through training and financial incentives for those women who want to start a business. Special attention should be paid to the internet presentation of women entrepreneurs and their products, since this contributes to business improvement and market expansion. Therefore, the process of digital transformation is especially important and since this process will be supported from international sources, during the validity period of the Strategy, women entrepreneurs and potential women entrepreneurs will be included in the project proposals as special target groups.

### ***3.2.3 Support for business association***

There are already women's cooperatives in Republika Srpska, supported by the Ministry of Agriculture, Forestry and Water Management. The cooperatives are entitled to support measures for financing business activities, for the procurement of working capital and equipment, amounting up to 50% of budget funds, as well as support for the purchase of agricultural products (5% of the value of purchased products). So far, four women's cooperatives have been organized: OPZ "Žena" Bratunac, OPZZ "Danica" Laktaši, PZ "Smokvica" Trebinje and Women's Cooperative Bijeljina. Since this kind of association and work of women in rural areas has proven to be a good way of empowering women, it is necessary to promote cooperatives in all communities in Republika Srpska where there are conditions for that. Such forms of women's association should be strengthened upon establishment, in the sense of continuous financial support from the budget and funds of international projects, continuing education, promotion and networking. Presenting cooperatives as good practice is particularly important. Apart from cooperatives, all other forms of women's association in rural areas certainly contribute to strengthening the role of women and their empowerment in society.

### ***3.2.4 Financial Incentives***

According to the Rulebook on Conditions and Method of Obtaining Financial Incentives for Capital Investments in Agriculture, women heads of agricultural holdings shall be awarded with additional 10 points. Also, women's associations in rural areas are entitled to support measures for financing business activities, for the procurement of working capital and equipment, up to 50% of the amount of budgeted funds, as well as support for the purchase of agricultural products (5% of the value of purchased products). As part of the emergency support and assistance measures, women heads of agricultural holdings who find themselves in difficult economic and social circumstances are also prioritized and receive additional points in order to get this type of assistance. Support for women in rural areas must also be developed in local self-government units. Adjusting the existing loan facilities would significantly facilitate women's business and obtaining loans in this field. Also, the introduction of new guarantee-credit lines with special conditions for the development of women's entrepreneurship in the field of agriculture would significantly improve access to loans for business activities of women in this field.

The “Republika Srpska Employment Strategy 2016 - 2020.” in its first strategic objective "Increase employment and economic activity of the population in Republika Srpska", within the operational objective 1.6. “Improve employment of the most vulnerable groups of unemployed” recognize women as a special target group. The 2018 “Employment Action Plan” foresees a special support measure for women victims of domestic violence and women in rural areas, for which the Republika Srpska Employment Bureau has allocated financial resources in the amount of KM 1.725.000. The Employment Action Plan for 2019 continues the implementation of this Programme with the inclusion of another target group - women victims of war torture, with allocated funds in the amount of KM 5.002.478. In addition to the financial support, a full set of advisory services is also provided by the Employment Bureau, including entrepreneurship training. It is imperative that other relevant institutions also provide all available training for this group, to enable women victims of violence to get a job or start a business, thereby gaining security and financial independence.

## **EXPECTED EFFECTS OF THE STRATEGY**

In line with the vision and strategic objectives of women's entrepreneurship development for the period 2019 – 2023, the expected effects of the implementation of the Strategy are as follows:

- Increased participation of women entrepreneurs in the total number of SMEs and in GDP,
- Increased participation of women entrepreneurs in total exports,
- Increased number of new women entrepreneurs,
- Increased number of women entrepreneurs in manufacturing industries,
- Increased number of employees in women-led business entities,
- Mentoring for women established,
- Improved access to finance for women entrepreneurs,
- Increased use of venture capital funds by women entrepreneurs,
- Increased innovativeness of women entrepreneurs in Republika Srpska,
- Established support for women entrepreneurs at the local level,
- Strengthened existing women's associations and supported establishment of new associations,
- Established e-platform for women.

The activities planned by the Strategy should influence:

- Increase in the share of women entrepreneurs in the total number of SMEs by 2023 to 30% of the total number of entrepreneurs,
- Increase in the number of employees working for women entrepreneurs by 10% in 2023. compared to 2019.

## **FINANCIAL RESOURCES AND ECONOMIC JUSTIFICATION OF THE STRATEGY**

The priority of all institutions - stakeholders in the Action Plan for the implementation of the Strategy should be the achievement of strategic objectives, programmes and activities, and provision of the necessary financial resources.

Available funding sources are: the Republika Srpska budget and local community budgets, earmarked resources of international projects, donor programmes, various forms of assistance etc. However, it should be emphasized that the implementation of certain activities does not require additional funds, as they are carried out within the framework of the regular activities of the competent institutions of Republika Srpska.

The funds needed for the implementation of the Action Plan activities in the period 2019 – 2023. amount to a total of KM 4.500.000. This amount does not include the guarantees provided in the amount of KM 2.500.000 as they do not represent a direct investment to businesses but support to credit lines.

The economic feasibility of the Strategy is based on the activities and measures that will be taken in order to strengthen women's entrepreneurship in Republika Srpska.

## **IMPLEMENTATION OF THE WOMEN'S ENTREPRENEURSHIP DEVELOPMENT STRATEGY FOR THE PERIOD 2019-2023.**

Implementation of the Strategy, i.e. its monitoring and reporting, is extremely important in achieving the Strategy. It involves the process of continuously collecting data and information related to measuring the success of the Strategy.

Realisation of the Strategy is possible only if all the institutions of Republika Srpska carry out activities within their competence, in the manner and within the deadlines defined by the Action Plan for the implementation of the Strategy (hereinafter: the Action Plan), and if they regularly monitor the achieved results.

Implementation of the activities of the Strategy is the task of all competent institutions and organizations whose activities support the economy at the level of Republika Srpska and the local level, as well as other interested organizations that can contribute to the implementation of this document. Monitoring and reporting on the implementation is the task of the Ministry and all other ministries that support the economy, the Chamber of Commerce, the Agency and all other institutions in Republika Srpska, as well as institutions at local level which will, within the scope of their competencies, produce an annual report on the implementation of the Action Plan and submit it to the Ministry.

Based on the submitted reports, the Ministry will prepare a consolidated information on the implementation of the Action Plan, which will be submitted annually to the Government of Republika Srpska for consideration, through the Annual Report on SMEs.

The Action Plan stakeholders should plan the funds for the implementation of these activities.

**ACTION PLAN FOR THE IMPLEMENTATION OF THE WOMEN'S ENTREPRENEURSHIP DEVELOPMENT  
STRATEGY OF REPUBLIKA SRPSKA FOR THE PERIOD 2019-2023.**

Name of objective / programme / activity	Execution dynamics					Main stakeholders and participants in the realization	Source of financing	Indicative budget in KM	Indicators
	2019.	2020.	2021.	2022.	2023.				
<b>Strategic Objective 1: STRENGTHENING THE COMPETITIVENESS OF BUSINESS ENTITIES ESTABLISHED AND MANAGED BY WOMEN ENTREPRENEURS</b>									
<i>1.1 Programme of financial support to women entrepreneurs</i>									
Establishment and functioning of a special grant scheme / fund for women entrepreneurs for various types of support.						MEE RS, other ministries, RSCC, RARS LSGU, donors	Regular budgetary funds and donor funds	500.000	Number of women entrepreneurs who received support Number of events and participants Number of supported associations
Establish special credit lines for women entrepreneurs in the banking and micro-credit sector of Republika Srpska						Banking and micro-credit sector	Funds from banks and microcredit organizations	1.000.000	Credit lines established Number of women entrepreneurs using the credit lines Number of loans granted

Initiate establishment of guarantee lines for women entrepreneurs						Guarantee Fund of Republika Srpska	GF RS budget	(2.500.000) <sup>7</sup>	Guarantee lines established Number of women entrepreneurs using the lines
									Number of approved guarantees
Introduction of venture capital for women entrepreneurs						MF, RARS, RSCC, other institutions	Different sources	300.000	Number of women entrepreneurs who used this type of funds Number of projects financed with these financial instruments
<b><i>1.2 Programme of professional support to women entrepreneurs</i></b>									
Preparation and organization of trainings for women entrepreneurs						MEE RS, RSCC, RARS, LSGUs, LDAs, other institutions and organizations, donors	Budget funds, donor funds	250.000	Number of trainings Number of participants

<sup>7</sup> The funds are not covered by the total budget because they relate to guarantees.

Preparation and organization of vocational trainings in priority areas and digital transformation of business entities run by women entrepreneurs					MEE RS, RSCC, RARS, LSGUs, LDAs, other institutions donors	Budget funds, donor funds	250.000	Number of trainings Number of participants
Mentoring for women entrepreneurs who are just starting their businesses					RARS, RSCC, LDAs, donors	Budget funds, donor funds	100.000	Number of trainings Number of participants
<b>1.3 Programme of support for association and networking of women entrepreneurs</b>								

Establish a database of women entrepreneurs and associations of women and women entrepreneurs in Republika Srpska					MEE RS in cooperation with MALSG RS, RSCC, RARS	-	-	Document adopted Established number of associations Measures identified
Provide professional support for the preparation and submission of projects supporting women entrepreneurs and promoting women entrepreneurs' networking and association					MEE RS, RARS, RSCC, MEIRS, women's associations, donors	Budget funds, donor funds	150.000	Number of trainings Number of trained women Number of projects Number of associations Number of clusters
Strengthening the capacities and activities of the councils for women' entrepreneurship and other councils involving women					RSCC, donors	Budget funds, donor funds	100.000	Number of trainings

Organizing events that can contribute to women's networking and association in Republika Srpska, BiH and the Western Balkans region					MEE RS, MEIRS, RSCC, RARS, GCRS, donors	Budget funds, donor funds	150.000	Number of events Number of associations Number of women participants
Using the tools of the Enterprise Europe Network in order to internationalize the business of women entrepreneurs					EUNORS	EUNORS funds	100.000	Number of women entrepreneurs who benefited from EUNORS
Creating and running a unique e-platform for information exchange and cooperation between women entrepreneurs of Republika Srpska					MEE RS, RARS, other organisations, LSGUs	Budget funds, donor funds	100.000	Platform created Number of requests for information Number of visitors to the platform Database on women entrepreneurs who will be used for faster and easier communication with women entrepreneurs

<b>Total funds for Strategic Objective 1</b>	<b>3.000.000</b>
<b>Strategic objective 2: IMPROVE AVAILABILITY AND ATTRACTIVENESS OF ENTREPRENEURSHIP AND BUSINESS FOR WOMEN</b>	
<b>2.1 Programme of adaptation of regulatory framework to women's entrepreneurship</b>	

Incorporating women's entrepreneurship into strategic and legislative documents and introducing incentives for women entrepreneurs						All ministries, RSEB, TARS, APIF, RSIS	-		-	Number of fields where women's entrepreneurship is involved Number of documents involving women's entrepreneurship Number of benefits for women Improved statistics on women entrepreneurs
Greater involvement of women entrepreneurs in the preparation of laws, bylaws and other documents that affect their business						Competent Ministries RSCC, councils, women's associations, LSGUs,	-		-	Number of women entrepreneurs' comments Number of regulations changed
						other organisations				
Greater involvement of women in local economic councils and other advisory bodies related to economy						RSCC, CSCE RS, LDAs, LSGUs, women's associations	-		-	Number of women who are council members
<b>2.2 Programme of indirect support for women's entrepreneurship</b>										

Facilitate business management for women entrepreneurs who are mothers as well as work to working mothers						MFYS RS, MEE RS, RSCC, donors	-		-	Number of modified documents Number of new types of support
Gender budgeting						GC RS, MEE, other ministries LSGUs	-		-	Developed budgets that respect gender equality
<b>2.3 Women's Entrepreneurship Promotion Programme</b>										
Prepare and publish success stories of women entrepreneurs and businesswomen in Republika Srpska						MEE RS RARS, RSCC, donors	Budget funds, donor funds		30.000	Number of success stories Number of views and comments on stories
Organize media-attractive events / meetings focused on women's entrepreneurship (conferences, round tables, forums, fairs, etc.)						MEE RS, RARS, RSCC, donors	Budget funds, donor funds		100.000	Number of events Number of participants

Promoting women's entrepreneurship in primary, secondary and high education						MEE RS, MPCRS, RARS, RSCC	Budget funds, donor funds	20.000	Number of events Number of schools and institutions where presentations were held Number of women-led business entities visited by pupils and students
<b>Total funds for Strategic objective 2</b>								<b>150.000</b>	
<b>Strategic objective 3: PROVIDE ADDITIONAL SUPPORT TO SPECIFIC AREAS OF WOMEN'S ENTREPRENEURSHIP</b>									
<b>3.1 Programme of support for women entrepreneurs in the field of crafts</b>									
Supporting preservation of domestic crafts and using it to empower women and their stability and independence (education, promotion and all other forms of support)						MEE RS, CDCE RS, LSGUs, donors	Budget funds, donor funds	200.000	Number of business entities supported
Handicrafts exhibitions						MEE RS, MTT RS, CSCE RS, LSGUs, tourist organizations, donors	Budget funds, donor funds	200.000	Number of exhibitions Number of women participants Number of POS opened
<b>3.2 Programme of development of women's entrepreneurship in rural areas</b>									

Considering legal restrictions on women's entrepreneurship in rural areas and advocating for their elimination and overcoming						MAFWM and other competent ministries	-	-	Number of documents changed Number of newly registered women entrepreneurs
Preparation and organization of training for women entrepreneurs in the agricultural sector						MAFWM, RARS, RSCC, donors	Budget funds, donor funds	100.000	Number of trainings Number of participants
Support for business association						MAFWM, RARS, donors	Budget funds, donor funds	50.000	Number of cooperatives established Number of associations
Financial incentives						MAFWM, MTT, RSEB donors	Budget funds, donor funds	800.000	Number of women who received incentives
<b>Total funds for Strategic objective3</b>								<b>850.000</b>	
<b>Total all objectives</b>								<b>4.500.000</b>	

## LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

MEE RS	Ministry of Economy and Entrepreneurship of Republika Srpska
MAFWM RS	Ministry of Agriculture, Forestry and Water Management of Republika Srpska
MFYS RS	Ministry of Family, Youth and Sports of Republika Srpska
MF RS	Ministry of Finance of Republika Srpska
MALSG RS	Ministry of Administration and Local Self-Government of Republika Srpska
MEIRS	Ministry of European Integration of Republika Srpska
MTT	Ministry of Trade and Tourism of Republika Srpska
MEC RS	Ministry of Education and Culture of Republika Srpska
RARS	Agency for Development of Small and Medium Enterprises of Republika Srpska
TA RS	Tax Administration of Republika Srpska
RSEB	Republika Srpska Employment Bureau
RSIS	Republika Srpska Institute of Statistics
APIF	Intermediary Agency for IT and financial services
GC RS	Gender Centre of Republika Srpska
RSCC	Chamber of Commerce of Republika Srpska
CSCE RS	Chamber of Skilled Crafts and Entrepreneurship of Republika Srpska
LSGU	Local Self-Government Units
LDA	Local Development Agencies
EUNORS	Enterprise Europe Network of Republika Srpska

## **REASONING**

### **OF THE PROPOSAL OF WOMEN'S ENTREPRENEURSHIP DEVELOPMENT STRATEGY IN REPUBLIKA SRPSKA FOR THE PERIOD 2019 – 2023**

#### **I THE CONSTITUTIONAL BASIS**

Constitutional basis for adoption of the Republika Srpska Strategy for Development of Small and Medium-Sized Enterprises for the period 2018 – 2022 is contained in the Amendment XXXII to Article 68, subparagraph 8 of the Constitution of Republika Srpska, according to which, among others, Republika Srpska regulates and provides key objectives and directions of economic development, as well as in Article 70, paragraph 2 of the Constitution of Republika Srpska, which establishes that the National Assembly of Republika Srpska adopts laws, regulations and other legislative documents.

Pursuant to Article 23 of the Law on Republic Administration (*Official Gazette of Republika Srpska* no. 118/08, 11/09, 74/10, 86/10, 24/12 and 121/12), entrepreneurship and small and medium-sized enterprises, and thereby development of strategies and policies for the development of small and medium-sized enterprises and entrepreneurship, is the responsibility of the Ministry of Industry, Energy and Mining of Republika Srpska.

The Strategy for Development of Small and Medium-Sized Enterprises of Republika Srpska (2016 – 2020) envisaged adoption of the Women's Entrepreneurship Development Strategy of Republika Srpska for the period 2019 – 2023.

#### **II COMPLIANCE WITH CONSTITUTION, LEGAL SYSTEM AND NORMATIVE LEGAL PROCEDURES**

According to the Opinion issued by the Republika Srpska Secretariat for Legislation no. 22.03-020-2263/19 of 26 June 2019, the constitutional basis for the adoption of this Strategy is contained in Amendment XXXII to Article 68, subparagraphs 6 and 8 of the Constitution of Republika Srpska, according to which, among others, Republika Srpska regulates and provides protection to all forms of property, legal status of enterprises and other organizations, key objectives and directions of economic and technological development, as well as policies and measures to guide that development. Additionally, according to Article 70 of the Constitution, the National Assembly adopts laws, other regulations and legislative documents.

In their document no. 22/02-021-1754/18 of 12 June 2018, this Secretariat positively assessed the Draft Strategy for Development of Women's Entrepreneurship of Republika Srpska for the period 2018 – 2022, and the Republika Srpska National Assembly adopted the Draft Strategy at the Second Session held on 14 February 2019.

The aim of this Strategy is to provide system support to women's entrepreneurship at the level of Republika and the local level, to enable greater participation of women's

entrepreneurship in the Republika Srpska economy, and to strengthen this entrepreneurship in all parts of Republika Srpska, especially in rural areas.

The Strategy defines three strategic objectives: strengthening competitiveness of businesses started and run by female entrepreneurs, improving accessibility and attractiveness of entrepreneurship and business for women, and providing additional support for specific areas of female entrepreneurship.

The most important differences between the Draft and the Proposal of this Strategy, resulting from the debate in the Assembly, pertain to the change of year from which the Strategy is to be implemented. Accordingly, the year of 2018 in the title of the Strategy was replaced with 2019, which caused changes in the analysis of statistical indicators, as well as the correction of financial projection and projection of expected results. Moreover, the Strategy is harmonized with the new Law on Republic Administration, and ministry names have been corrected accordingly.

Activities pertaining to the financial support to female entrepreneurs were modified in the first strategic objective. The professional support programme for female entrepreneurs is divided into support for female entrepreneurs starting business and support for female entrepreneurs already doing business. The mentoring system is aligned with these changes. Establishment of database of female entrepreneurs and their associations was proposed, instead of the analysis of their work.

Supplements made to the second strategic objective pertain to the support for female entrepreneurs at the local level.

Supplements made to the third strategic objective are related to the protection of local intangible cultural heritage, particularly in the area of craftsmanship, and amendments have been made in the part pertaining to the support for female entrepreneurs in rural areas.

The Secretariat notes that this Strategy is in line with the Decision on Planning, Monitoring and Reporting Procedure on the Implementation of Adopted Strategies and Plans of Republika Srpska and the Administration Bodies (*Official Gazette of Republika Srpska* no. 50/16).

Since the Secretariat for Legislation determined that there is constitutional and legal basis for adoption of this Strategy, it is our position that the Proposal of Women's Entrepreneurship Development Strategy of Republika Srpska for the period 2019 – 2023 can be referred for further consideration.

### **III COMPLIANCE WITH THE EUROPEAN UNION LEGAL ORDER**

According to the Opinion issued by the Ministry for European Integration and International Cooperation no. 17.03-020-2291/19 of 27 June 2019, and following the review of

the European Union regulations and analysis of the provisions of the Proposal of Women's Entrepreneurship Development Strategy of Republika Srpska for the period 2019 – 2023 (hereinafter: the Proposal), it was established that the EU *acquis* contains sources relevant to the regulation of the submitted Proposal, and that the proponent took this into account when drafting the document in question, which is why the Declaration of Conformity is assessed as *partially aligned*.

The matter at hand, in the part related to the primary sources of EU legislation, is regulated by:

- The Treaty on European Union, Title I – Common Provisions, Article 3 (3) and
- The Treaty on the Functioning of the European Union, Part Three – Union Policies and Internal Actions, Title IV - Free Movement of Persons, Services and Capital, Chapter 2 - Right of Establishment, Articles 49 – 55; Chapter 3 – Services, Articles 56 – 62; Title VII - Common Rules on Competition, Taxation and Approximation of Laws, Chapter 1 - Rules on Competition, Section 2 – Aids granted by States, Articles 107 – 109; Title XVII - Industry, Article 173.

In relation to the secondary sources of EU legislation, the proponent transposed Directive 2006/123/EC of the European Parliament and of the Council of 12 December 2006 on Services in the Internal Market.

As for other sources of EU legislation, the proponent took into account:

- Communication from the Commission COM (2010) 2020 final Europe 2020: A strategy for smart, sustainable and inclusive growth,
- Communication from the Commission to the Council, the European Parliament, the European Economic and Social Committee and the Committee of the Regions - *Think Small First - A Small Business Act for Europe*,
- Council conclusions of 7 March 2011 on European Pact for Gender Equality 2011 – 2020,
- Communication from the Commission: A Strengthened Commitment to Equality between Women and Men and A Women's Charter Declaration by the European Commission on the occasion of the 2010 International Women's Day in commemoration of the 15<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the adoption of a Declaration and Platform for Action at the Beijing UN World Conference on Women and the 30<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of the UN Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women,
- Communication from the Commission to the European Parliament, the Council, the European Economic and Social Committee and the Committee of the Regions Strategy for Equality between Women and Men 2010-2015 and
- Study carried out by the European Commission *Women active in the ICT sector*, October 2013.

The adoption of this proposal will contribute to the fulfilment of the obligations under Articles 50 – 59 of the SAA<sup>8</sup> pertaining to the cooperation of the contracting parties in the field of business settlement and provision of services, and Articles 71, 76, 93, 98 – 100 pertaining to cooperation of the parties in the fields of competition, consumer protection, small and medium-sized enterprises, taxation, social policy, education and training.

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<sup>8</sup> Stabilization and Association Agreement between the European Communities and their Member States, of the one part, and Bosnia and Herzegovina, of the other part (*Official Gazette of BiH – International Contracts*, no. 10/08).

#### **IV REASONS FOR ADOPTING THE STRATEGY**

The need to adopt the Republika Srpska Women's Entrepreneurship Development Strategy has been highlighted by the fact that women take a significant place in the economy, but there are still some obstacles or prejudices when it comes to women who are business owners or women who manage business entities.

The Strategy defines strategic objectives, programmes and activities for the development of women's entrepreneurship for the period 2019 - 2023, that are based on the analysis of the situation, development activities in the sector so far, the EU requirements and the needs of SMEs.

The review of the Republika Srpska Women's Entrepreneurship Development Strategy for the period 2019 - 2023. was planned by the Work Programme of the National Assembly of Republika Srpska for 2019.

#### **V DIFFERENCES BETWEEN IN THE STRATEGY PROPOSAL AND THE DRAFT**

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#### **VI. EXPLANATION OF THE PROPOSED SOLUTIONS**

Considering the results of the analysis and research carried out in the process of the strategy development, as well as the vision and the strategic objectives for the development of women' entrepreneurship, three strategic objectives for the development in the period 2019 - 2023 have been defined:

**Strategic Objective 1: Strengthening competitiveness of business entities established and managed by women entrepreneurs**, will be realized through a programme of financial support for women entrepreneurs, a programme of professional support for women entrepreneurs, and a programme of support to women's association and networking.

**Strategic Objective 2: Improving accessibility and attractiveness of entrepreneurship and business for women** will be achieved through the implementation of a programme for adapting the regulatory framework to women's entrepreneurship, a programme of indirect support for women's entrepreneurship and a programme of promotion of women's entrepreneurship.

**Strategic Objective 3: Additional support for specific areas of women's entrepreneurship** will be realized through the implementation of a programme of support for women entrepreneurs in the field of crafts and a programme of support for women entrepreneurs in rural areas.

An overview of concrete measures and activities, stakeholders, deadlines, necessary implementation resources is presented in the Action Plan for the implementation of the Strategy, which is an integral part of the Strategy.

Monitoring and implementation of the Action Plan is the task of all institutions of Republika Srpska. They will produce an annual report on the implementation of the Action Plan under their respective jurisdictions and submit it to the Ministry of Economy and Entrepreneurship of Republika Srpska. The Action Plan will be an integral part of the Annual Report on SMEs and Entrepreneurship, which shall be submitted for consideration to the Government of Republika Srpska and the National Assembly of Republika Srpska.

As a result of the implementation of the Strategy, positive effects in the field of women entrepreneurship are expected in the forthcoming period, such as an increase in the number of newly opened women-owned SMEs, increase in women's employment and their share in GDP, as well as an increase in exports.

## **VII PARTICIPATION OF PUBLIC AND CONSULTATIONS IN CREATING THE STRATEGY**

The Ministry of Economy and Entrepreneurship requested the opinion of the competent ministries, chambers, agencies and other development actors in Republika Srpska on the proposal of the Republika Srpska Women's Entrepreneurship Development Strategy for the period 2019-2023. The following institutions have delivered their opinions: Ministry of Finance, Ministry of Trade and Tourism, Ministry of Agriculture, Forestry and Water Management, Ministry of Education and Culture, Ministry of European Integration and International Cooperation, Agency for Development of SMEs of Republika Srpska, Gender Centre of Republika Srpska, Tax Administration of Republika Srpska, Investment and Development Bank of Republika Srpska, Guarantee Fund of Republika Srpska, APIF, Chamber of Commerce of Republika Srpska, Employment Bureau of Republika Srpska and Republika Srpska Institute of Statistics.

## **VIII FINANCIAL RESOURCES AND ECONOMIC JUSTIFICATION OF THE STRATEGY**

The funds needed for the implementation of the Republika Srpska Women's Entrepreneurship Development Strategy for the period 2019-2023 amount to KM 4.500.000, most of which are credit funds. This amount does not include the guarantees in the amount of KM 2.500.000 as they do not represent direct support for businessmen but support for credit lines.

In addition, the other available funding sources are: the Republika Srpska budget and local community budgets, earmarked funds of international projects, donor programmes and various forms of assistance etc. However, it should be emphasized that the implementation of certain activities does not require additional financial resources, as they are carried out within the framework of the regular activities of competent institutions of Republika Srpska.

## STATEMENTS AND COMMENTS OF NATIONAL ASSEMBLY DEPUTIES ON THE PROPOSAL OF THE STRATEGY

The National Assembly of Republika Srpska, at its 2nd session held on 12, 13. and 14. February 2019, reviewed and approved the Draft Strategy for the Development of Women's Entrepreneurship in Republika Srpska for the period 2018 - 2022.

The Draft Strategy for the Development of Women's Entrepreneurship in Republika Srpska for the period 2018 - 2022. was supported by the assembly members, with the following comments and suggestions by the deputies:

### Ivanka Marković

The deputy Ivanka Marković said that the preparation of the Strategy was based on the need to comply with the Action Plan for Harmonisation of the Republika Srpska Legislation with the EU Acquis and that this raises fear that Republika Srpska will not do everything that is necessary to create more favourable conditions for businesses of women entrepreneurs. She also said that the Strategy states that there is gender inequality in entrepreneurship as well as in other spheres of life, but that this document gives hope for creating formal conditions for women to be equal in entrepreneurship. She also mentioned that the document states that women do not have leadership positions and they are mainly engaged in service activities. The deputy also mentioned the existence of sexual corruption. She said that the Strategy was submitted in June 2018 and is only now under consideration. She asked when the Fund for Women's Entrepreneurs would be formed. She believes that the Employment Agency's funds for women victims of violence and women in rural areas cannot solve their problems because they are one-offs, and she called for the introduction of a fund for victims of violence.

### Answer:

**The Strategy is, first of all, made upon the requests and needs to support women entrepreneurs. As this document is partially aligned with EU regulations, it is also planned in the Harmonization Action Plan. In Republika Srpska, the Law on Gender Equality and other respected documents are in force, so it cannot be stated generally that there is gender inequality, but that it may occur sporadically, as in other countries of the region and the EU. This document defines support for women entrepreneurs, that is, women who participate in business processes, while addressing general problems of women, such as gender equality, violence against women, sexual corruption and other issues, is dealt with in other documents and activities of competent ministries. The Ministry of Economy and Entrepreneurship has already proposed the establishment of the Fund for Women Entrepreneurs, through a budget plan for the next three years, and it will also be proposed in the 2020 budget plan, as support for women entrepreneurs from international sources.**

### Vice President Bratić

The Vice President gave a brief clarification that the Assembly has not been in session since late June 2018, and that is why this document has not yet been considered.

### Mara Milošević

The deputy supports the adoption of the Strategy, as well as women in developing their own businesses. She said that women are not ready for this role, they lack confidence and do not see themselves as leaders, and that is why they have previously been left out of business. She believes that support should be provided through women's entrepreneurship fairs, with the support of the Government of Republika Srpska and local communities, where women would be provided with training and financial support to start a business. She mentioned that many women are represented in the organs of authority and her municipality Derventa. She proposes consistent adherence to the Gender Equality Law, and that this document be circulated to all local communities after its adoption.

#### **Answer:**

**The Ministry, along with other ministries and organizations, will certainly plan fairs, training and financial support for women. We also support the full implementation of the Gender Equality Law in all spheres, and in particular in business, which is the subject of this Strategy. Once adopted, we will forward the Strategy to all local communities.**

### Milica Lovrić

The deputy believes that adoption of this document will create a more favourable environment for the development of women's entrepreneurship, change the awareness and increase the number of women entrepreneurs. Although the number of women entrepreneurs is encouraging, they still face problems with access to information, finance, education and the property registration. In addition, women are also mothers, which is an additional challenge. She believes the Strategy will enable the transition from ad hoc to system support. She considers as particularly important to support women in rural areas. i.e. to find a modality for women to be heads of family farms, to be able to obtain the status of self-employed persons, according to the Law on income tax of citizens - as in Serbia - and that women in rural areas should receive compensation during maternity leave. She also proposes opening of day nurseries and kindergartens in rural areas, as branches of city kindergartens and playrooms that would operate 15-17hrs. Ms. Lovrić believes that women entrepreneurs in agriculture should receive general and vocational training in specific activities supported by projects and that as many women's cooperatives as possible should open in rural areas.

#### **Answer:**

**According to information from the Ministry of Agriculture, Forestry and Water Management, women can be heads of agricultural holdings, and according to the Law on**

**Crafts and Entrepreneurship of RS, women can be registered as independent entrepreneurs. According to the Law on Agriculture of Republika Srpska, a family agricultural holding is entitled to health insurance in accordance with the applicable legal regulations governing this area and that, among other things, regulate the use of maternity leave. If she/he meets the conditions laid down in the aforementioned legal regulations, the holder of the family agricultural holding shall be obliged to insure herself/himself and her/his family members engaged in agricultural activity. The opening of kindergartens and nurseries is foreseen in this document, in accordance with the legal regulations in this field and the capacities of local self-government units in charge of kindergartens and nurseries.**

### **Ranka Perić Romić**

She believes that the Strategy is very important for raising awareness, and that women in Republika Srpska have the potential for development, because by empowering women we empower the whole society. It is necessary to improve the quality of life of women and improve the economic environment. She believes that the most important activities have been mapped and commends the Ministry and the Chamber of Commerce for promoting women's entrepreneurship. The activities that have been identified as problematic need to be refined and put into practice in order to have visible results. She believes that financial support is needed for both women entrepreneurs and women's associations. She particularly encourages the support to women in rural areas and women's self-employment, so that they may engage in some additional activities in their area and environment. She believes that women are not sufficiently consulted in drafting legislation and norms that are in some way related to the development of women's entrepreneurship, and that women should be recognised as members of various commissions, committees, and advisory bodies so they could fight themselves for solutions of their problems. She believes that supporting women's networking through clusters, cooperatives and other forms of association is very important in order to facilitate market entry. The development of women's entrepreneurship is a huge, untapped potential, important to both existing and new women entrepreneurs.

#### **Answer:**

**The Ministry plans to provide financial support to both women entrepreneurs and their associations. Support to women and their associations in rural areas is also envisaged in the Rulebook on Conditions and Method of Obtaining Financial Incentives for Capital Investments in Agriculture and rural areas for 2019. We support greater participation of women entrepreneurs in the adoption of regulations, as well as their networking. This will be addressed through the implementation of the Strategy activities.**

### **Dušica Šolaja**

The deputy believes that women's entrepreneurship is not the responsibility of only one ministry but also of all deputies and the entire society and it is very important as a development opportunity. She believes that it is necessary to create policies for women containing easier and better business solutions to their problems. The Deputy requested the information on how many municipalities and cities in Republika Srpska have strategies related to this area. She thinks that the Chamber of Commerce, with its regional chambers, is very important in supporting women's entrepreneurship. Also, she considers conferences for women entrepreneurs to be very important, such as the conference in 2017, with a lot of practical experience and useful information. She expressed her hope that there would be more similar events. Ms. Šolaja assumes that very few women and women entrepreneurs are informed about financial resources, which are mostly Investment and Development Bank loans, as well as resources from projects and local communities. She thinks it is necessary to determine whether there are funds in the local budgets for this area and that they should be earmarked by each local community for these purposes. She mentioned the rulebook that allows certification of independent entrepreneurs engaged in old and artistic crafts and domestic handcrafts, according to which 33 independent entrepreneurs have been certified, of which 13 are women. The support is necessary in order to have more women in this field. Ms. Šolaja also mentioned the activities related to the listing of the "Zmijanje" embroidery on the UNESCO List of Intangible Cultural Heritage. This valuable experience should be used in other areas in order to have more candidates for this process. She believes that rural women are an important resource for development. Also, the problems of traditional views in patriarchal society and some difficulties still exist but they can be changed.

**Answer:**

**There are no specific strategies to support women's entrepreneurship in Republika Srpska, but support activities in this area are envisaged in the general strategic development documents in a number of local self-government units: Banja Luka, Prijedor, Novi Grad, Derventa, Laktaši, East Stari Grad, Ugljevik, Gacko and Milići, and this document will enable the creation of support in local self-government units in the coming period. In 2018, the Ministry and the Chamber organized an international conference for women entrepreneurs, as well as two workshops for women entrepreneurs with more than 200 participants. Similar events are planned in the coming years. The Ministry will initiate a special credit and guarantee line for women entrepreneurs, in order for these funds to be of better quality and more visible for women. Also, promotion of old crafts and domestic handicrafts is envisaged in order to have as many certified entrepreneurs as possible and to promote their products. The Ministry is already working on this. The objective is to protect some of these products and to include them in the UNESCO list of protected intangible heritage. The Ministry will cooperate with other ministries in the implementation of this document, as well as with interested organizations, representatives, local governments, projects and others, in order to provide the highest quality support for women entrepreneurs. It will also work on better information of women entrepreneurs.**

## Valerija Lakić

The deputy stressed that more and more women in Republika Srpska decide to start private business. She believes that gender equality is one of the basic conditions for economic development in general. The measures of the Government of Republika Srpska and the Chamber of Commerce of Republika Srpska aimed to encourage development of women's entrepreneurship. She believes that the Strategy of economic development of women in Republika Srpska is very important for development in general and that the Strategy provides strategic objectives, stakeholders and deadlines for activities. Given that a large number of actors is envisaged to help women entrepreneurs, she thinks that it is necessary to establish an entrepreneurial education centre within some institution, where women can be informed about the conditions necessary for setting up and running a business. She called on her colleagues to support the Strategy as she felt that it covered most of what women entrepreneurs needed.

### **Answer:**

**The Ministry supports the idea of establishing an education centre for women entrepreneurs or a support centre for women entrepreneurs. Their establishment will depend on the resources available.**

## Andrea Dorić

The deputy supports this Strategy, as a document that strengthens the position and role of women which will help, but not enable, the economic and financial independence of women. She believes that initiation and survival of rural entrepreneurship and employment of rural women are of national interest, and that is important for the survival and development of villages in Republika Srpska. She says that there is a noticeable absence of women's networking and that this should be worked on, as independent women entrepreneurs cannot survive on their own on the market. She believes that with constant upgrading and development, the results can be expected and women's entrepreneurship promoted and improved. She thinks that this is a side issue for many and that it is still strange for women to run successful organizations. An important step is to accept the fact that not everyone has the same treatment in business. She supports the objectives set out in this document and believes that the chances of all those who have knowledge and want to achieve results should be balanced, and that an environment should be created in which the chance will be given to every good idea, no matter who it comes from. She supports the Strategy and hopes that more similar documents related to women's economic independence will be developed in the near future

### **Answer:**

**The strategy proposal foresees promotional events to raise awareness of the importance of women entrepreneurs, which will help to equalize the chances for all who want to start a business, especially for young women. Also, successful women**

**entrepreneurs should be promoted in news programmes and on the internet so that young women can hear their success stories and decide to start their own businesses.**

### **Gordana Vidović**

The deputy commented that the Strategy was submitted in July and has not been considered since. Furthermore, the reported discussion shows that the Strategy is considered a women's issue, and that is evident from the composition of the Committee on Equal Opportunities, which consists mainly of women deputies. She said that there are no lines for women's entrepreneurship in the Investment and Development Bank. She thinks that women are often business owners but do not engage in economic activities. Also, there are more unemployed women among women victims of violence. There is a bank that has a (credit) line for women, but they have to be managers, which means nothing. She believes that nothing has been done so far except that a Council has been established, and that the Programme which was adopted in 2012 is in line with the Strategy. She thinks that it is good to adopt the Strategy, but that there must be control mechanisms that will monitor the implementation of the Strategy, because otherwise it won't worth anything, At least annual reports on the implementation of the Strategy should be presented. She believes that the document was not created in order to provide better support for women entrepreneurs. She believes that there are no women taking over the family business for which training in the field of management for women entrepreneurs is foreseen and that good practice in this area from Serbia should be adopted. A lot of documents have been adopted in the area of gender budgeting but nothing has been done so far. Also, gender budgeting was supposed to take root in local communities but the municipality of Modriča is one of very few municipalities that planned funds for victims of violence in their budget. She said that the document envisaged an analysis of the work and functioning of non-governmental organizations but she believes that a strategic objective of establishing better communication between women, women entrepreneurs and women from the non-governmental sector should be formulated in finding the best solutions for the position of women. She believes that laws and policies should be changed, in order to create a balance. The Strategy provides for conferences and events, but much more needs to be done to make a real impact and that women gain more space in general.

#### **Answer:**

**The Strategy has not yet been considered because there were no Assembly sessions until January 2019, when a new convocation was constituted. Regardless of the discussion, it is important that Republika Srpska receives a document that will support women entrepreneurs. This document cannot solve all problems of women in all spheres of life, as these issues must be addressed through other policies and documents. Of course, this document must take into account the environment for women entrepreneurs as well as the problems that women running businesses or women employed by business entities may face. The document is similar to the programme from 2012, as the activities envisaged by the programme and the Strategy are necessary to all entrepreneurs all the time, not just to**

women entrepreneurs, because everyone needs financial support, education, promotion, association, networking and other activities. The Strategy received good response from women entrepreneurs and institutions, and is certainly designed to provide better support for women entrepreneurs. Gender budgeting does exist, but it needs to be worked on and involve more institutions. Both the Government and non-governmental sector must be involved in the implementation of this document, in order to provide the best possible support to women entrepreneurs through joint activities. The Ministry has been so far, and it will continue to be committed to the initiation and proposal of amendments to legal and bylaw documents that affect the development of entrepreneurship in general, as well as women's entrepreneurship.

### Dušica Šolaja

The deputy said that the information on the IDB credits was provided, but she didn't get into details whether it was a separate credit line (for women), or within an existing one - it was important that there was a possibility of withdrawing these funds. She believes the key problem is how many women have information on credits. She reiterated that nothing much can be done without municipalities and cities and their local budgets that would have a special budgetary position for this purpose. She thinks there are mechanisms which would, practically, oblige municipalities and cities to have budgetary resources for women's entrepreneurship within their budgets. This is a serious topic and much needs to be done in informing the public where all the resources that can be withdrawn for women's entrepreneurship can be found.

#### Answer:

**The Ministry will initiate special credit lines in the banking sector and special grants for women entrepreneurs in the Republika Srpska budget and local budgets, as well as in international projects.**

### Mirela Kajkut Zeljković

The deputy expressed satisfaction that the Draft strategy was being considered. She believes that the establishment of a Fund for women Entrepreneurs is an extremely important measure, because such funds have never been available neither at the level of Republika Srpska nor at the level of local communities. She believes that it is necessary to prepare and educate women entrepreneurs for preparation of project proposals in order to apply for international funds. She wants to emphasize that nowadays it is very important to transfer the traditional knowledge and skills that we possess to younger generations, and to support women in the field of domestic crafts. She mentioned women's associations that motivate young people to take up entrepreneurship. Education for women in rural areas is extremely important and it is necessary to use the advisory service of the Ministry of Agriculture and its capacities to improve the entrepreneurial environment of women in rural areas who wish to start certain economic activities. She commends the activities of the Employment Bureau of Republika Srpska, which

has allocated KM 500.000 to encourage entrepreneurship among women victims of violence and women in rural areas, and expressed hope that this will be available in future as well, in the form of grant funds, what would certainly contribute to the development of women's entrepreneurship. She believes this draft will empower and support women who want to engage in entrepreneurship.

**Answer:**

**The Ministry and other institutions that will work on the implementation of the Strategy will work on the establishment of the Fund and training for women entrepreneurs, especially in the field of old crafts and domestic crafts, and for women in rural areas.**

**Igor Žunić**

He believes that women's entrepreneurship is a very important topic and potential that exists in Republika Srpska. He thinks that this document should solve some problems, not for the sake of European integration, but for its importance for the future of Republika Srpska. He believes that there is no public discrimination against women because there are regulations and support for women, but there are certain prejudices. Mr. Žunić says that, according to some data, investors are not ready to support women entrepreneurs, and that they receive 8% of their funds through credit lines, and the rest is borrowed, which means that a special credit line and fund should be created for them. He believes that women with good ideas do not dare to start businesses, because they think about how much their families would suffer because of that. Therefore they start businesses between the age of 35 and 50. and this is, really, late for starting a business, so the education is important. He believes that the Strategy is well defined and it opens the potential for international funds. It is important to create a women-to-women support network and to ensure that women receive support at local level, trough funds or grants. He thinks that, similar to what happened with Zmijanje embroidery, other communities should also protect and promote our heritage and enable the development of related businesses. He suggests that a grant for these purposes should be provided in the next budget. Mr. Žunić supports the Strategy and believes that women's intuition in business would certainly contribute to having fewer bankruptcies and failed companies.

**Answer:**

**The Ministry will initiate the establishment of special credit lines for women entrepreneurs in the banking sector, while the resources for the establishment of a Fund for Women Entrepreneurs will be planned in the Budget Plan for 2020. The Ministry supported the establishment of the Business Women Club of Republika Srpska, which plans significant support for women entrepreneurs. After the adoption of the Strategy, the Ministry will initiate activities for women entrepreneurs at the local level as well. The Ministry will also initiate the listing of products in the field of crafts and domestic crafts on the list of intangible cultural heritage of Republika Srpska. From there the products and**

customs from Republika Srpska will apply for UNESCO's heritage protection. So far, 15 traditional products and customs have been included on the list of intangible heritage of Republika Srpska, two of which are protected by UNESCO (Zmijanje embroidery and picking of iva grass on Ozren).

#### **Miladin Stanić**

The deputy thinks that women are the most important part of society and supports all kinds of support for business development, but believes that the Strategy does not need to be glorified because of the amount provided for that support. He thinks that the Zmijanje embroidery is just a story, and that there are no (native) people on Zmijanje. The SDS Club supports the Strategy, but believes that it is not appropriate to offer 4.5 million marks at the four-year level, because that is not enough money even for ten women to start a serious business. He believes that equal treatment and equal opportunities for all women should be developed.

#### **Answer:**

**The inclusion of Zmijanje embroidery to the UNESCO list has greatly facilitated the promotion of Zmijanje, our traditional values and the recognition of this area and Banja Luka beyond the borders of Republika Srpska, which also contributes to the development of this area. The recognition of this product is important for both culture and tourism, as well as for the survival of associations and entrepreneurs engaged in this activity. The Action Plan only provides for an indicative budget, which will be increased in line with available domestic and foreign funds. When granting incentives, all businesses have equal rights if they meet the conditions and criteria set out in public calls, regardless of the gender of the owner.**

#### **Srdan Mazalica**

The deputy explained that the importance of Zmijanje embroidery for Republika Srpska and Banja Luka area does not mean that people should return to Zmijanje, but it should encourage development of that area. He explained the situation in Zmijanje area and everything that was happening there in the previous period. The deputy further spoke of plans for the development of Zmijanje and the need to foster and nurture everything that has both intangible and material cultural value.

#### **Answer:**

**The Ministry fully agrees with the deputy's statement regarding the interpretation of the value and importance of Zmijanje embroidery.**

#### **Zoran Vidić**

The deputy interpreted the violation of the Rules of Procedure.

### **Miladin Stanić**

The deputy commented on the status and budgets of other institutions and organizations which have larger budgets than the one foreseen in the Strategy. He thinks that women should receive for four years at least as much funds as agriculture for one year, because women are more responsible and best to work with.

#### **Answer:**

**The Ministry provided funds for women entrepreneurs in the Budget plan.**

### **Srdan Mazalica**

The deputy said that it would be advisable to provide more funds foreseen by the Strategy for the development of women's entrepreneurship. He said that these funds should not be compared with any other allocated for certain institutions in Republika Srpska. He mentioned that many women from the SNSD ranks hold important positions and that would certainly influence other women to start their own businesses and develop their careers.

#### **Answer:**

**The Ministry believes that the promotion of successful women in all walks of life is very important and that participation of women in all areas of business, and life in general, should be promoted.**

### **Miladin Stanić**

The deputy reiterated his opinion that more money should be allocated for supporting women and that they should receive for four years at least the amount of incentives in agriculture. The rest of the discussion was not related specifically to the Strategy.

#### **Answer:**

**The Ministry provided funds for women entrepreneurs in the Budget plan.**

### **Srdan Mazalica**

The discussion was not related specifically to the Strategy, except that it was said there was no funding available for these purposes at the local level.

### **Igor Žunić**

The deputy reiterated that he did not consider this to be the ultimate document that would solve all problems of women entrepreneurs, but that it was a good starting point. Women can apply to all projects and credit lines, same as men, but this offers them just a little more

encouragement so that they feel they have some kind of support. He raised the dilemma of whether in all women-owned businesses women are really running the business or it is only a formality. He believes that Zmijanje embroidery is a potential for promotion, with the possibility of creating new businesses. Therefore it is necessary to support promotion of similar activities as opportunities. This Strategy is one of these opportunities and therefore he thinks it is well made.

**Answer:**

**The Ministry has processed the statistics on ownership based on data obtained from APIF, that has data on all registered business entities and their ownership structure. In practice, it is very common for women to be both owners and directors of companies. As already stated, the support for old crafts and domestic crafts, which includes Zmijanje embroidery and other handicrafts in Republika Srpska, is within the competence of the Ministry. The Ministry will, in accordance with its capacities and available resources, continue to support this area.**

**Dušica Šolaja**

The deputy said that the debate confirmed one thing - when only women discussed, giving their opinions on how to improve the Strategy, there were no problems and the discussion could end in a very constructive way. But it showed how the things actually function in practice. She reiterated that there are not enough funds for women entrepreneurs, that this is not the job of one ministry and that each municipality should provide some funds for women entrepreneurship. The rest of the discussion was not related specifically to the Strategy.

**Answer:**

**The Ministry will continuously initiate the allocation of funds for women entrepreneurs in the Republika Srpska Budget, local budgets, banking sector and international organizations. Also, other ministries and all other institutions and organizations that can support women entrepreneurs will be included in all the activities.**

**Nedeljko Glamočak**

The deputy thinks that there is no doubt when it comes to importance and potential of women in entrepreneurship; however, he doubts that women only formally run their businesses. He mentioned that it will take a long time to implement the Strategy, and that someone will just submit a bill for their work and nothing will happen. The deputy commented on the SWOT analysis and mentioned that entrepreneurship exists only in the urban areas of Banja Luka, and that the Strategy hasn't even touched other areas. He believes that the legal framework for family agricultural holdings limits the opportunities, as well as the formal education system which does not contribute to the formation of entrepreneurial attitudes and skills. This will certainly affect women's entrepreneurship and the outflow of young skilled and capable workforce. Financial resources are also insufficient.

**Answer:**

**There are a number of successful women-run businesses in Republika Srpska. The Strategy was developed by the Ministry, with the professional support of the EuProlokal project and no budget funds were used for it. The Strategy applies to the whole territory of Republika Srpska and this is evident from its objectives and programmes. According to the information from the Ministry of Agriculture, Forestry and Water Management, the law pertaining to agricultural holdings does not restrict who will be the head of the same. Also, there is a continuous effort to improve the education system and entrepreneurship is studied in both secondary and higher education institutions.**

**Anton Kasipović**

The Minister thinks that women are important members of the society. He said that there are serious debates in the world about the status and earnings of women in both the underdeveloped and developed world. He believes it is somewhat disrespectful that the discussion on this important issue has gone directly into political waters. He thinks that the segment on problems in family and society has been left aside, so he asks the proponents not to neglect that segment in the final document. We can provide any resources necessary, but if we do not prevent domestic violence, we have done nothing. The important thing is that we could make up for wasted time by speeding up work on adopting and improving this draft.

**Answer:**

**The Ministry agrees with the comments. This document does not resolve all the issues, that is, women's problems, because this document exclusively addresses the problems of women entrepreneurs. The other problems, especially violence against women, must be addressed through the laws that prosecute the perpetrators, as well as through specific support programmes for women victims of violence. However, women victims of violence should certainly be supported in the form of employment or self-employment, which would provide them with more security and economic independence.**

**Zoran Vidić**

He thinks that there is no doubt that, in order to improve and increase the rights of women in Republika Srpska, we also have to adopt such strategies, policies, plans etc. Entrepreneurship faces many challenges. The information on domestic violence provided by social work centres to local communities is usually illogical, i.e. the number of women victims of violence is low. He believes that the Strategy will not change the mentality. He mentioned problems related to maternity leave, and that woman's constitutional rights should be protected and awareness raised. He again mentioned violence against women that is, most often, not reported. He believes that if women's status in general is improved, women's entrepreneurship problems will be easier to deal with. He believes that there can be sufficient money for women's

entrepreneurship if the funds for various leases and other activities are fairly redistributed. He thinks that securing funds is also a challenge at the local level, and this must be addressed. At the end of the discussion, the deputy raised a question not related to the Strategy.

**Answer:**

**The responsibility of the Ministry and the subject of this Strategy is women's entrepreneurship. As stated earlier, violence against women is the subject of other laws and policies and must be carefully addressed, but it should certainly be ensured that victims of violence are provided with security and economic independence through employment and self-employment.**

**Srdan Rajčević**

The Minister answered the question of the deputy Vidić, which was not related to the Strategy.

**Gordana Vidović**

She believes that the earlier discussion regarding the implementation of the Strategy was good and constructive. Ms Vidović again mentioned the indicators of the real position of women – in the RS National Assembly Gender Equality Board women are dominant, while in the RS National Assembly Economic Committee there are 11 men and one woman. She again mentioned women victims of violence and the traditional attitude of the environment towards them. She says that the programmes must be implemented, that there is no credit line for women entrepreneurs, that the Employment Bureau has established a Fund for Women, but that women cannot meet the criteria, due to their inability to secure a mortgage, since they do not own the property. Women need help to be educated, retrained and able to easier close their businesses and get childcare. The deputy mentioned the analysis of non-governmental organizations and the need to set up women's cooperatives and the need to change the law on agricultural cooperatives. She believes that local communities can work through gender equality boards to allocate funding. She thinks that there is a need for education in gender budgeting and that the Ministry of Finance should be involved in these activities. She believes that we can all contribute to better life of women in Republika Srpska.

**Answer:**

**We agree that support should be provided for women in all walks of life. The Ministry, together with other institutions, will work on the implementation of all activities of the Strategy. Support should also be provided at the local level and work on gender budgeting, which will certainly be one of the activities of the Ministry of Economy and Entrepreneurship.**

### **Miladin Stanić**

He believes that in order to get a good strategy it is necessary to address some of the issues discussed earlier by women deputies. He reiterated that not enough money was provided for such a serious strategy.

The rest of the discussion did not specifically relate to the Strategy.

#### **Answer:**

**As stated earlier, the Ministry will plan funds for these purposes in its Budget Plan, as well as from other available sources such as international projects.**

### **Kostadin Vasić**

He thinks this is the first time in Republika Srpska that there is one good idea and one solid strategy that needs to be refined, and that there is never enough money, but that it should be planned in every subsequent budget, the Republika Srpska budget and local budgets, but also in the budget of Bosnia and Herzegovina.

#### **Answer:**

**The Ministry will initiate the provision of funds for women entrepreneurs from all available sources.**

### **Ilija Tamindžija**

The deputy's discussion did not specifically relate to the Strategy.

### **Milan Tubin**

The deputy welcomes the Women's Entrepreneurship Development Strategy as well as everything else that concerns our women in Republika Srpska. He believes that money must be found and funds must be increased. He mentioned a tax liability that made it impossible for women to close their businesses. He also mentioned the status of female war veterans (about 50 women) who are now 60 years old, no longer able to work, have 20-30 years of work experience but cannot retire. He wants this problem to be addressed because they fought for Republika Srpska and they deserve that we find a way to provide them with pensions and decent life in the coming period.

#### **Answer:**

**As noted earlier, this document can not cover all forms of support for women but, during the implementation of the Strategy, it will support women in the business world, whether they are entrepreneurs or employees.**