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The purpose of this document is to illustrate the results of the 1st round table discussion of the LLP Programme “LadybizIT. Women Entrepreneurship on the verge of ICT”, which took place on March 20, 2012 in Athens, Greece and was co-organized by the Hellenic Professionals Informatics Society (HePIS) and the European Centre for Women and Technology (ECWT).

At the opening of the roundtable discussion the President of HePIS, Mr. Nikos Faldamis welcomed the participants observing among other things, that in times of financial crisis, new opportunities have arisen and women should seize them to create their own businesses, explore new challenges and in this effort adopt new technologies. Mr. Faldamis also pointed out that HePIS, as the national point of contact of the ECWT, will continuously support every effort that aims at increasing women’s entrepreneurship.

As the co-organizer of the event, Dr. Irene Kamberidou welcomed the participants on behalf of the European Centre for Women and Technology (ECWT) and presented the activities and goals of the ECWT. Dr. Kamberidou referred to current research— such as the report of the National Foundation of Women Business Owners (NFWBO) — which shows that women entrepreneurs have a significant impact on the economy, not only in their ability to create jobs for themselves but also in creating jobs for others, stressing that women-owned firms compete in the global market, stimulate growth and are focused on business expansion. Dr. Kamberidou also pointed out that research confirms that women entrepreneurs are highly educated and use more high technology systems than their male counterparts. Additionally, studies show that women create relatively more viable enterprises, are more cautious than men and possess better awareness regarding the risk of failure. Consequently, it is vital to raise the visibility of women’s entrepreneurship and that more women learn how to play the international trade game.

Following the welcome and opening remarks by the organizers, Dr. Maria Stratigaki, General Secretary for Gender Equality, presented the latest report of the Foundation of Economic and Industrial Research (IOBE) for the period 2010-2011, according to which women entrepreneurs represent only 3.7% of the population (age range 18-64). According to Dr. Stratigaki, women’s entrepreneurial initiatives are necessary for economic growth and should be encouraged by the government and decision makers. Furthermore, she announced that within the next 3 months a new funding program will be released regarding women entrepreneurship and encouraged the roundtable participants to submit their proposals.

Subsequently the former Minister for Technology and Industry, Mr. Theodoros Damianos addressing the participants stressed that despite the economical circumstances, young men and women are very lucky due to the fact that they can do everything by using New Technologies and Social Media: “By pushing one button you can advertise and disseminate your services and products to a mass audience. In my generation, this was impossible. Women have the abilities, are capable of doing amazing things and the only thing that they have to do is to realize their full potential”. Furthermore, he referred to the new business era where the traditional stereotypes, which consider technology and entrepreneurship suitable only for women, have been debunked.

One need point out here that the moderator of the roundtable, the President of the Greek Association of Young Entrepreneurs (ESYNE), Mr. Andreas Stefanidis, contributed to the productive dialogue between the entrepreneurs, politicians, journalists, representatives from the private, the public sector and women associations as well as women seeking new entrepreneurial opportunities.

Every participant shared his/her own experiences and provided recommendations and proposals concerning methods for creating and sustaining new businesses.

Olga Stavropoulou, General Manager of the Project Leader of the Program (Militos Emerging Technologies & Services), referred to how technology has helped the expansion of her own business and especially tele-working through which she combines and balances her personal-private life and business life. On the other hand, Ms. Stavropoulou also stressed that the internet and new technologies could be considered a threat to private life and that's why we need to draw boundaries and set limits.

Olga also informed the participants about the scope/targets of the LadybizIT programme which include:

- To encourage and motivate women, regardless of age and origin, to learn what LLP can do for them, by offering them a personal development advantage and a new career path, through the access and use of available ICT.
- To disseminate and inform on recent experiences and know-how and raise awareness among women on the dynamic process of entrepreneurship in an emerging knowledge-based society.
- To encourage women to launch their own businesses and identify markets.
- To build an informal sustainable liaison between all the presented projects and the events' participants of ladybizIT.

Olga Stavropoulou informed the delegates that the ultimate goal of the LadybizIT Programme is the organization of the European Conference that will sum up the results of 12 European projects, mostly LLP, which will be held in Athens, in 6th November 2012.

The conference will be based on practical and interactive methods aiming to be a fruitful, valuable and insightful experience for over 200 participants. The conference will be moderated by Dr. Irene Kamberidou, member of the Executive Committee of the ECWT.

Following Ms. Stavropoulou's presentation, Ms. Sophia Protopapa (Founder, OLN Learning) shared her experience on how technology played a catalyst role in her business. Ms. Protopapa organized webinars and developed e-learning solutions with the use of technology, among other things.

Within this framework, the other partner of the consortium, Ms. Georgoula, Educational Manager at ITEC, presented how ICT educational seminars have improved employees' productivity and have driven companies to success.

It's worth describing some of the roundtable participants case studies in which technology facilitated their businesses and their personal life as well:

- Agnes Psatha, Founder of the Essence Marketing Company. Agnes said that it would have been impossible to launch her own business without the use of technology. Technology enables her to work from home, providing her with a family-career balance.
- Matina Magkou, events management. Referring to her experience in the management of sports and cultural events, Matina would like to launch her own business that will be based on her professional knowledge on events management. She stressed that women's entrepreneurship is an incentive for her to prove what she is capable of.
- Artemis Lionta, Social Media Consultant. As the Social media is growing rapidly, Artemis consults companies for social media strategies and effective communications. She runs her own business and at the same time she is an active member of the women's association "TOGME". Artemis informed the delegates that TOGME has organized a few educational seminars in which many women have had the opportunity to be trained in New Technologies.
- Emmanouela Stamiri, member of the Cabinet of the General Secretariat for Gender Equality. According to Emmanouela's personal experience, although women now have very useful tools (new technologies) to run their own businesses, the bureaucracy is still a big obstacle. For example, although the internet is rapidly growing providing many opportunities, the bureaucracy confronted in Greece is disabling, setting many barriers for new entrepreneurs, from new initiatives to launch your own business.
- Barbara Asimakopoulou, an HR Consultant. Barbara launched "Rebounders", a community group which supports and motivates professionals and executives who are facing business challenges to regain control over their professional lives, to reinvest in themselves and in the job market. According to Barbara, women have amazing abilities and they have to believe in themselves.
- Toulia Tranaka, electronic journal gynaikasimera.gr. Toulia created the website (e-journal) gynaikasimera.gr, a meeting point for all women, which contains invaluable information for various aspects of professional, political, social and family life and primarily gender equality issues, women role models, mentors e.t.c . "My vision", she said "is to establish a meeting point that will inspire and help women for new challenges. Women are more cool than men and don't have to be afraid of anything. They can do fantastic things."

- Kalliopi Marini is a psychotherapist. She stressed that technology has become a part of her work. Many of her patients, even though they moved abroad, continued to attend the consultations/therapy with Kalliopi via teleconference. Although she had some concerns about this method at a first glance, Kalliopi realized how technology facilitates her work.
- Vassia Atsali, an HR Consultant. Since 2011, Vassia has been running her own business (Flya Consulting) which focuses primarily on career and business development. Vassia stated that nowadays it is impossible to implement projects without the use of technology.
- Anastasia Manou, founder of “WebFox”, a software development company. Anastasia stressed the importance of mentoring in order to increase women’s entrepreneurship. According to her experience mentoring is an effective way to motivate potential entrepreneurs and to provide them with the know-how and many tips on how and why they need to invest, what risks they have to avoid, etc.
- Yioula Georgiou, Partner of the FlyaConsulting Company. Yioula shared her working experiences with the delegates as she combined many and different things simultaneously by using her laptop and phone device. With the use of technology, she managed a group of people from different countries. As Olga mentioned earlier in the discussion, Yioula referred to the impact that Technology has in the private life of every professional.
- Christina Gardikiotis. Christina worked for several years at Merill Lynch, in the United States before returning to Greece. Her vision is to launch a company which will produce many quantities of animal feeds with the use of Technology. She has already created the business plan and she is trying to attract investors from universities, enterprises, and open funding communities in order to launch her project. As the unemployment rate is rising drastically, Christina aims to motivate people to live and work in the villages or countryside. The project is called ecovillage and the acronyms are: e referred to technology, co to company, and village to the sense of community.

Questionnaires were distributed all the roundtable participants after the discussions. In conjunction with the questionnaires, the roundtable discussion was well received by the majority of the participants and characterized as fruitful, productive and effective. The participants learned how ICT facilitates new business plans and activities, supports entrepreneurship, and helps balances professional and private life.