

Eurochambres Women Network Survey 2023: A Picture of Female Entrepreneurship





RESILIENCE IN FACING ADVERSITIES

The current economic environment is particularly challenging for all entrepreneurs. The different crisis of the recent years (Covid pandemic, Ukrainian war and the subsequent increase on energy prices) are taking a toll on European businesses.

This survey aims at taking a look on how women entrepreneurs in particular are reacting to the increasing challenges, while also considering the issues that are more specifically pertaining to female-led businesses.

The results show that not only women entrepreneurs demonstrate resilience in facing adversities, but also that they have a long-term vision and welcome changes and new challenges in a prompt and forward-looking manner. It suffice to cite their commitment in sustainably and digitally transforming their businesses, activities which they started well before the current situation forced the overall economic environment to embrace those changes.

Unquestionably, women entrepreneurs need more support from public institutions and the creation of target measures. We as chambers are already active at local level with initiatives to back up female-led businesses, but also to prepare women to fulfil managerial roles in already existing companies. My wish for the future is to strengthen the links with local institutions, in order to ensure that our efforts to support women entrepreneurs are multiplied and reinforced.

Marina Rožić, Chair of Eurochambres Women Network and Secretary General of the Croatian Chamber of Economy

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A PICTURE OF FEMALE ENTREPRENEURSHIP

After two years from the last Eurochambres Women Network survey, which was focusing on the impact of the Covid-19 crisis on female-led enterprises, it was time to evaluate again the state of play of female entrepreneurship, with a new, more complete survey.

This survey, in fact, touches upon different subjects, from skills to work-life balance, from financing to digitalisation. It aims at giving a – even if short – glance into what doing business in the current environment means for a woman, with the hope that the discoveries made will help those who are concerned to develop more targeted initiatives and measures to support women entrepreneurs across Europe.

823 replies were collected, from 24 countries, not only of the EU, but also of neighbouring countries, in order to give the clearest picture possible of what is at stake in this geographic area.

The survey questions are grouped by topic. In order to ensure that additional inputs were taken into account, and that the results were not limited exclusively to what was pre-determined in the structure of the survey, respondents were often given the possibility to provide their comments and supplementary information.

The survey was launched at the end of December 2022 and closed on 08 March 2023. Although the survey is mainly aimed at women entrepreneurs and self-employed women, a certain number of replies have been obtained by women who do not own a business, but still play a managerial role in the company they work for.

The survey is composed of 24 questions, and additional input is asked to those who replied in a certain manner. For example, those who indicated liquidity or other financial problems among the main obstacles that entrepreneurs are currently facing in the run of their business were asked to indicate what they think are the reasons behind their struggles to accessing financing means.

The first questions are of general nature, enabling a more in-deep understanding of the context surrounding the respondents and allowing for a specific cross-checked analysis whenever information - such as the age of the entrepreneur or the size of the enterprise - where to be considered important factors in understanding fully the reply given to another question.

The topics that the survey touches upon are:

- Presence of women in the workforce of the company
- Reason behind the decision of becoming an entrepreneur
- Impact of being an entrepreneur on the work-life balance
- Analysis of the obstacles the entrepreneurs run into
- Access to finance
- Challenges of being a woman in the business environment
- Sustainable transition
- Digital transition
- Extra and intra-Europe relocation of business

As can be seen, some topics are more general, they could be asked also to male entrepreneurs. Here what is interesting is to assess if women entrepreneurs are behaving according to general trends or, on the contrary, they follow other patterns.

Other questions are woman-specific, as they aim at understanding if certain aspects of being a woman can affect the life of an entrepreneur.

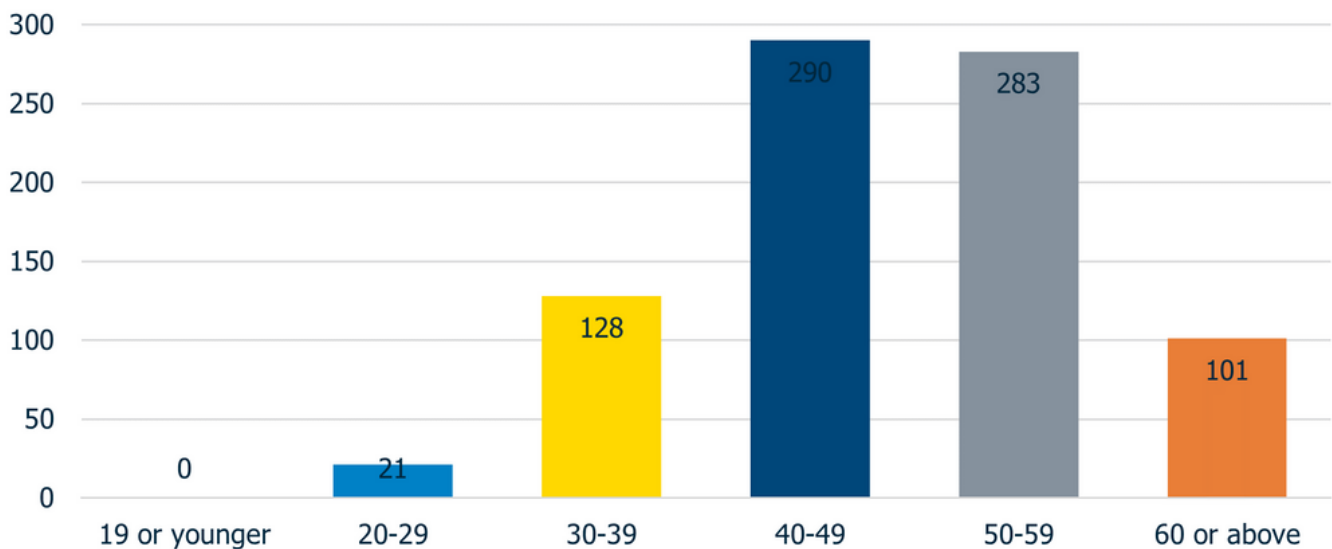
This report ends with a specific focus on conclusions that can be drawn by the overall assessment of the questionnaire. We have also tried to indicate some recommendations that public institutions could build upon in order to shape initiatives and support measures that are really and fully able to provide help to women entrepreneurs and to guide them in facing the current challenges successfully.

Some best practices of activities implemented by Chambers of commerce are also mentioned, as an example of the commitment of chambers across Europe in improving the business environment for women entrepreneurs.

THE STATE OF PLAY OF FEMALE ENTREPRENEURSHIP

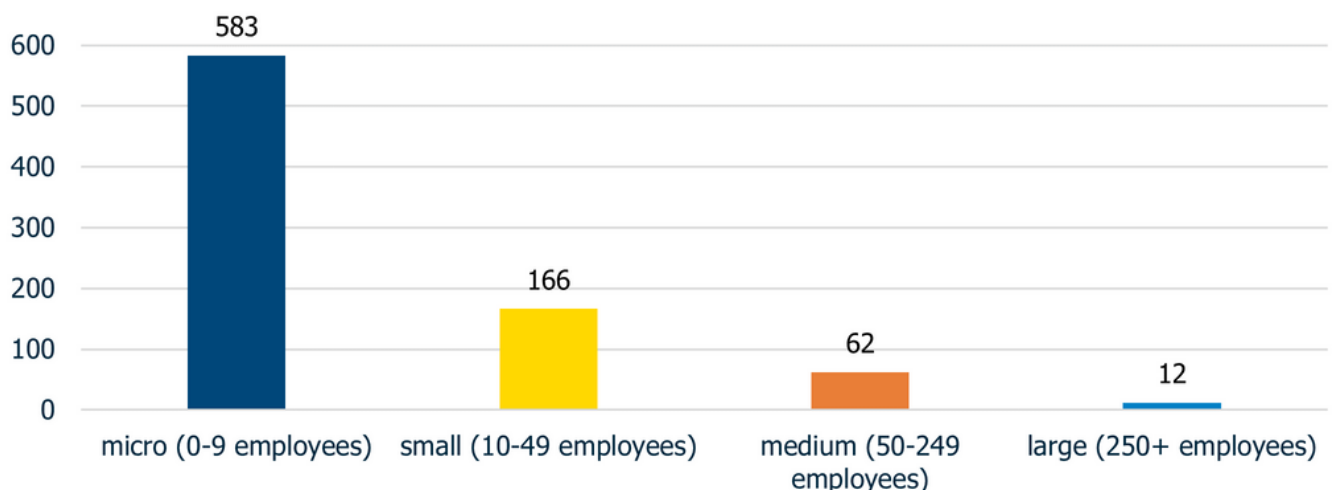
Which age category do you belong to?

The large majority of entrepreneurs are between 40 and 60 years old, although there is a certain number (101 respondents) who are of an older age. Only a few companies are led by young women, a data that mirrors some activities that are currently established by chambers of commerce, that are focusing on showcasing the advantages of opening their own businesses to students at school. It could be assumed that in the current difficult economic environment the job of entrepreneurs may not be perceived as attractive to young generations as it was in the previous ones.



What is the size of your enterprise?

This data is in line with the general trend of enterprises in Europe: in fact, the European business environment is composed mainly by small and medium-sized enterprises. Women entrepreneurs follow this trend: only 12 own a large enterprise, and the large majority have a micro enterprise.

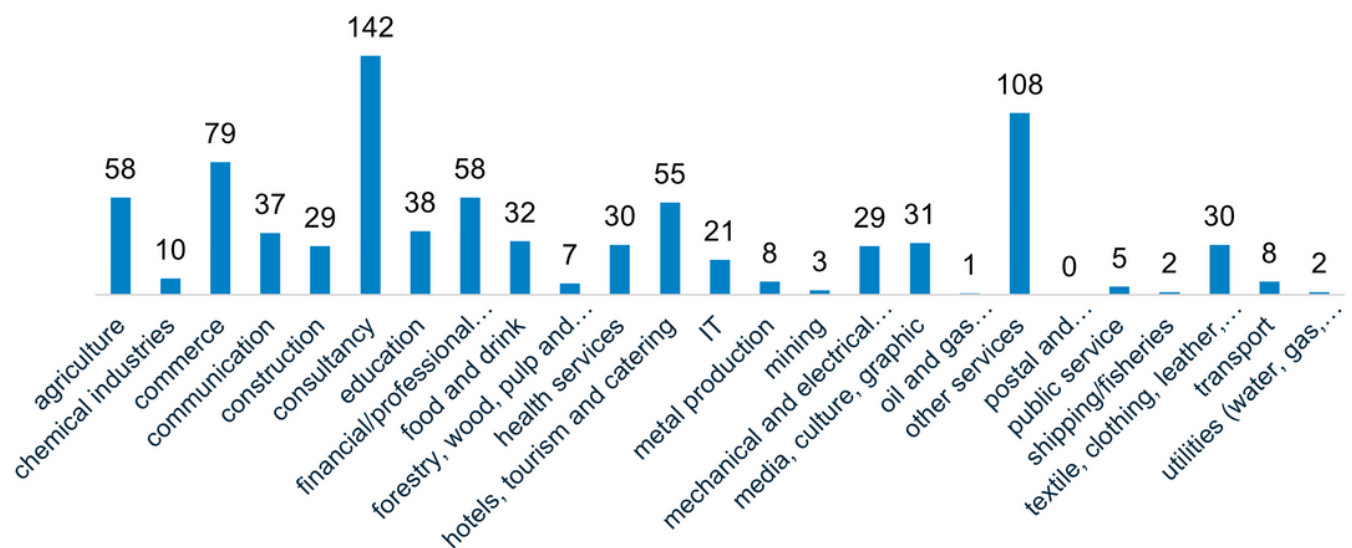


How long is your business operating?

367 own a business created in the last 10 years, with 24 among them having started activities in the last year. 183 of the businesses have been existing from 11 to 20 years. It is worth noting, though, that 52 businesses are very old (operating since more than 50 years, with peaks of over 100 years).

What sector does your business fit into?

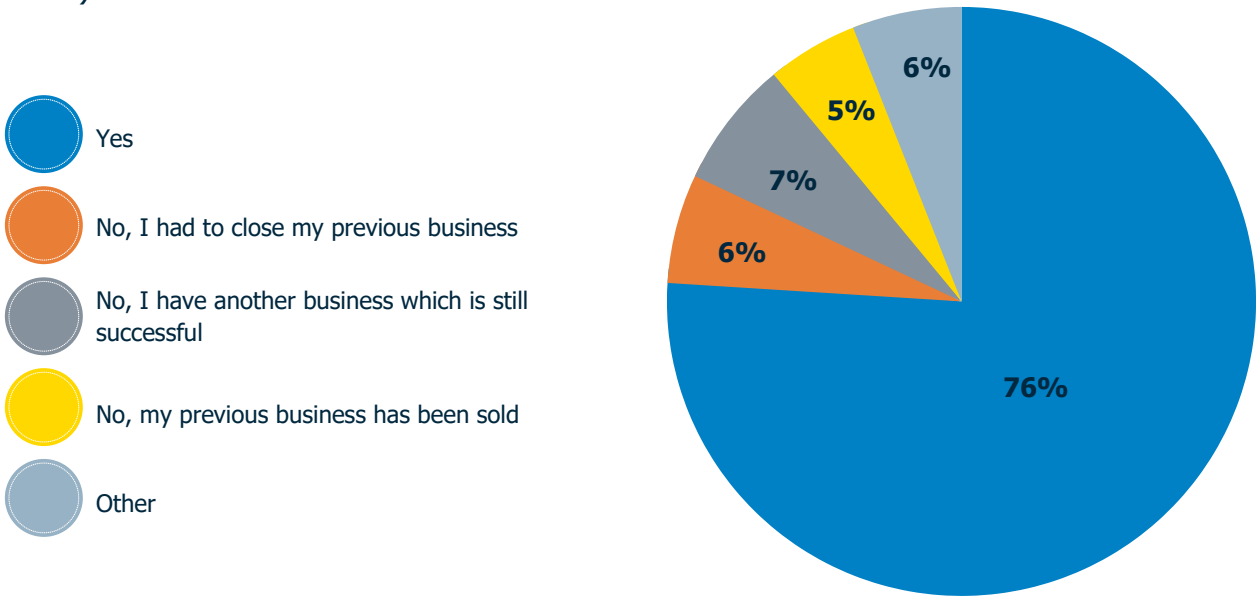
142 entrepreneurs own a consultancy company, but, if data is aggregated by macro categories, the majority own a business providing different kind of services (381 replies, including consultancy, education, financial/professional services, health services, public services and other services). Wide communication (including communication strictly speaking, IT, media, culture and graphic) accounts for 89 replies. Surprisingly, only 55 companies focus on the HORECA sector. As it is to be expected, more technical jobs are less common among women entrepreneurs.



Is your present business the first enterprise that you have owned?

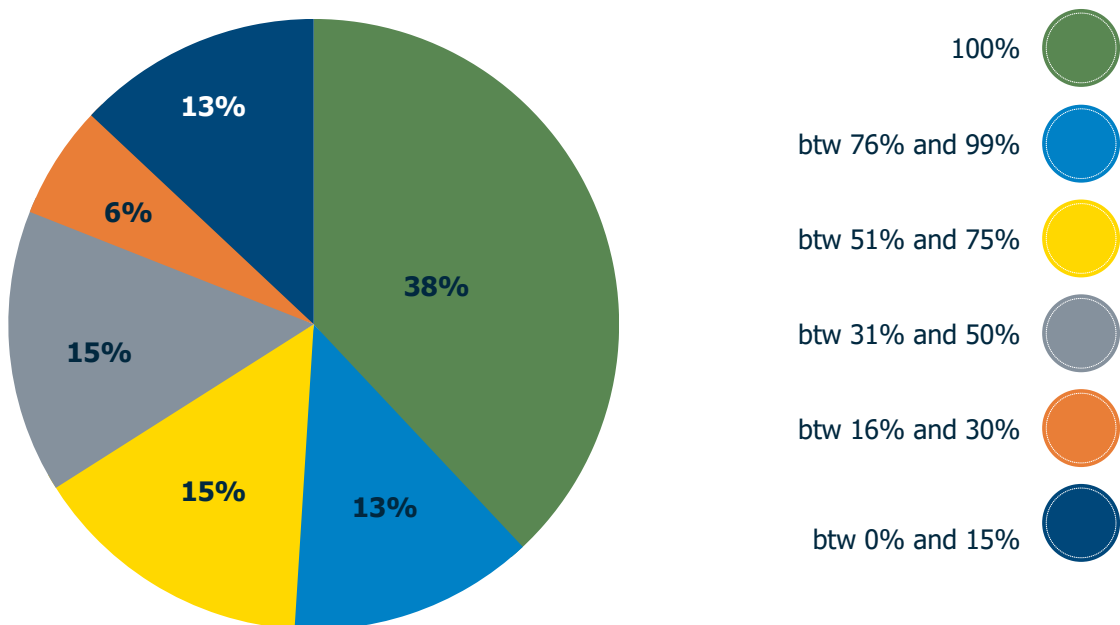
For 76% of female entrepreneurs (614 replies), the current one is the first business they have owned and of these, the majority (17%) are consultancies - which are mostly small or micro enterprises. This seem to confirm the trend that women tend to create businesses in the tertiary sector (services). Among the others, it is interesting to notice that 61 own also a second business, which is also currently running. 11% were previously owners of another business, and half of them had to close it, while the other half sold it out.

Some of the respondents specified that they do not own the business, but they have a managerial role in the company. Others are self-employed (mainly offering professional services).



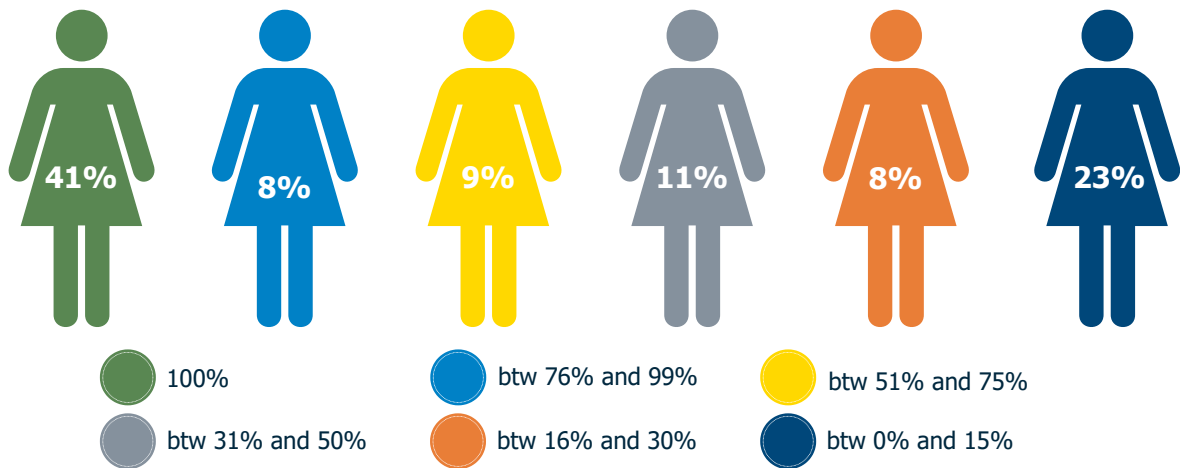
What is the percentage of women in your company?

The data of this question need to be looked at together with the replies to the question on the size of the company (see above for details). In fact, of the 309 entrepreneurs who declared that their workforce is composed 100% of women, only 11 are not micro-sized enterprises (0 to 9 employees). It can be assumed, therefore, that many women among them do not have employees at all, which would explain these high numbers. Still, it is important to note that 234 entrepreneurs (28% of respondent) declared employing between 51% and 99% of women, which is still a high rate although most of these enterprises are also either micro (50%) or small (30%).



Among those, what is the percentage of women in high-level position?

The estimate above is confirmed by the replies to this question: 334 respondents (41%) declare that 100% of the women in their companies are in a high-level position. To be assumed that it is, indeed, a one-man-band company. In fact, the second-highest data, is a 23% who declare that only between 0% and 15% of women in their companies are in a high-level position. Although *prima facie* it could look like women entrepreneurs show not to be keener than men in supporting fellow women in reaching high-level position, most probably this data is simply due to the fact that the majority of respondents own a micro or small-sized enterprise, where there are not many opportunities to be in a high-level position. The respondents that declared that 100% of the women in their companies are in a high-level position operate mostly in consulting (27%), commerce (9%) and financial services (9%).



How was your company founded?

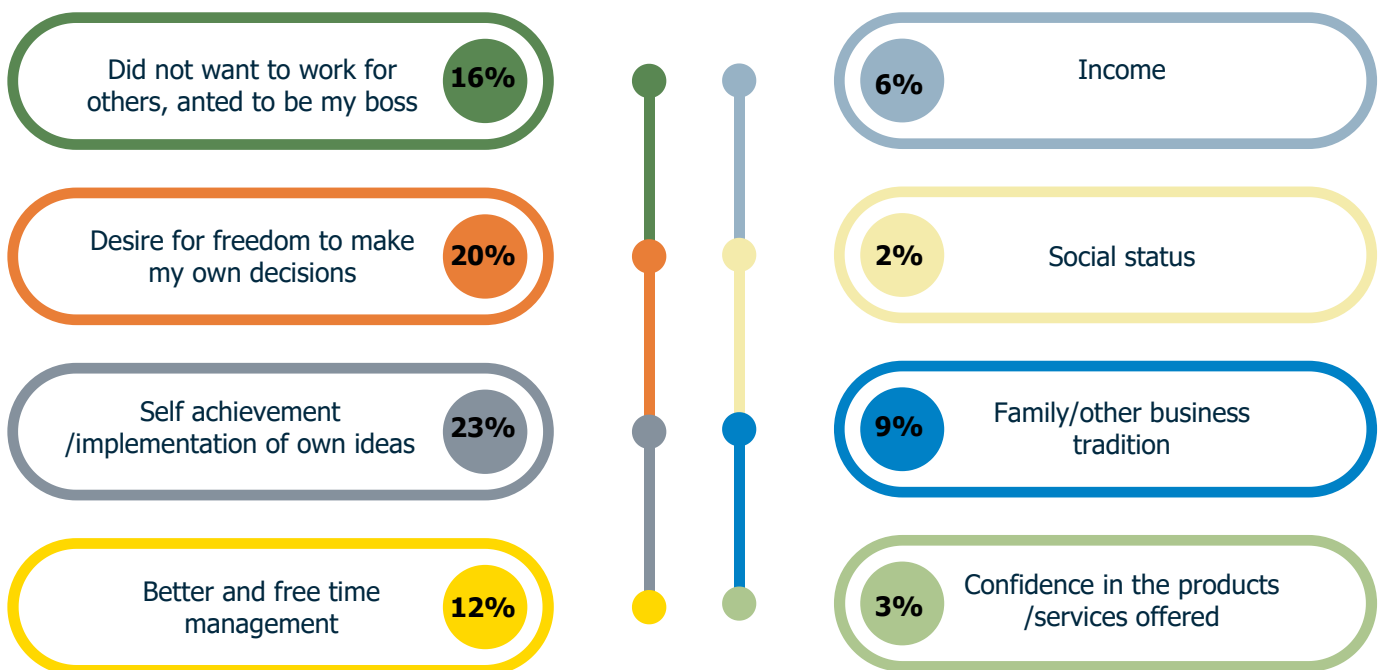
78% have created their own company, mostly consultancies (21%) - of which only 3% are young entrepreneurs in their twenties, with the majority being in their forties (almost 36%) - while only 5% bought the business from the previous owner. Of these, there are no entrepreneurs in their twenties, and the majority (50%) are in their fifties and the most popular sector was still consulting (13%). 139 entrepreneurs (equalling to the 17% of the replies), have inherited their business by a member of the family, the majority of these being again middle-aged (38% are in their forties) and the most popular sector being agriculture (15%).



What made you start your own business?

The two most common reasons indicated by entrepreneurs are the desire for self-achievement, the possibility of implementing one's own ideas (402 replies – indicated by half of the respondents) and the desire for freedom to make one's own decisions (more than one third of respondents – 336). It looks like the social status is not a drive in the choice of women to become entrepreneurs. Also, income is not considered a good enough reason to open one's own company (only 109 indicated it as a contributing factor in their choice).





Among the comments, to be noted that for someone the idea of creating an enterprise was born because of a difficulty in finding a job as employee, while for others it was necessary to exercise specific activities in accordance with the national/local legislation. Others, interestingly, indicated that the strong belief in the quality of a product or in the usefulness of a service was at the origin of the choice of creating an enterprise.

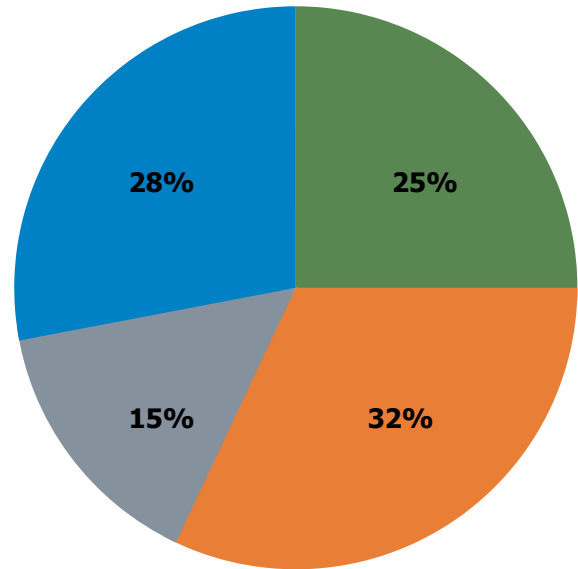


Do you offer telework plans to your employees (when compatible with their specific tasks)?

The replies here are quite balanced, although among those who are not completely in favour of teleworking measures, the majority do not allow it at all (28%), while only 15% offer it in limited and specific occasions. Those who do not allow it at all work mostly in the agricultural sector (18%), while those who allow it exceptionally work mostly in commerce (14%).

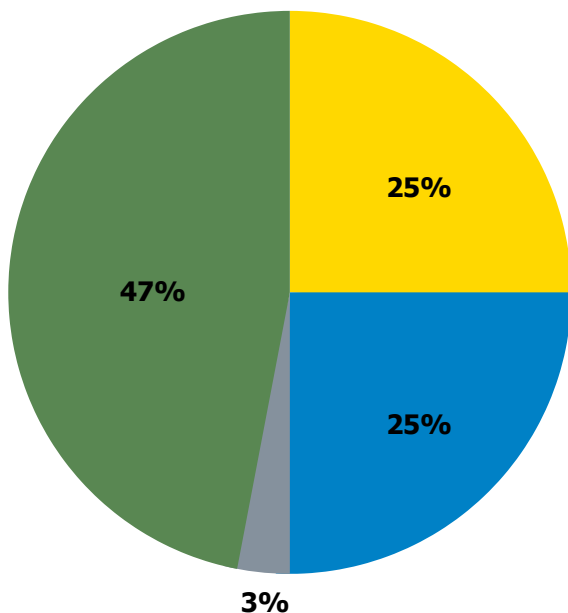
Small and medium enterprises mostly do not allow teleworking or only exceptionally, while micro enterprises are more open to it and half of large enterprises allow teleworking for a certain amount of time each week, while half do not allow it at all or only exceptionally.





-  Yes, they can telework for a certain amount of time each week
-  Yes, they can have full flexibility in deciding if and when do telework
-  No, they can telework only under exceptional circumstances
-  No, teleworking is not a possibility



If you have a partner, what is the share of home responsibilities between you and your partner?

Excluding those who do not have a partner / do not live with one, the highest number is represented by women who split equally (or almost) home responsibilities with their partner. This is true for all surveyed age groups. This is notably better than what may have been expected, and more so given that the minority of respondent are of young age. In fact, it was to be expected as more common, still, for older generations of women to be the ones more investing in household and care duties. It looks like the cultural changes of the latest years are also involving older generations.



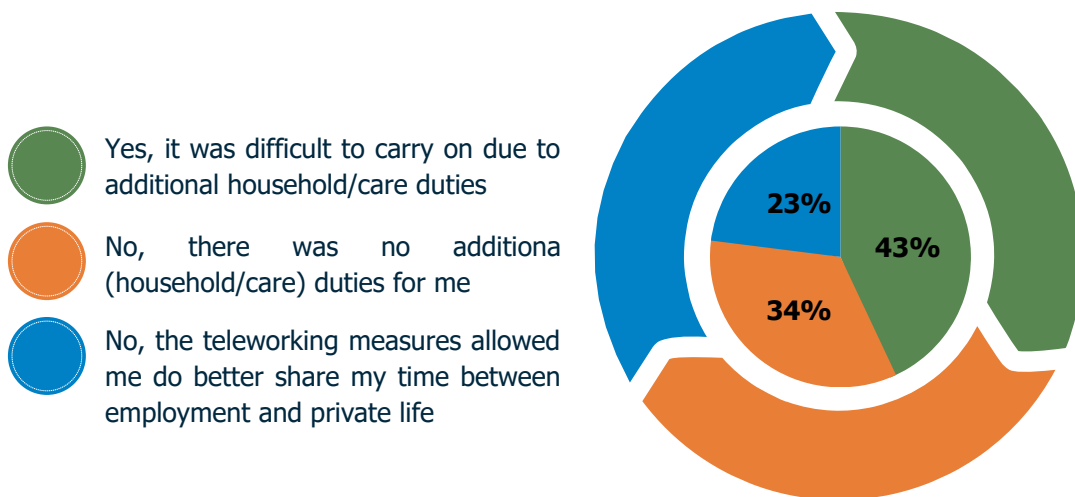
-  The majority of the household responsibilities are on my shoulders, while my partner is minimally involved
-  I do not have a partner/do not live with one, therefore I take care of all household duties
-  The majority of the household responsibilities are on my partner's shoulders, I am minimally involved
-  my partner and me split euqally (or almost euqally) the household responsibilities

Have the consequences of the lockdown/restrictions to movement during the Covid-19 pandemic, such as homework (for you) or distance learning (for your children, if any) made it more difficult to carry on your business?

This question was asked also in the previous survey, focusing on the impact of the pandemic on women-led businesses, and the replies are consistent among the two surveys. Also this time, in fact, 43% of women replied that the teleworking measures negatively impacted the management of their business, claiming that it was more difficult to carry on due to an increase in the household/care duties.

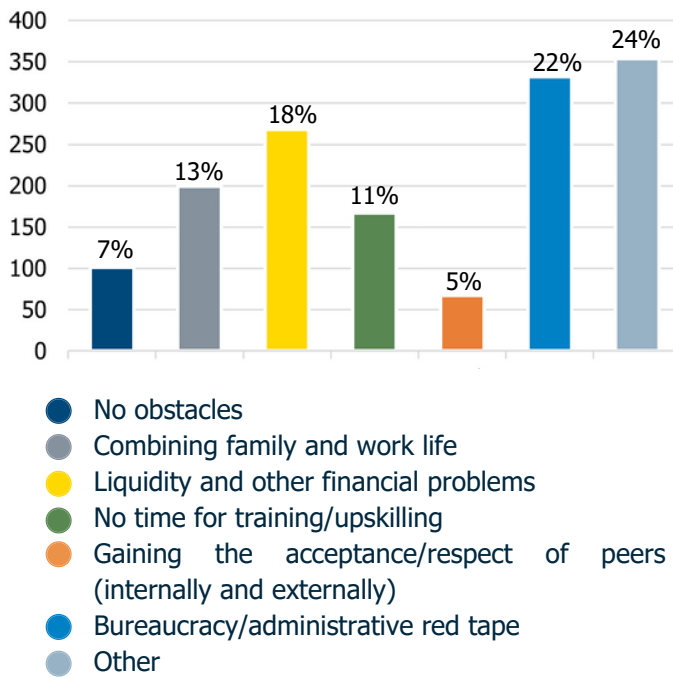
Still also this time a certain number of entrepreneurs (23% - amounting to 192 replies) declared that, on the contrary, those measures allowed them to better manage their time between work and private life. It is an interesting piece of information: we are used to hear that the restriction to movement measures implemented during the pandemic negatively impacted the work-life balance of workers, while here we see that, at least for entrepreneurs, teleworking could – under certain conditions – be beneficial for a healthy work-life balance.

This result was especially relevant for the consulting sector, as 25% of entrepreneurs operating in this sector thought that the teleworking measures allowed them to better share their time between employment and private life and 15% thought that there were no additional (household/care) duties.



What are the main obstacles you are currently facing in the running of your business?

The two most popular replies here were bureaucracy/administrative red tape (332 replies) and liquidity and other financial struggle (268 replies). Also combining family and work life was indicated as one of the main obstacles in the running of a business (199 respondents) and the lack of time for training and upskilling too. Curiously, the majority of entrepreneurs indicated that there were additional obstacles.

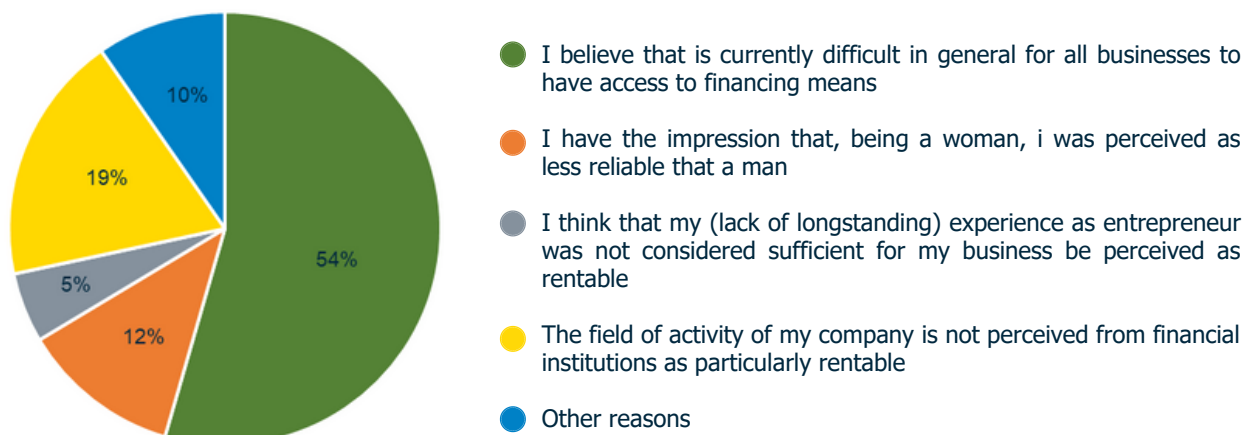


Among those: high taxes which do not allow the company to increase the number of workers, difficulties in finding a common ground among business partners, bad institutional management of the Covid crisis and its long-term consequences and in general the impact of Covid-19 (quite popular answer), disturbances in the markets of raw materials and products, difficulties in finding skilled employees (cited multiple times), high energy costs, lack of time to develop business strategies (popular comment).

According to you, what are the reasons behind your struggles to access financing means?

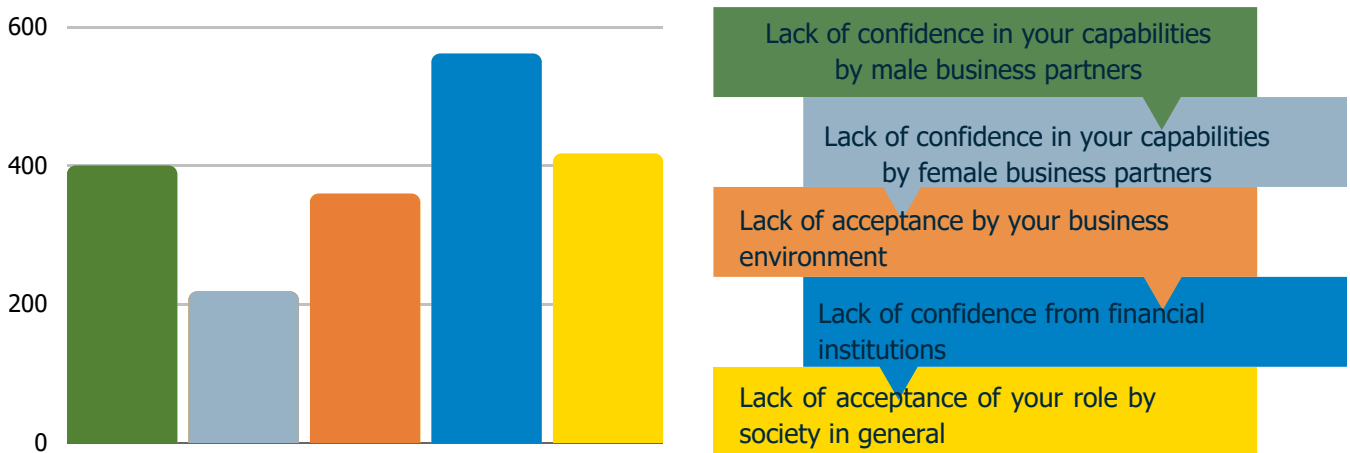
Women entrepreneurs here clearly indicated that the fact of being a woman is not necessarily impacting the access to financing means. In fact, the most cited reasons behind their struggles in accessing finance are the fact that it is currently difficult for any business to obtain financing (54% of those who cited financial struggles in the previous question) - particularly true for the sectors of consulting (12%), agriculture (10%) and commerce (9%) - and the fact that the field of activity of their company may not be perceived as rentable by financial institutions, in particular for the sectors of consulting (18%), education (14%) and agriculture (12%).

Only 12% considered being a women the reason behind their struggles. Among the comments, it is worth noting that the conditions for accessing credit are considered burdensome.



Which of the following situations – if any – do you face in the running of your business?

In this case, it is important to make a premise: the majority of respondents do not think that any of the above situations has an impact – or at least an important one – on the running of their business. The least impacting situation is considered the lack of confidence by female business partners (77% declared not to be affected by it at all). This said, among the 5 situations, the one perceived as most applicable is surely the lack of confidence from financial institutions, followed by the lack of acceptance of the entrepreneur's role by society in general and the lack of confidence by male business partners.

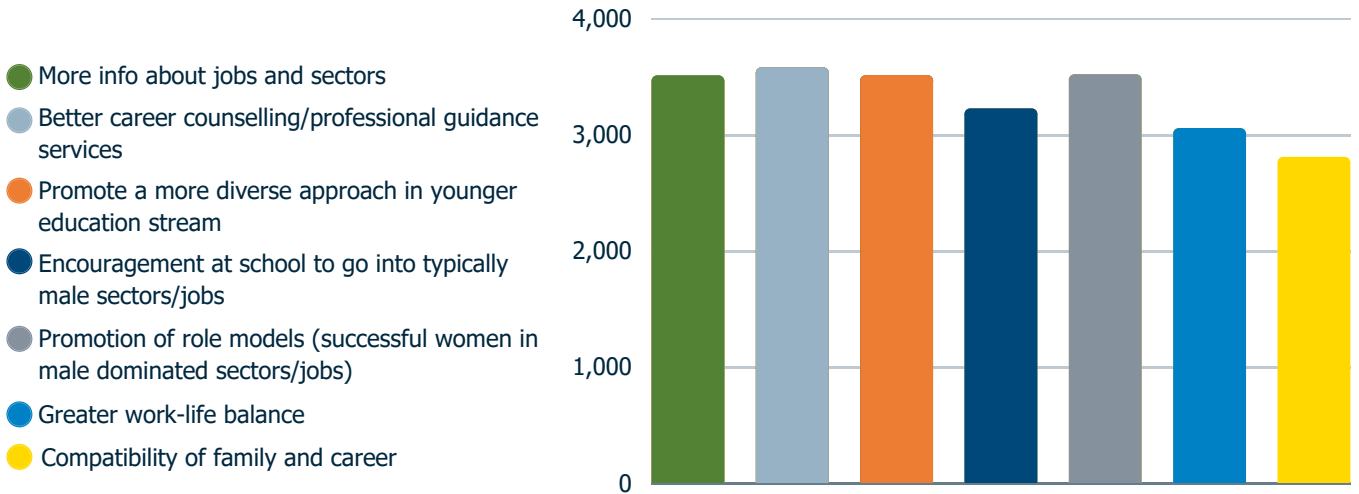


What should be done to improve the situation of women in male-dominated jobs and sectors?

Among the suggested replies, there is none that is strikingly considered predominant on the others, supposedly because all the solutions proposed are deemed appropriate on the path to improving the situation of women in male-dominated sectors. It is equally evident, though, that the factors that are perceived as less relevant are a greater work-life balance and the compatibility of family and career. This reflects what was discussed above: the majority of respondents living with a partner share equally the household/care duties with their partners.

If we look at the comments, there are interesting insights. Someone underlined that we should reverse the current situation: no more praising the companies who provide equal opportunities, as this should be the normality, but reprimanding those who don't. Others pointed out that training women on specific skills (such as digital or managerial ones), would help the condition of women in male-dominated sectors. Equal pay is strongly advocated for by multiple respondents, while someone proposes financial measures to support women in opening their businesses (e.g., "flexible financial transition grants – [e.g., duration of 5 years - initially 18 months full grant - then subsidies that decrease over time] for women who want to become self-employed after being employed").

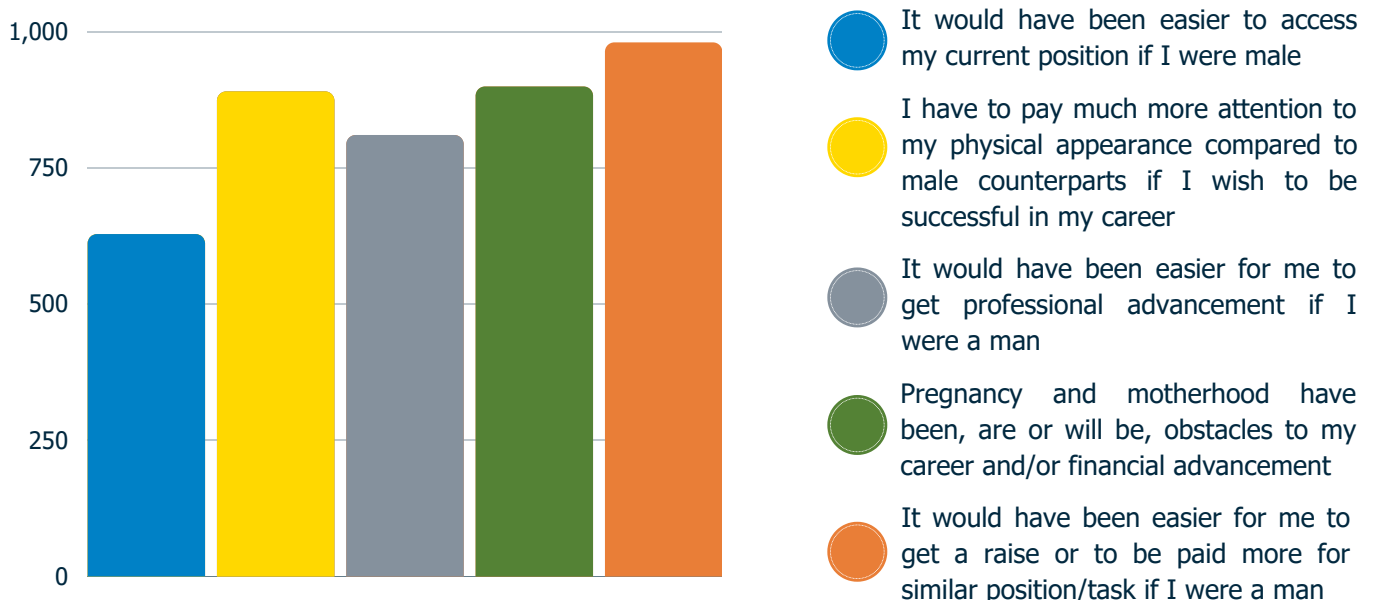
Among the most interesting suggestions are those citing the need of focusing on the education of men not only from an early age, but also later in life, in order to change the mentality of the whole society.



Do the following statements apply to you?

Almost half of the entrepreneurs (302 replies) consider that it would have been easier for them to be paid more if they had been men, while the majority do not think, on the contrary, that it would have been easier for them to access their current position if men (436 respondent declared that this was not applicable to them at all).

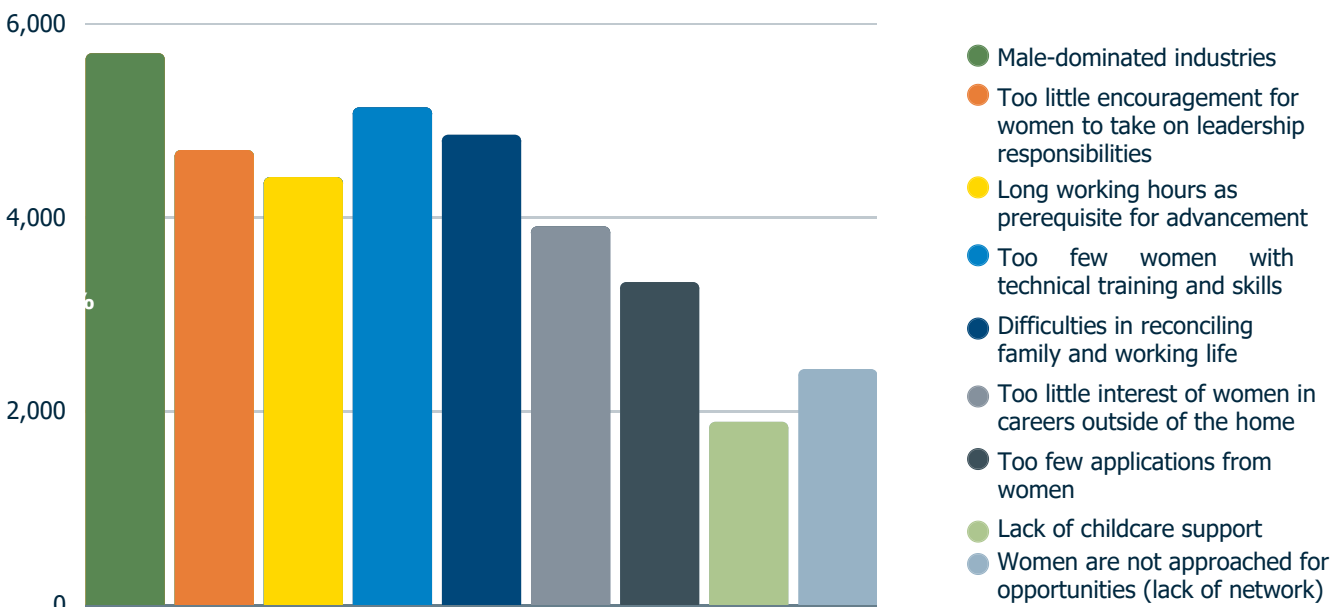
Also, the perception that motherhood could represent an obstacle to their careers and the need to pay attention to their physical appearance are considered relevant problems by women entrepreneurs (around 250 entrepreneurs considered these two issues to be relevant for their situation).



From your point of view, what are the reasons for the large-scale under-representation of women in business?

Male-dominated industries are considered by the majority of respondents the main reason why women are less represented in the business environment. It is interesting to see that the second factor per importance is deemed to be the too little encouragement given to women to take on leadership responsibilities. In third place we find the difficulty in reconciling family and work life (which is slightly in contradiction with the replies to a previous question, where greater work-life balance was not considered to be among the main factors that could improve the situation of women entrepreneurs).

To be expected, women do not consider themselves not to be interested in careers outside of the home, and they equally do not think that they are not approached for job opportunities, lacking strong networks.

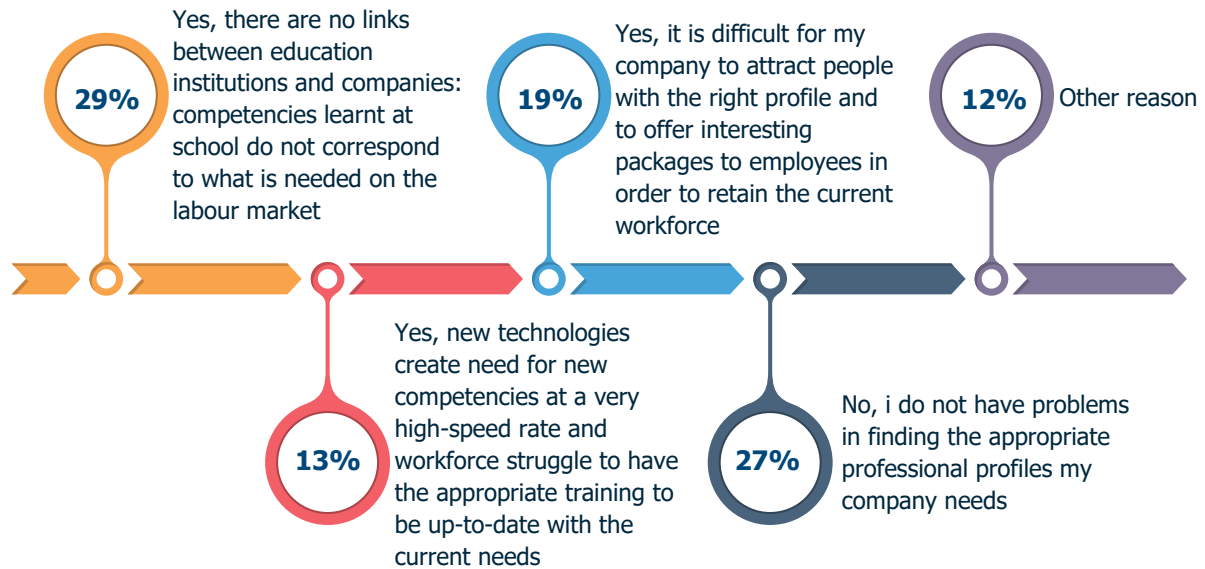


Do you struggle to find the right professional profile for the vacancies you have in your company?

29% of women entrepreneurs consider that it is difficult to find the right professional profiles for their staff due to the fact that there are no links between education institutions and companies and, therefore, competencies learnt at school do not correspond to what is needed on the labour market. This is true in particular for the following sectors: consulting (11%), commerce (10%), hotels, tourism and catering (7%), and food and drink (7%).

Another problem in identifying the right profiles (19% of replies) is the difficulty of the entrepreneur in offering interesting packages to attract new employees or retain the existing workforce.

This results is particularly relevant for the following sectors: commerce (14%), consulting (12%), financial/professional services (9%), and agriculture (8%). 27% declared instead not to have any problem in finding the right profiles on the job market. The comments on some occasion reflect the national environment, citing national measures, such as the support to unemployment and the contractual regulation, as challenges in finding the right profiles.



Have the peculiar circumstances of the last few years (covid and war in Ukraine) had an impact on your decision on investing in sustainability?

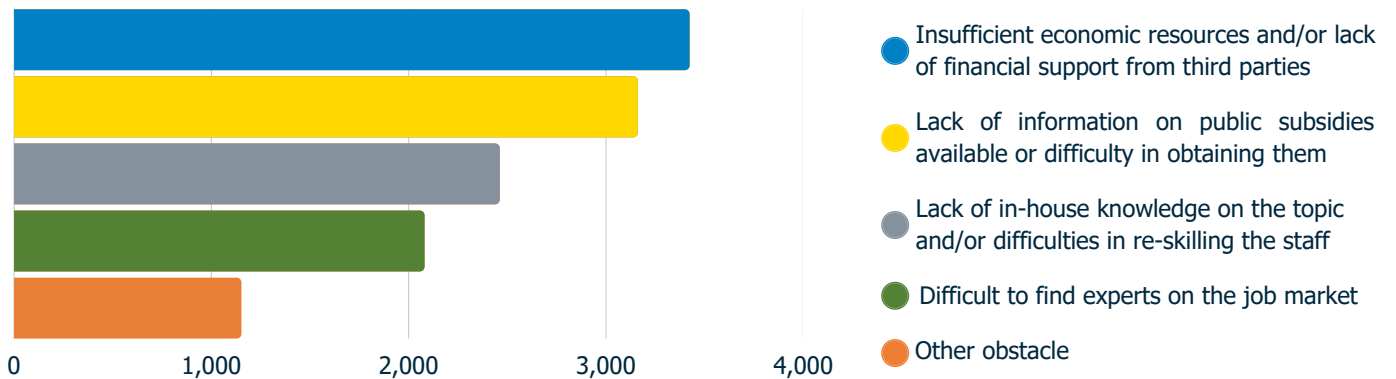
The majority of entrepreneurs have not been affected by the latest years' peculiar circumstances (55%), but, among those, more than half (33% of the total of respondents) declared to have continued investing - those mostly operating in the sectors of consulting (18%), commerce (8%) and hotels, tourism and catering (8%). This shows that sustainability is considered an important topic by women entrepreneurs, and this perception is reinforced by the fact that in total, between who was investing before and who started recently, currently 68% of women entrepreneurs are investing in sustainability. Only 101 entrepreneurs declared that they had stopped investing, this result was particularly relevant for the sectors of commerce (14%) and agriculture (12%).



In your opinion, which are the main obstacles to the introduction of sustainability investments in your company?

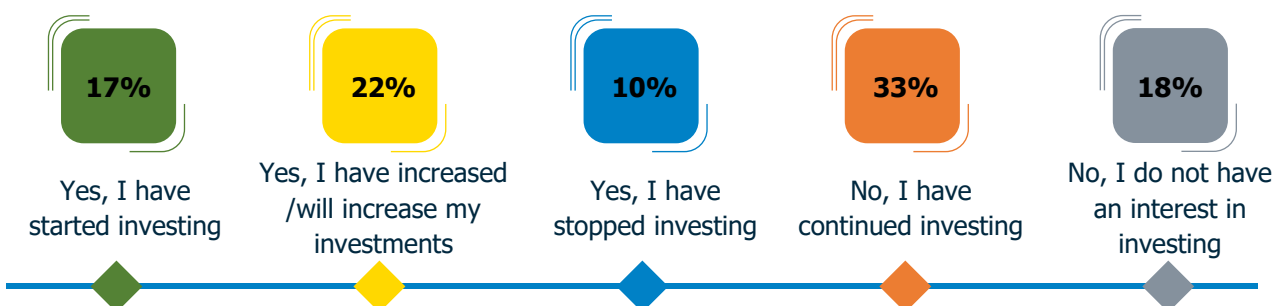
649 entrepreneurs considered the insufficient economic resources and/or the lack of financial support from third parties as the main obstacle in investing in sustainability. This goes in pair with the second-best reply, according to which the main problem is the lack of information on support available. Entrepreneurs recognise the need to be helped in their path toward a more sustainable business, but they lament the appropriate support, or at least the knowledge of it.

Someone cited also the bureaucracy linked to obtaining funds for the sustainable transition as an important factor discouraging business from applying for the funds, when existing.



Have the peculiar circumstances of the last few years (Covid-19 and war in Ukraine) had an impact on your decision on investing in digital technologies/solutions?

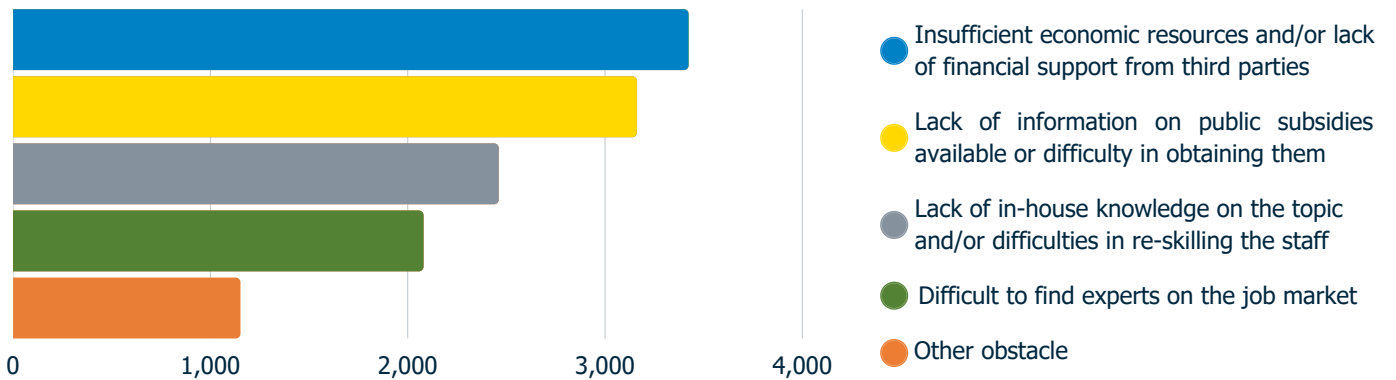
Also, in this case the attitude of women entrepreneurs is positive: 72% was already or have started investing in digital technologies, particularly in the sectors of consulting (19%), commerce (9%), financial/professional services (7%) and hotels, tourism and catering (7%). Only 10% has stop investing due to the crisis of the last few years, particularly in the sectors of commerce (15%), agriculture (8%), hotels, tourism and catering (8%), and only 18% declared not to have any interest in investing.



If we considered those who were affected, although, in different ways, by the pandemic and the war, the total amount to 49% of respondent: 39% have been prompted to increase their investments or to start doing so altogether, while 10% declared to been affected negatively and needed to stop investing.

In your opinion, which are the main obstacles to the introduction of digital technologies/solutions investments in your company?

Similarly to what happens for sustainable investments, also in this case the insufficiency of economic resources and the difficulties of obtaining them from third parties is the most popular reply (660 entrepreneurs consider it an important problem). This is followed shortly by the lack of information on public subsidies available (500 entrepreneurs). Here again, the bureaucracy linked to available fund has been cited as considered an important obstacle.



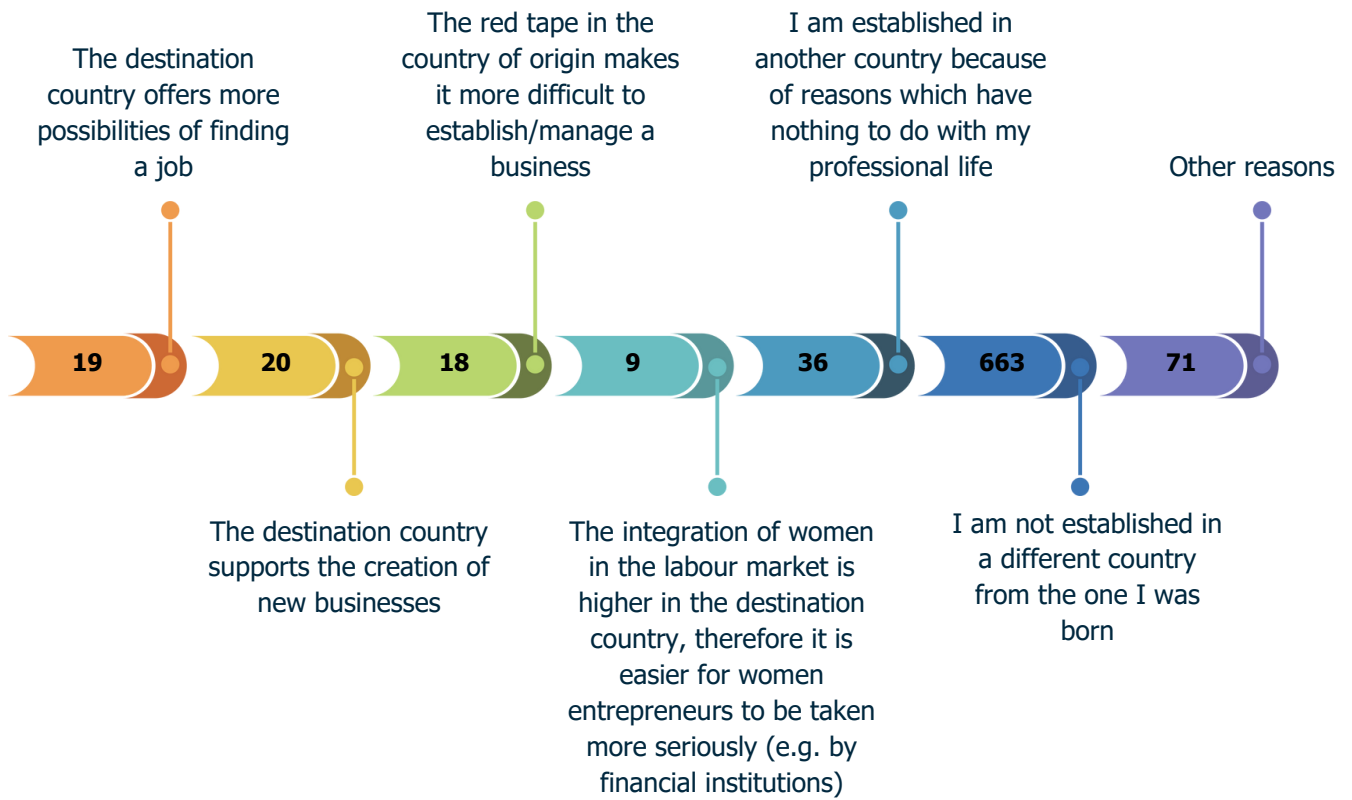
If the country of origin is different from the country your business is established, why did you choose to relocate/open your business elsewhere?

A few of the people who did not relocate to another country still declared that there were reasons why they opened their business elsewhere. The explanation need to be that those people relocated in another area of their country, and still noticed a difference in how local regulation affects businesses.

Among those actually coming from another country, the majority declared having relocated for reasons that had nothing to do with their business.

If we take into consideration the remaining entrepreneurs, we have to distinguish among those who were coming from outside the EU and those that relocated intra-EU: the first ones considered in majority as an important factor that the destination country offers more possibilities of finding a job, while the latter category considered that the destination country supports better the creation of new businesses.

Red tape has also been cited twice by those actually relocated in a different country from the one they were born in.



INITIATIVES AND SUPPORT MEASURES TO HELP WOMEN ENTREPRENEURS

There are certain aspects on which we should focus in order to allow women entrepreneurs to fully exploit the potential of their businesses:

Bureaucracy

If and when measures are available, women entrepreneurs complain about difficulty in obtaining them because of red tape. Decision makers, especially at local level, should simplify the procedures linked to the initiatives in support of entrepreneurs, and women entrepreneurs in particular. Also communicating more on the initiatives available is important to ensure that initiatives are effectively exploited by potential beneficiaries.

Access to finance

Financing institutions should assess internal selection processes allowing the distribution of credit and financial means in general. The perception of women entrepreneurs is that sometimes their companies are not considered rentable enough to invest into, either because of the fact that they are women or because the fields of activities they often choose to operate into are not deemed to be interesting.

Same chances

The mentality needs to change, in order to ensure that there is an equal distribution of both women and men in all the job sectors. Women entrepreneurs believe that the promotion of role models among young women and a focus on the education system, encouraging young women to get familiar with more technical disciplines, can prompt them to choose different career paths than what is currently common.

Equal pay

Women have the perception that they may have earned more money if they were men. This seems to be true not only for the respondents that are actually employees (those in a managerial position), but also for women entrepreneurs. At the same time, respondents also pointed out that it is more difficult to reach a managerial position. More needs to be done, at private and at public level, to ensure that high-level positions are equally accessible to women and men and that remuneration is independent from the sex of the worker.

Work-life balance

The management of time and the struggles to balance work and private life are evident for all workers, especially after the pandemic, which has allowed everyone to get familiar with more flexible working measures. Women, though, are particularly touched by it, because there is still a consistent number of them who need to take care solely or at a greater level of the household/care duties. A cultural change is needed, although much more households than before are based on a more balanced sharing of responsibilities.

Sustainable and digital transformation

The large majority of women entrepreneurs are positively taking onboard new sustainable and digital processes and technologies. There is the need for more means of financing those changes and also, where subsidies are already existing, a more widespread campaign of information, at national and at local level.

CHAMBER ACTIONS TO IMPROVE THE FEMALE BUSINESS ENVIRONMENT

The chamber network plays an important role in empowering women entrepreneurship, offering tools that help improve business performance and, consequently, sustainable economic growth. In addition, chambers of commerce and industry lead by example and encourage the adoption of policies that meet the needs identified by women entrepreneurs. In this way, they can find support in tackling many of the problems pointed out by this survey.

Below it is possible to find some of the initiatives developed by the chamber network to help women succeed in a competitive business environment.

Academy for Women Entrepreneurs (AWE)



The programme Academy for Women Entrepreneurs (AWE) has been launched by the Malta Chamber in 2022, in collaboration with the U.S. Embassy in Malta. This training programme ran from August until December with more than forty participants completing the course, which consisted of both online and physical modules, focusing on different subjects:

- Malta's Economic Context
- Malta's Policy Vision and its impact on running a Business in Malta
- Assistance available for Start-Ups
- Aspects of Malta's Commercial Law for Entrepreneurs
- Intercultural Awareness & Business
- Exploring the International Market

Each participant was provided with a mentoring session with a mentor of her choice and was given the possibility to pitch her business proposal in front of a panel of qualified judges. The two projects that were considered more interesting received a financial support.

Thanks to its success, the Chamber aims at making it a yearly activity, and is already working on the 2023 edition.

Business start-up incubator for women entrepreneurs



The Business start-up incubator for women entrepreneurs was established in the Croatian Chamber of Economy – Split County Chamber – in 2015. The aim of this project was to contribute to the development of women entrepreneurship by supporting women in their first business steps.

The Croatian Chamber of Economy allows new female entrepreneurs to use four equipped offices within the Chamber building, for the period of three years.

Besides offices, women entrepreneurs also have mentoring, advisory, promotional, and other logistic help to start and succeed in their project.

Additional support provided:

- free use of meeting rooms with available equipment
- free use of Internet for basic office work
- possibility of using secretarial services, copier, printer
- consulting and organisational help under the mentorship of the Chamber and Krug (Croatian association of businesswomen Krug – branch of Split)
- business assistance that Chamber can provide by sharing information, contacts etc.
- possibility of promotion, presentation on the Chambers website and in media.

The incubator is designed for women entrepreneurs:

- that have established or will establish a company in the current year
- that are employed in the company and have 100% or majority company ownership
- whose company headquarters is in Split-Dalmatia County.

Priority is given to candidates that: operate in accordance with the Split-Dalmatia County Development Strategy, perform an activity that is not, or is poorly represented in the County, perform an activity that facilitates business activity for women entrepreneurs or are developing a new product/service.



Gender Equality Certification System

The 'Gender Equality Certification System' is an initiative of the Italian National Recovery and Resilience Plan (PNRR), under the auspices of the department for equal opportunities of the Presidency of the Council of Ministers. It aims at accompanying and incentivising Italian enterprises to adopt appropriate measures to reduce the gender gap in the areas that are most critical for the professional growth of women.

This certification system has been developed in line with the European priorities, to encourage the adoption of gender equality and women's empowerment policies at company level, and to improve women's access to the labour market, to leadership positions, and to work-life time harmonisation.

The certification, which is provided by accredited bodies, is issued to enterprises in line with the UNI/PdR125:2022 standard.

The UNI certification for gender equality defines the guidelines for a management system for gender equality (in particular, structuring and adopting a set of KPIs related to gender equality policies in businesses).

Under the agreement with the Department for Equal Opportunities, Unioncamere (the Italian Union of Chambers of Commerce) will support until 2026 around 1,000 Italian SMEs in the voluntary path towards gender equality certification.

This initiative will benefit of the assistance of the Italian Chambers of Commerce (currently 67) and the chamber network of Women's Entrepreneurship Committees (50 realities throughout the country), which will be committed to the promotion of women's entrepreneurship by providing free accompaniment and technical-consultancy services, and by bearing the costs of certification.



Guide to a happy future for aspiring women entrepreneurs

The Chamber of commerce of Bolzano, through its local women entrepreneurship committee, has issued in 2021 an informative brochure, named Guide to a happy future for aspiring women entrepreneurs (Guida per un futuro sereno per aspiranti imprenditrici), aimed at supporting women who are willing to create an enterprise to become more knowledgeable when it comes to financial education and complimentary social security.

This guide is not only share with aspiring entrepreneurs during events and mentoring activities, but also distributed among students at schools.

The aim is to offer a general overview of important topics such as economic management, savings, investments and supplementary pensions to encourage young freelancers to fill gaps in their knowledge and to awaken their interest in financial topics.

The guide takes into consideration important aspects of entrepreneurial everyday life, focusing on the financial situation of women who work as freelancers, therefore supplementary pensions are also explained in detail. Furthermore, it is necessary to encourage young female entrepreneurs to get in touch with the services listed in the guide, in order to be able to deal with the issue of economic management in a proactive and aware way.

Leadership Accelerator for Women



The Leadership Accelerator for Women was kicked off by Estonian Chamber of Commerce and Industry in January 2023. It lasts 6 months and the main focus of it is to increase the argumentation skills of female leaders. This is done by biweekly argumentation training run by the SpeakSmart Social enterprise.

The programme has voluntary parts as well- monthly meetings with managers, voluntary participation on Female leaders round table and virtual masterminds. As a result of all these activities, Female leaders will be equipped with skillset to apply for top level management positions.

The programme is partly self-funded by participants and partly funded by sponsors: TELIA Estonia, Canadian Embassy in Estonia and Swedish Embassy in Estonia. Short video with English subtitles with participants can be found [here](#).

In total 120 applications were received, and 25 entrepreneurs took part in the activities.



Women Writing the Future

The Project on Women Writing the Future has been launched in 2017 by The Union of Chambers and Commodity Exchanges of Turkey (TOBB) and Turkcell. It aims at providing training for women in order for them to develop mobile applications and increase the employment capacity of women in the software field.

659 women who received face to face training qualified to participate in the project developing process with 320 projects. Participants realised their projects under Turkcell's technical consultancy and also received support from TOBB mentors on the applicability and commercialisation of ideas. The project ended with a ceremony during which the three most interesting ideas were selected to receive funding.

As a result of increasing demands, the project was re-launched in 2019 in 24 Turkish provinces.

An example of a winning project is the Otizmo software, which was awarded the first prize, enables to identify autism in case of suspicion through the signals coming from a wearable device.

The Women Writing the Future project continued with the Climate Idea Marathon, where women were given support to produce technological solutions for climate change, in the fields of Efficient and Renewable Use of Energy, Waste Management, Carbon Footprint Management and Sustainable Agriculture.

ZUKUNFT. FRAUEN

Das Führungskräfteprogramm



Zukunft Frauen

The programme Zukunft Frauen has been launched in 2010 by the Austrian Federal Economic Chamber, together with the Austrian Ministry for Labour and Economic Affairs and the Federation of Austrian Industries, to tackle the under-representation of women not only in the highest management positions, but in decision-making positions in general.

Women in management positions who are potential candidates for top management, board of directors or supervisory board positions, but also self-employed women in managerial positions, can apply.

The objectives of the programme are

- establish more women in management and supervisory board positions
- make leadership positions more attractive for women
- motivate and empower women to seek and apply for higher positions
- create a network of female managers who are role models in public

- achieve an economic advantage for Austrian companies through more women at the top
- raise awareness of companies and decision-makers to this topic

Participants take part in training modules touching different aspects: communication tools, legal aspects of supervisory boards, media training, accounting for management, negotiating skills etc.

The programme is currently at its 22nd edition, having provided trainings to more than 470 women. The programme is complemented by a database which facilitates the search for potential candidates for supervisory management positions.



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