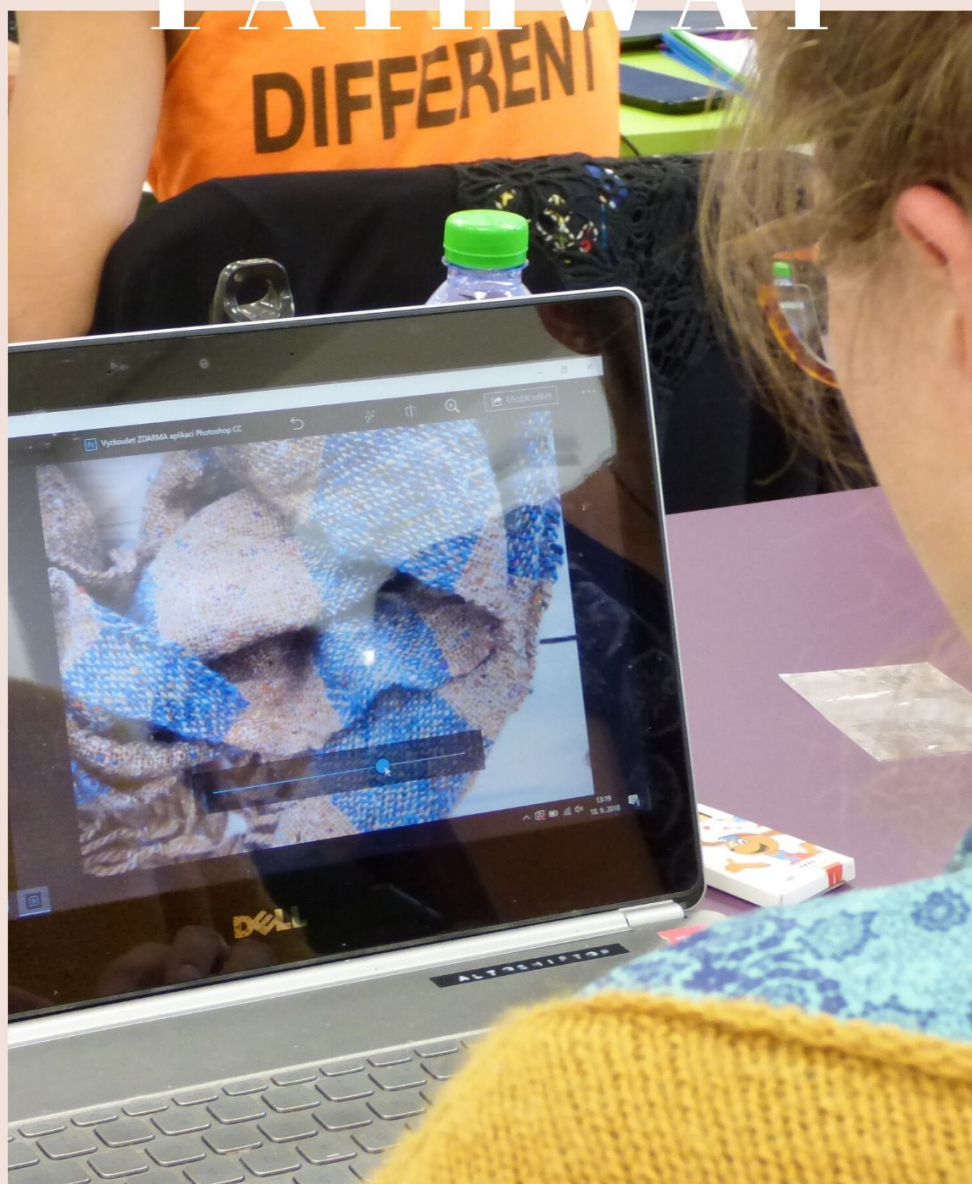


FLORA' HANDMADE WOMEN
ACROSS EUROPE

CAREER PATHWAY





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Career Pathway in Participating Countries



Analysis and comparison of studies
conducted by project partners

Partner project

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1. Introduction

Despite the Great Recession of the late 2000s and early 2010s¹ all European countries are now experiencing improvements both in economic growth and employment. Improved economic growth is also proven by increased job offer and demand and business activities. On supra-national level, European Commission answered the challenges brought by the gravest economic crisis in the last 50 years by The Entrepreneurship 2020 Action Plan, “a blueprint for action to unleash Europe’s entrepreneurial potential, remove existing obstacles and revolutionize the culture of entrepreneurship in the EU”².

Social, academic and political interest in entrepreneurship has grown over the last few years because entrepreneurship is crucial to economic development, promoting social integration and reducing inequalities.³ In fact, entrepreneurship is expected to reduce unemployment and fight exclusion among certain groups that suffer social and labour discrimination, for example women and immigrants. Still today, women suffer marginalization on the job market based in part on the notion that they have an alternative area where to work productively, namely the family, domestic, private area.⁴

Current global trends emphasise depart from blind consumerism towards minimalism, slow way of living, self-sufficiency, recycling (or up cycling) and appreciation of durable, timeless and sometimes custom-made products. This creates a favorable environment for craft and DIY movement, and indeed, we can observe renaissance in this field, a renewed interest in traditional artisan methods. At the same time, number of opportunities are opening for creative individuals, who seek for an alternative to tradition employee model.

We also live in a highly technological world. The recent proliferation of blogs, social networks and websites allows for a greater extension of the handmade work phenomenon as well as new, global sales channels for crafts and artisan work. Similar opportunities rise from increased popularity of local craft markets and interest in local produce (be it artisan products or locally grown fruits and vegetables).

The following document is aiming to summarize and compare situation that women with their own handmade or craft micro-business face in 5 European countries participating in the project “Florà – Handmade Women Across Europe” (alphabetically): Bulgaria, Czech Republic, Italy, Poland and Spain.

¹ Except for Poland, all the countries participating in the project Florà experienced longer or shorter recession periods [Great Recession in Europe, online: https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Great_Recession_in_Europe]. Interestingly, traditional EU countries like Italy and Spain, record longer recession periods than “newcomers”, Bulgaria and Czech Republic. Similarly, current unemployment rates remain higher in Italy and Spain, and lower in Bulgaria, Czech Republic and Poland. See Annexes or European statistics at <http://ec.europa.eu/eurostat>.

³ https://ec.europa.eu/growth/smes/promoting-entrepreneurship/action-plan_en

⁴ <http://www.oecd.org/sdd/business-stats/EaG-Spain-Eng.pdf>

http://www.italcamara-es.com/wp-content/uploads/2016/11/WOMEN_ENTREPRENEURSHIP_IN_SPAIN.pdf

2. Female Entrepreneurship in Europe

Even though there are more women than men in Europe, female entrepreneurs represent only a third of the self-employed in the EU: women constitute 52 % of the total European population, but only 34.4 % of the EU self-employed and 30 % of start-up entrepreneurs.

There are some additional factors (such as reconciling business and family) that make entrepreneurship a less attractive option for them than for men. According to European Commission, female creativity and entrepreneurial potential are an under-exploited source of economic growth and jobs that should be further developed.⁵ European Commission promotes female entrepreneurship through the Small Business Act⁶ and the Entrepreneurship 2020 Action Plan⁷, by supporting networking among female entrepreneurs and support organizations, or through various support tools (such as WEgate-platform⁸).

In individual project partner countries, this situation differs, but all have registered a recent change. In Czech Republic, for instance, while men still dominate in business, their numbers have stagnated in recent years, while there is a steady growth in the number of female entrepreneurs. Since the crisis, there were ten times more starting female entrepreneurs than males.⁹

In Bulgaria, gender and women entrepreneurship issues are addressed by the National Strategy for Promotion of the Gender Equality 2009-2015,¹⁰ updated and specified by annual Action Plan for Promotion of Equality between Women and Men. The basic challenges are increase employment of women, improving their position in the labour market, and eliminating the social distance between the sexes.

In Italy, the female employment situation is reported to be constantly improving over the last 40 years,¹¹ despite the short interruptions dictated by moments of economic crisis; diverse factors can explain this constant growth – from better education to tertiarization of the economy. But the gap between women and men on the total workforce is still large, with female employment at 49.1 %. Of all entrepreneurs in the country, 26 % are women, and two thirds of these are self-employed workers in sectors as catering, trade, accommodation and market services with a high knowledge content. Employment rate grows with education, regardless the role in the family, but the country still reports work-family reconciliation difficulties. In this situation a 2014 document bringing positive changes in the line of work, especially on issues such as maternity or equal opportunities, is regarded as a big step forward.¹²

Studies show, that women start businesses for fundamentally different reasons than men:

⁵ European Commission, *Female Entrepreneurs*. Online: https://ec.europa.eu/growth/smes/promoting-entrepreneurship/we-work-for/women_en.

⁷ https://ec.europa.eu/growth/smes/business-friendly-environment/small-business-act_en

⁸ https://ec.europa.eu/growth/smes/promoting-entrepreneurship/action-plan_en

⁹ <https://www.wegate.eu/>

¹⁰ *Od doby krize přibýlo desetinásobně více podnikatelek než podnikatelů*. Online: <http://amsp.cz/od-doby-krize-pribylo-desetinasobne-vice-podnikatelek-nez-podnikatelu/>, published: 17 April 2018.

¹¹ Online: <http://www.strategy.bg/FileHandler.ashx?fileId=9431>.

¹² Giorgio Alleva, *Indagine conoscitiva sulle politiche in materia di parità tra donne e uomini*. ISTAT, 2017.

¹² Dipartimento Pari Opportunità (2014). *Protocollo di Intesa per lo Sviluppo e la Crescita delle Imprese e pravelente Partecipazione Femminile e delle Lavoratrici Autonome*. Roma.

*While men start businesses primarily for growth opportunities and profit potential, women most often found businesses in order to meet personal goals, such as gaining feelings of achievement and accomplishment. In many instances, women consider financial success as an external confirmation of their ability rather than as a primary goal or motivation to start a business, although millions of women entrepreneurs will grant that financial profitability is important in its own right.*¹³

The 2010 Global Entrepreneurship monitor in 59 countries, women, more often than men, decide to become self-employed in search of a better balance between work and family life and financial needs (push factors as main motivation to start a business), while men tend to make employment choices based on earning potential (pull factors as main motivation to start a business).¹⁴ In the United States of America, women tend to start businesses about ten years later than men, and the reasons cited for this delayed entry are motherhood, lack of management experience or traditional socialization. Traditionally, women also started their businesses due to traumatic events, such as a divorce, discrimination due to pregnancy or the corporate glass ceiling, the health of a family member, or economic reasons such as layoff. But this has started to change recently, as well as composition of traditional women entrepreneurship disciplines.¹⁵

More often than men, women in Poland start a business out of necessity, as there is no other sensible alternative for them.¹⁶ Women usually pointed to the following reasons for undertaking business activity: aspiration for independence and self-reliance in making decisions; urge to gain higher income (financial independence); possibility of professional development; negative experiences in contract work; prevailing conditions on the labour market; lack of other possibilities of employment; unemployment threat; and greater assurance of self-employment.

Similar motives were observed in the Czech Republic. Among the strong ones, we would find flexible work hours (78 %), independence on decisions of others (66 %), full exploitation of one's abilities (62 %) or the possibility to achieve financial stabilization (42 %). Women much less emphasized motives as prestige (18 %), realizing a business idea (14 %), inspiration by a hero/personality (9 %), service to the society (8 %), experience in the family or among friends (6 %) or exploiting a favourable (economic) situation (3 %).

In Czech Republic, half of the women who started business chose the service area, and unless we count small handmade production, only minimal numbers opted for production sector. A significant proportion of female entrepreneurs was recorded in finance and insurance (more than one fifth). And since the turn of the century, the share of women with a university degree has grown quite significantly among entrepreneurs; among self-employed and compared to men in similar situation, larger percentage of women hold a university degree. Dating to the turn of the millennium, Czech situation offered a common model where a woman entered the

¹³

¹⁴ Inc., *Women Entrepreneurs*. Online: <https://www.inc.com/encyclopedia/women-entrepreneurs.html>.

Donna J. Kelley, Niels Bosma, José Ernesto Amorós, *Global Entrepreneurship Monitor, 2010 Global Report*. Global Entrepreneurship Research Association, 2011. Online: <https://www.gemconsortium.org/report/47109>.

¹⁶ Inc., *Women Entrepreneurs*. Online: <https://www.inc.com/encyclopedia/women-entrepreneurs.html>.

42.9 % women, compared to 32.8 % men, cited necessity or lack of possibilities of choice as the motive to start their own business. *Female Entrepreneurship in Poland*.

company as a “husband’s right hand”, where male partner offers strategic leadership, while the woman is usually in charge of administrative and organizational side of the business.¹⁷

As in other countries observed in this study, female self-employment and being an employer in Poland is strongly correlated to education, age and place of residence. Companies run by women are mainly smaller and mostly employing contract workers. While men mostly run their business in building sector (94.2 % among all the companies in the sector) and transport and storage (87.3 %), women are prominent in child care services (72.7 %), health protection and social welfare (70.5 %) and real estate (49.3 %). Survival rate of the companies founded by men is higher than with those initiated by women.

The main challenges faced by women when establishing and running a business are: access to finance, access to information, training, access to networks for business purposes and reconciling business and family concerns.

2.1.Reconciliation of work and family

While European Union offers several instruments to improve equal opportunities situation, and all the countries participating in the project report to have national strategies to implement them, women are still forced to choose between work and family. Work-family reconciliation difficulties are often emphasized by women’s choice to have no children to get a higher work position. And it should be added, that many women find themselves in a so-called “sandwich generation” situation, assuming caring responsibilities not only for their children, but elderly relatives as well. Costs of formal care, or its absence within the country’s social services or employer culture, force women to opt for self-employment as a tool to increase time flexibility.¹⁸

For example, in Italy, participation to the labour market is strongly connected to family situation: employment rates of women living alone (81.1 %), in couple without children (70.8 %) and mothers (56.4 %).

Because of the low pay and insufficient demand, only small percentage of women can work part-time in Bulgaria, allowing for balanced work-family proportion. Number of companies in which women, owners and managers, can work from home (online) is negligible. At the same time, while being better educated and more active in lifelong learning than men on average, they face inequality in pay. Especially among elderly and single mothers, the risk of poverty for women is much greater.

In Poland, we can find a strong advocacy for a traditional division of roles in a family, with the man supporting the family financially and woman as caregiver working at home. Two thirds of Poles still expect that raising a child should be completely or mostly carried out by the mother, while one third think that parental leave should be divided equally between mother and father of the child (compared to, for example, Sweden, where 61 % of respondents favour an even distribution of duties in the family).

¹⁷ Alena Křížková, *Životní strategie podnikatelek a podnikatelů na přelomu tisíciletí*. Sociologický ústav Akademie věd České republiky, 2004. Also available online: <http://www.soc.cas.cz/sites/default/files/publikace/2004-8.pdf>.

<http://eige.europa.eu/gender-mainstreaming/policy-areas/entrepreneurship>

A Spanish study has shown, that 35 % of Spanish people must sacrifice sleep to achieve the conciliation between work and family.¹⁹ Work-family balance is a particularly pertinent aspect of quality of work in the context of self-employment, since it is often cited as an important motivational factor to start a business.

The Spanish labour market still does not offer complete equality between men and women. Although women have joined the labour world, the greatest burden of housework and childcare remains with them. In addition, women between 25 and 45 years old are at risk of discrimination because of the probability of pregnancy.²⁰ The creation of a legal context for equal opportunities and the implementation of a balance in the sharing of family responsibilities is necessary. This would include maternity and paternity leave, reduced working hours for child care, nursing leave, schedule adaptation that allows to meet the needs of children or prevention of health risks and care of mother and baby. Although many actions have been taken to sort this issue, its implementation is not yet entirely effective.²¹ Spanish employees with family responsibilities are less protected by their government than for example Dutch, Swedish or German workers, who enjoy public aid that is offered in different manners, from economical subsidies to public assistance and facilities. Spain lacks day-care centres at work and with compatible schedules.²² The lack of social awareness regarding reconciliation of labour and family life is apparent in that its regulation does not emerge from an initiative of the Spanish parliament, but rather results from the transposition of guidelines established by the international and European communities. Spain, similarly to other south-Mediterranean countries, is characterized by the predominance of split work schedules. Split work schedules typically consist of 5 hours of work in the morning (typically from 9 am to 2 pm), followed by a 2-hour break and another 3 hours of work in the afternoon/evening (typically from 4 pm to 7 pm). Because of the evening work hours, split work schedules are contributing to work-family conflicts.²³ However, there are social movements demanding introduction of an uninterrupted workday with a flexible schedule.²⁴

Compared to European countries like Denmark, Sweden, Germany or the Netherlands, employees with family responsibilities in the countries participating on the project Florà find it harder to achieve a balance between work and family. This might be partly the reason for the current rise of numbers of self-employed and enterprising women, as well as the preference of fields of business with looser schedule and flexible working hours, possibility to work from home, and lesser need for special work equipment or a dedicated workspace.

2.2. Women and small craft businesses

Due to serious life situation and because of the lack of opportunities or too many constraints, some women are forced, and others opt for turning a craft hobby into a handmade business. However, not all use their creativity and dexterity to fund a legal business and many remain in the grey zone of low earnings for products sold through friends or sites that do not require official status of registered sellers. So, while there are statistics available for small craft

¹⁹ Mercedes Galvez: *Why work and family life reconciliation is a challenge today*. Online: <http://aecetia.es/en/2016/09/15/reconciliation-work-and-family-life/>, published on 15 September 2016.

²¹ <http://bit.ly/1gPhryu>

²² <https://e-revistas.uc3m.es/index.php/SLLERJ/article/view/3310/1974> (2016)

²³ <http://aecetia.es/en/2016/09/15/reconciliation-work-and-family-life/>

²⁴ <http://ftp.iza.org/dp4542.pdf>

https://elpais.com/elpais/2016/04/13/inenglish/1460554418_902495.html

business run by women in some of the participating countries, these are not fully reliable to paint the whole picture.

Compared to attention dedicated to the salaried women in Spain, only scarce information exists on self-employment of women.²⁵ A study on craftsmanship in Spain from 2015 shows an interesting aspect of Spanish artisanal companies, namely the presence of women in their human capital and everyday operation:²⁶ Between 2010 and 2014 presence of women in artisanal companies rose from 20 % to 36 %. In Spain the dedication to artisanal occupation also seems to be highly localized – according to a 2009 study, communities of Catalonia, Valencia, Madrid and Andalusia gather 61 % of all handicraft employment in Spain. For the same year, 73 % of all artisanal enterprises consisted of a single person and it was estimated that 95 % of these would fall into a micro-enterprise category.²⁷

In the year 2008, the added value of the artisanal sector in Spain represented approximately 3 % of the industrial GDP and approx. 0.4 % of the national GDP. The artisanal activities should be not only considered an integral part of the collective identity with a high degree of contribution to the preservation of the cultural tradition and the ethnologic wealth of a region and country, but they also must be acknowledged as economic activities. We must add that in many small municipalities handicrafts constitute the only manufacture activity, especially thanks to the ease of combining them with agricultural occupation. At the same time, they support and create regional culture, and thus foster tourism and bring additional source of income.

We have already mentioned that companies founded by women are on average smaller than those initiated by men. This might be explained by the motives women have to become self-employed or employers, also described above. In addition, Polish statistics show that survival rate of companies run by women in the first few years from their foundation, is comparably lower than that of companies run by men. For example, 2007 statistic shows survival rate after first year for companies established by women at 70.3 %, while for companies with a male owner at 77.2 %.²⁸

2.3.Sales opportunities in the sector

Due to specific current global trends, people dedicated to crafts and establishing handmade business have more possibilities to sell their products and thus make a living. On the local level, these are craft markets in larger urban areas, but gradually moving to smaller communities as well. On a global level, the most obvious are online selling tools and social networks. A fairly new sales opportunity connecting the face to face local with online global is a pop-up store, relying on a temporary exhibition and sales point supported by social networks publicity and PR work.

²⁵ With an exception of studies like Amado Alarcón Alarcón and Ignasi Brunet Icart, *Género y ocupación por cuenta propia. Análisis e través de dos estudios en los ámbitos rural y urbano de Cataluña*. RIPS, Revista de Investigaciones Políticas y Sociológicas, vol. 6, pp. 117-129. Online: https://www.researchgate.net/publication/26573150_Genero_y_ocupacion_por_cuenta_propia_analisis_a_traves_de_dos_estudios_en_los_ambitos_rural_y_urbano_de_Cataluna, published January 2007.

²⁶ Example of the Spanish study: Fundación EOI, *Situación de la artesanía en España. Informe de competitividad y principales variables económicas*. Madrid, 2015. Online: https://static.eoi.es/savia/documents/EOI_Fundarte_ArtesaniaEspana_2015.pdf.

²⁷ DGPYME, *La presencia del sector artesano en las fuentes estadísticas*. 2009

²⁸ See appropriate statistics at <http://stat.gov.pl/en/>.

Thanks to the tourism booming since the so-called Velvet Revolution of 1989, Prague as the capital of Czech Republic saw establishment of quantity of shops dedicated to local handmade products. In later years, this trend continues with appearance of shops dedicated to qualitatively superior and more expensive design objects, fashion and accessories, often aimed not only to tourists, but residents as well. These shops are characterized by a strong personality of the owner or a group of owners (collective), using their personal tastes and ethics to choose, offer and sell handmade and design products. Lately these are being established in regional capitals like Brno or Ostrava and even smaller cities.

2.4.E-Commerce

With E-Services, E-Learning, E-Business or E-Shops the World Wide Web offers endless technical opportunities and chances for individuals as well as companies today. Although these new Information and Communication Technologies (ICTs) may simplify and professionalize processes and improve the competitiveness, craft companies have not put them into an optimal use until now.

Figures from the World Economic Forum 2010 show that in Spain, Italy and Austria the majority of the population own a computer and many use it to work. Even if the use of computers and the Internet might be common in western Europe, the rather conservative and traditional attitude of craftsmen in the present is an obstacle. So far, the sector has not discovered possibilities such as the commercialization of products via E-Shops or the use of the Internet as information and communication medium as well as marketing platform. To improve this situation, the European Commission launched several initiatives to improve the quality and accessibility of European education and training systems through the effective use of ICTs.²⁹

E-commerce is growing and predicted to keep growing in all the participating countries of the Florà project. In some of them opening an online business implies a complex bureaucratic process and costs of platform maintenance and that is why many hobbyists and artisans decide to rely on pre-existing “marketplace” platforms, functioning as intermediaries for advertising and sale, withholding a percentage of each sale or relying on a similar scheme. These platforms are national, but thanks to advantages brought by internet also inter- or supranational, allowing to address a world-wide audience.

In Poland more that half of constantly growing number of internet users shop online, while the vast potential of the industry is identified in the massive number of the “not-buyers”.³⁰ Interestingly, clothing and accessories (often products that handmade businesses produce) are among the goods that women shop for more frequently online in Poland. Similarly, among the top three most purchased products and services in Valencia Community in Spain in 2016 were fashion products (58 %) and shoes and accessories (43 %), and on average Valencia spent 996 EUR for online products and services (the figure is inferior to the Spanish average of 1.413 EUR).³¹

The most popular national “marketplace” sites are listed in the Annex 4. E-commerce sites.

²⁹

³⁰ <http://projects.ifes.es/pdfs/craft/craft1.pdf>

³¹ <http://www.gemius.com>

Liliana Marsán, *Los valencianos compraron online sobre todo productos de moda y turismo*. El Observatorio Cetelem, online: <http://bit.ly/2oaM0p9>, published on 21 February 2017.

3. National policies

There is no European legislative framework on the craft sector. Different European countries have different regulatory frameworks so a comparison neither seems useful nor contributes to a better understanding. However, generally in every country there is a specific law governing the craft sector, and craftsmen require a formal registration to open their own workshop.³² But EU does offer a policy overarching framework on Small and Medium Enterprises (SMEs) in The Small Business Act (SBA). It aims to improve the approach to entrepreneurship in Europe, simplify the regulatory and policy environment for SMEs, and remove the remaining barriers to their development.³³

3.1. National policies supporting female self-entrepreneurship and laws in support of handmade trade

Many in handmade sector work illegally. This data does not show in the official statistics but is essential to be acknowledge if we want to paint the complete picture of the field. Policies aimed at boosting female entrepreneurship are constantly encouraged by European Union and consequently by individual governmental institutions in participating countries – for example through the Presidency of the Italian Council of Ministers through the Department for Equal Opportunities in Italy or Ministry of Labour and Social Policy in Bulgaria.

Some countries, although taking over European policies in support of small entrepreneurship, do not offer a targeted help for women or handmade/craft businesses – such as Czech Small and Medium Enterprises Support Strategy 2014-2020. There is a document called Governmental Strategy for Gender Equality in the Czech Republic for 2014-2020 that sets its goal at systematic support of female entrepreneurship or monitoring the situation of involuntary entrepreneurship and the Czech Ministry of Labour and Social Affairs announced programmes to support starting female entrepreneurs funded from EU, but both lack comprehensive strategies or systems. There are NGOs supporting enterprising women, but their financing is complicated. At the same time, Czech Republic does not have craft chambers, only crafts sections in some of the regional chambers of commerce, and membership in chambers of commerce is not mandatory.

In recent years, Italy is taking steps to promote and support female entrepreneurship and women's access to credit.³⁴ Funds to support female artisans and hobbyists could be found on state, regional and private level, and include open calls for proposals. Among initiatives dedicated to both women and men there are Italian Ministry of Economy funding programs, such as “Smart&Start Italia” (for innovative startups), “Autoimpiego” (intended for self-employment in specific regions) or “Nuove Imprese a Tasso Zero” (new zero rate companies; targeting young people and women).

In Spain (similarly to Italy) the responsibility to legislate handmade and craft entrepreneurship lies on regions. Besides some similarities in rules and terms, every Spanish autonomous community has a specific definition of craft and craftsperson, some resulting in “Craftsmen Lists”. They have also adapted different ways to promote and develop the sector, for example standards declared in “Zones, Districts and Areas of Craftsmanship Interest”,

³² <http://projects.ifes.es/pdfs/craft/craft1.pdf>

³³ https://ec.europa.eu/growth/smes/business-friendly-environment/small-business-act_en

³⁴ Dipartimento Pari Opportunità, *Protocollo di Intesa per lo Sviluppo e la Crescita delle Imprese a prevalente Partecipazione Femminile e delle Lavoratrici Autonome*. Rome, 2014.

among other activities also regulating training process. There are representative bodies that help strengthening the craft sector's position on the national as well as international market, for example by positively influencing regulations and modification of standards (Organización de las Artesanos de España, also called Oficio y Arte, member of World Crafts Council Europe).

On the national level, Ministerio de Sanidad, Servicios Sociales e Igualdad (Ministry of health, social services and equality, MSSSI) and an autonomous organisation attached to it, Instituto de la Mujer y para la Igualdad de Oportunidades (Women's institute for the equal opportunities, IMIO), share, among others, a common objective to promote female entrepreneurship and self-employment. In this respect, they are carrying following actions: Emprendimiento Feminino en el Mundo Rural: Programa "Desafío Mujer Rural" (Female Entrepreneurship in the Rural World: Programme "Challenge Rural Women"), Programa Innovatia 8.3 (co-financed by European Social Fund and aiming to incorporate gender equality in all places generating and transferring knowledge) or Programa de Apoyo Empresarial a las Mujeres (Women Entrepreneurial Support Programme, PAEM), again, co-financed by European Social Fund, and apart from targeted mentoring or counselling in offers financing programmes.

In Bulgaria, Ministry of Labour and Social Policy is the main institution in charge of co-ordination and control of the provision of equal opportunities throughout society; Ministry of Economy is listed as an institutional coordinator of a number of measures from the Action Plan 2020 related to promotion and support of entrepreneurship among the target groups of inclusive entrepreneurship; and Ministry of Education and Science is responsible for the inclusion of entrepreneurship in the system of formal education at all levels of education.

Bulgarian national policy documents include Action Plan Entrepreneurship 2020 – Bulgaria (promotion and support of entrepreneurship for under-represented and disadvantaged groups with a focus on women and youth, implementation period 2016-2017); National Strategy for Promotion of SMEs 2014-2020 (encouragement of entrepreneurial activity; increasing awareness about entrepreneurship and stimulating interest, particularly among youth and women); Operational Programme Innovation and Competitiveness 2014-2020 (OPIC); Operational Programme Human Resources Development 2014-2020 (OPHRD); or Operational Programme Rural Development 2014-2020.

Bulgaria also has a dedicated organization of women pursuing an artisan career, a non-governmental "Balkan Union of Women in Crafts", founded in 2009 with the aim to preserve old folk crafts in the Balkan countries while supporting businesses of women artists who try to combine traditional techniques and elements with somewhat more modern trends. It is supposed to be a meeting ground for exchange of opinions, experience and ideas as well as for various trainings.³⁵ On a more general level, Bulgaria legislates the field through The Skilled Crafts Act, defining 3 levels of mastering a craft: apprentices, journeymen and masters. It defines regional craft chambers that support their members by organizing and effecting craft training, qualification exams, and issuing journeymen certificates. Programmes of training are adapted to the needs of regions, coordinated with National Chamber of Crafts and endorsed by National Agency of Vocational Education and Training.

³⁵ Vyara Popova, *Women in Bulgarian folk crafts*. Online: <http://bnr.bg/en/post/100129726/women-in-bulgarian-folk-crafts>, published on 15 November 2011.

Similarly to Bulgaria and Czech Republic, Poland too administers various Operational Programmes financed by European Union, for example offering grants and loans to start-ups and new businesses, among others to those funded by women returning from maternity leave or young women seeking their first employment, as well subsidies for disabled women seeking employment.

3.2.Fiscal and taxation aspects for the sale of handicrafts

Taxation, namely value-added tax (VAT) and direct taxes were named as the most burdensome legislative acts for SMEs within the European Union.³⁶ Analysis for the five participating countries in the project Florà show, that while the bureaucratic and tax system may complicate professionalization of crafting individuals, it can also offer benefits. For instance, in Czech Republic one of the main advantage of small handmade businesses (compared to other types of businesses) with less than one million CZK annual turnover is a possibility to apply a 80 % flat rate expenditure. Poland offers tax advantages on products defined as folk and artistic handicraft.

Regarding the bureaucratic and tax load, development for the better can be observed in some of the countries. For example, since OECD named Spain as the second country creating most bureaucratic obstacles to nascent companies in Europe in 2012, the country created new laws, accelerating considerably the whole process. The measure does not have a universal character and is aimed specifically at small and medium enterprises (SMEs). Despite this, a 2017 study by Eurofond (European Foundation for the Improvement of Living and Working Conditions) still reveals limits to self-employment in Spain, namely high social and administrative charges, high tax rates, difficulties finding new clients, unfair competition, national poorly performing economy or clients who fail to pay.³⁷

Apart from tax allowances for people selling product of their hobby on an occasional basis and up to a certain limit in Italy or Czech Republic, participating countries did not report any special fiscal or taxation aspects for crafts and handmade objects.

³⁶ European Commission, *Results of the public consultation on the TOP10 most burdensome legislative acts for SMEs*. Online: <https://ec.europa.eu/docsroom/documents/10036/attachments/1/translations/en/renditions/pdf>, published on 29 April 2015.

Jessica Durán López, *Spain: Self-employment in the Spanish labour market*. Online: <https://www.eurofound.europa.eu/observatories/eurwork/articles/spain-self-employment-in-the-spanish-labour-market>, published on 24 January 2017.

4. Hand-Made

By contrast to industrial mass products, crafts produce individual goods or limited series, artisans serve either as local suppliers or as sub-contractors to larger enterprises with their goods and services, and they are not exclusively located in larger urban areas but also decentralized to rural parts of the country.

The craft sector is the key factor for sustainable development. Crafts and small enterprises typically rely on their local roots and make an essential contribution to local development and social integration. They create jobs, provide vocational training and ensure the transfer and continuous improvement of specific knowhow. They often employ people with disabilities, hence providing them a social integration. The traditional craft has, at least in part, always been working according to sustainable criteria without necessarily promoting it to the public. The self-employed artisans are in close contact with their customers, they usually use high-quality, locally available resources and produce predominantly domestically instead of outsourcing costly manufacturing steps to a foreign country.

As local suppliers, artisans contribute to the security of supply as well as to the national welfare and quality of life. Moreover, the sector conserves the unique traditions and the historic cultural heritage of its proper region. However, that part is unfortunately often underestimated by the public. Craft products are usually long-lasting and high-quality goods. Compared to industrial mass-products, the higher prices of craft goods generally reflect the true costs of the product as it includes the use of high-quality resources and auxiliary materials as well as human work. However, one can assess that craftsmen do not consider their products in context. The main reasons may be the fast-changing economic environment which did not shift the sector in a benefiting position and still puts them under financial pressure as well as difficulties in raising capital. Moreover, sustainability as an overall concept, including the ecology (e.g. looking at the ecological impacts of the whole product life-cycle), society (e.g. considering not only employees but also suppliers and consumers) and economy is also not well known in the sector.

As probably no other sector in Europe craft needs to develop innovative forms of management and production modes to maintain its competitiveness. Sustainability offers great new opportunities in this field, for example by minimizing the resource consumption by repair or renovation services. A knowledge transfer of already existing successful and innovative approaches and examples from different countries is needed.

At the same time, we can see renaissance of hobby making in the participating countries. For example, in Czech Republic (former Czechoslovakia) the pre-1989 generations were makers and tinkerers, compensating for lack of consumer goods or variety in clothing and accessories. This trend now returns, in a younger generation, both with people starting a hobby or learning crafts and techniques, and interest in hand made products. This can be observed especially in larger cities, with appearance of such services as coworking workshops or hands-on courses, and online in video courses and blogs, or growth of the business supplying creative materials and necessary tools. New interest in handmade and craft objects means that traditions and forgotten techniques are rediscovered and sometimes modernized for the need of a contemporary costumer.

Although we can all “sense” this change, objective analysis of this phenomenon is complicated by the lack of hard data. The dispersion of the artisanal activities along different branches of activities, as well as the difficulty in differentiating the artisanal production from the industrial in the official statistics, constitute two important obstacles to the obtainment of the economic dimension of the sector. Also, as was already mentioned above, some of the artisanal, handmade and craft production is carried out on the border between hobby and entrepreneurship, in a grey economical sector.

4.1.Profile of the Handmade

In the European countries, despite its historical and economical importance, handmade production was almost entirely supplanted by a growing mass production of a much stronger technological sector. The subsequent renaissance or revival did not bring a deep change. A breakthrough only came with e-commerce, that allows artisans to address a wider and more varied audience.

On example of Spain, with strong regional craft traditions, we can see how locally specific crafts are revived and practice by contemporary artisans – hand-made lace, ceramics and pottery, Spanish guitars or leather goods. But contemporary artisans do not necessarily have to learn locally from a “master”, there is vocational education, online and offline course, people can travel the world to learn regionally specific techniques.

In Bulgaria, some prefer term “designer-maker”, implying that a person is responsible for both design and creation of an object. “Handmade” on the other hand, describes an object that was not made from scratch, it uses somebody else’s idea or design or a semi-finished product and gives it a twist conceived and performed by the maker.

4.2.Handmade production market

Individual countries participating in the project report quite similar groups of handmade products as being practiced by women. But most of them lack a deeper analysis of the sector – exception being the Spain. We will focus on the Spanish example, drawing on some general observation at the conclusion of this chapter.

The study “Situación de la artesanía en España Informe de competitividad y principales variables económicas” (2015)³⁸, realized by the Escuela de Organización Industrial in partnership with the Ministerio de Industria, Energía y Turismo, identifies the main differences in the competitive position of the artisan subsectors at the national level. The handicrafts subsectors show notable differences in certain features and competitiveness factors of its enterprises, but they are rather homogeneous in others. The elements judges in the analysis were antiquity (that is tradition, within the country and family), type of production, degree of utilization of the productive capacity, associationism, human resources, level of equipment and ICTs, innovation, sales channels, internationalization and cooperation.

The analysis showed, that the handmade sector was deeply impacted by the prolonged economic crisis – the most notable result being the loss of many handicraft enterprises, mainly self-employed individuals, and jobs. On the other hand, this process was accompanied by rise of the average productivity, resulting in a steady contribution to the national economy. At the

³⁸ Fundación EOI, *Situación de la artesanía en España. Informe de competitividad y principales variables económicas*. Madrid, 2015. Online: https://static.eoi.es/savia/documents/EOIFundesarte_ArtesaniaEspana_2015.pdf.

same time, between 2011 and 2015 the Spanish handicraft sector notably increased its competitiveness, by adopting innovative practices, incorporating ICTs, intensified intra and intersectoral cooperation and a major orientation of all its processes towards the product commercialization.

One aspect, that seems to be more pronounced lately, on both hobby and commercial level of the handmade, is recycling or upcycling. And hand in hand with the development of the whole field, something that we could call a support infrastructure is emerging. Be it supply (material and tools) shops, online and offline, DIY blogs or interest communities (e.g. Ravelry for knitting and crochet), community self-help or support groups, mentoring and programmes for further education, new e-commerce marketplace platforms or shared shops or design and handmade markets, these seem to create a business field on their own.

4.3. Marketing tools used

Artisans have historically taken advantage of technical advancements (e.g. electricity). Technical advancements in different fields have simplified or lightened certain techniques and allowed to continue in a competitive way without renouncing to the artisanal elaboration.

However, it is infrequent to meet artisans that combine artisanal techniques with the use of online and other techniques of marketing to make their art available to whomever may appreciate it. The challenge for craftsmen is to learn how to exploit the most recent technical advancements in their favour. E-commerce allows artisans to be (more) independent from the on-site sale, offering products to a wider public. Reversely, the public has access to a wider range of hand-made products to choose from. In addition, it also allows the direct communication with clients and the management of social media for the own promotion campaign.

It is convenient to combine online marketing with “traditional” marketing tools to reposition the brand and raise the product's value. Storytelling is a spread marketing and branding tool that helps breaking the cool barrier that exists between a business, a PC screen, and the user (potential buyer) by creating an emotional bond. The use of stories helps transmitting the symbolic potential of each object, as well as the identity of the brand, to offer the most complete sensory experience of it. To raise the value of a product it is use useful to rely on the key role that photography, packaging and products delivery can play to transmit the specific crafts' exclusivity and quality.

These strategies can bring customers closer to the brand and increase the perceived value of a product and finally to increase sales and prices. Every kind of business can benefit from the advantages that both online and traditional marketing offer. The Internet plays a fundamental role. It has democratized the use of certain advertising and communication tool, which until it was not spread were only accessible to those brands able to make big investments in this respect. Moreover, it is important to remember that to use these tools, for how accessible, it is necessary to start from a clear definition of the target group, value proposal, and brand identity. Elements of traditional marketing that indispensable to design strategies for the relational networks that will embrace.

5. Conclusions

Different countries provided different data, thus making the comparison and drawing conclusions more complicated. But in the background of current global trends, European statistics and European Union policies, while using examples from participating countries where available, we were able to arrive to several observations.

Current situation of globalization of information and localization of consumer interest as well as increased consumer consciousness are favourable for starting and running a successful handmade or craft business. Renewed interest in artisan work and crafts allows for horizontal integration – those interested in making a living through the selected craft can develop their business by teaching craft courses (online and in person) or selling materials (again, with the support of online sales).

What the studies for individual countries did not emphasize (Spain being an exception here), but should be at least mentioned here, is the potential to promote local traditional crafts and consequently national or regional culture and encourage tourism, as well as support marginalized groups of people or regions. A current case of an uncovered cultural appropriation shows, how online marketing tools can be used to benefit otherwise marginalized groups of inhabitants.³⁹

Examples from different countries also showed the huge potential in handmade market, for overcoming some major obstacles of female employment (such as work-family reconciliation, self-improvement or family budget), but also of potential impact of possible future economic crises. Where the whole field can improve, is the use of ICTs and adjusted marketing tools – and for that, there is a need of specific and targeted training.

³⁹ See for example the reaction of the Romanian village of Bihor to appropriation, without giving any credit, of a traditional costume by the fashion house Dior and the launch of a new brand called Bihor Couture (<http://www.bihorcouture.com/>). For example: Mayukh Majumdar, *Bihor Vs Dior – How a Tiny Romanian Village Took On One of Fashion's Most Powerful Houses*. Online: <https://www.mansworldindia.com/fashion/bihor-vs-dior-tiny-romanian-village-took-one-fashions-powerful-houses/>.

Annexes

1. statistics of women working at home, various statistics on the work of artisans Part-time employment and unemployment in Europe and project partner countries, <http://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/data/database>.

	Part-time employment, 2017 (ages 15 to 64)			Unemployment, 2017 (15 to 64)		
	Total	Men	Women	Total	Men	Women
EU (28)	19,4	8,8	31,7	9,4	9,3	9,5
Bulgaria	2,2	2	2,4	9,2	9,8	8,4
Czech Republic	6,2	2,4	10,9	5,1	4,2	6,1
Italy	18,5	8,3	32,5	11,9	11,3	12,7
Poland	6,6	3,7	10	7,5	7,3	7,7
Spain	14,9	7,2	24,1	22,1	20,8	23,6

Self-employment in project partner countries, <http://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/data/database>.

	Self employed in % of total employment					
	2002			2014		
	Total	Men	Women	Total	Men	Women
Bulgaria	29,2	34,9	22,9	27	33,1	20,2
Czech Republic	15,5	19,5	10,2	15,3	18,7	10,9
Italy	27	30,8	20,9	25,6	30,2	19,1
Poland	28,2	30,5	25,5	21,4	24,3	17,7
Spain	16,1	18,2	12,8	13,7	16,7	10,1

2. organizations dealing with handmade

World Craft Council – Europe (<http://wcc-europe.org>)

3. handmade stakeholders

Organización de los artesanos de España – Oficio Y Arte (<http://www.oficiovarte.org>)

Catalogue of Spanish artisanal associations per autonomous community (<http://www.oficiovarte.org/directorio/asociaciones/espana.htm>)

4. e-commerce sites

Bulgaria: www.ruchnaizrabotka.com; bg.bazarino.com; 10fingers.bg; <https://myhandmade.bg/>.

Czech Republic: <https://www.fler.cz>, <https://artbe.cz>, <https://www.simira.cz/>, <http://www.ceskatvorba.cz/>,

Italy: Blooming (“social shopping”), DaWanda (DIY designers and artisans), A Little Market (A Parisian portal for buying and selling handmade products), Babirusa (handmade and vintage), Miss Hobby (handmade).

Poland: <https://artillo.pl>; <https://www.decobazaar.com/>; <https://www.pakamera.pl/>

Spain: Manos ed más, Aliexpress España, Alibaba, Mercadolibre, Tienda de Ropa, Crear pagina web gratis, Plantillas Web Gratis, eBay España, Facebook Ads, Tiendas Chinas Online

5. handmade markets

Bulgaria: Handmade Festival at National Palace of Culture in Sofia, Kapana Fest

Czech Republic: <http://www.dyzajnmarket.com/>, <https://www.mintmarket.cz/>, <https://www.praguemarket.cz/>, <http://www.farmarsketrziste.cz/>, <http://www.hrncirsketrhy.cz/>