

### **Reasons that stimulate women to start their own business in Ukraine**

The share of women in the total economically active population in the Ukraine is about 49 %. The economic and social transformations in Ukraine have particularly affected women who today form the largest number of the poor, powerless and disenfranchised. The following data give good grounds for concluding that the process of market transition has decreased Ukrainian women's opportunities in economic life.

- In 1994–2000, 80 % of all discharged workers were women. As a rule, directors of enterprises and firms consider women to be more expensive and less reliable workers, because women have a right to maternity leave. The prejudice also exists that women give higher priority to the family than to their professional career.
- Despite higher relative levels of education, women are still discriminated against in the market for stable and well paid jobs. Human Rights Watch report (2003), "Women's Work: Discrimination Against Women in the Ukrainian Labour Force," describes how Ukrainian employers discriminate against women job seekers in the way they announce vacancies and interview applicants.
- Women's salaries average only about 65 % of men's. The wage gap is a result of the concentration of female jobs at the lower end of the labour market and of the discrimination through lower pay for work of equal value.

The negative impact of economic structural adjustments pushed women out of the traditional labour market and forced them to seek ways to support themselves and their families. The situation in Western Ukraine is particularly bad. Large numbers of women leave for abroad in search of a job. In this context, informal small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) have become crucial for family survival. The last 3–4 years have seen women run businesses developing rapidly in the Ukraine.

- According to the results of a BIZPRO survey, in Ukraine women controlled 22 % of private small and medium enterprises in 2000.
- In Ukraine among the recently established enterprises 29.8 % are controlled by women, and only 22.7 % by men. From this one can draw the conclusion that women run business is developing more intensively than that controlled by men.



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The reasons that stimulate women to start their own business in Ukraine are, on the one hand, the need to support their families and provide their children with access to education and health services, and on the other hand, a desire to be economically self-sufficient and independent, to plan their own time, have a professional career and to realize their professional skills and knowledge.