

SUPPORT FOR FEMALE ENTREPRENEURS

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The Association of Female Entrepreneurs is a civil association established in 2001. Its main objective is to support activities aimed at business development and job creation in individual Slovak regions, focusing on small enterprises led by women and families. The Association is a member and co-founder of the Women's Forum 2000 association consisting of 32 non-governmental organisations and the Women's Lobby of Slovakia.

The Association is represented at the highest bodies in both organisations.

It closely cooperates with the National Agency for Development of Small and Medium Enterprises, the Ministry of Labour, Social Affairs and Family of the SR, the Centre for Work and Family Studies, the Slovak National Centre for Human Rights, and the Slovak Guarantee and Development Bank.

Every woman older than 18 years of age, who is an entrepreneur or is planning to start her own business, is eligible for membership in the Association of Female Entrepreneurs. Since its establishment, the Association has provided advice to some 4 200 women and has helped 327 of them to start their own businesses. The Association has prepared several support programmes for its members.

Businesswomen's Clubs

The regular monthly club meetings are focused on the provision of business consulting services. Furthermore, each meeting is dedicated to a specific topic. They are aimed at the exchange of experience, mutual support, and assistance. The clubs are led by business experts – representatives of the Association of Female Entrepreneurs, the National Agency for the Development of Small and Medium Enterprises, the Slovak Guarantee and Development Bank, successful businesswomen, representatives of employment agencies, and others. The clubs are open to all interested persons.

Consulting services

The Association provides consulting services via businesswomen's clubs and in the form of individual consultations. In addition, advice is provided free of charge via its www.zzvp.sk web site, where interested persons can find all contact information.

Education

Since 2006, the Association has organised training sessions entitled "How to start your own business" in cooperation with the F. A. M. E. consulting and education company.

Competition Family-Friendly Employer

Under the organisational patronage of the Association, the Ministry of Labour, Social Affairs and Family regularly holds a public competition aimed at stimulating employers to create a family-friendly environment and balance between work and private life, while providing a new culture, flexibility, justice and equal opportunities. The ceremonial publication of the competition winners takes place in May, on International Family Day.

Projects

The Association organises one or two projects every year aimed at promoting business and job creation. At present, the project entitled The Family-Friendly and Gender Equality Promoting Employer, which is co-financed by the European Social Fund and builds on the Family-Friendly Employer competition, is being completed. The project monitors and analyses the environment created by employers and, consequently, motivates employers to promote family-friendly activities and to equalise the employment status of women and men. This is done by an information campaign, seminars and the presentation of good practices from Slovakia and abroad.

Information trips abroad

The Association organises study trips abroad focused on studying the business environment in individual countries and involving meetings with entrepreneurs and visits to selected companies. The Association organised a business trip to Denmark in 2005, an info tour to Tyrol, Austria, focused on tourism, in May 2006, and, within the Family-Friendly Employer project, a working visit to Bonn and Dusseldorf, Germany, in October 2006.

A speciality – work in Denmark

Work abroad programmes have expanded the activities of the Association of Female Entrepreneurs. The Association provides assistance services to its clients by facilitating their search for jobs and adapting to a new environment. Special focus is placed on a personal and individual approach to each woman who is looking for work, the flexibility of Association workers in solving problems, assisting clients with difficulties, and on the comprehensive provision of quality services. Since its creation, the Association of Female Entrepreneurs has striven to adhere to its credo: ***"We are here to prove that we are able to benefit from our talent, responsibility and invention. And we are here to help ourselves and to improve the role of women in the business world. We would be glad to welcome you to our community."***