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EmpowerInclusive





Introduction



Empowering women in business has been a focal point in North Macedonia's entrepreneurial landscape. The Association of Business Women, an NGO established in 2010, actively promotes female entrepreneurship by collaborating with the government, NGOs, and the private sector. Their initiatives include organizing forums, B2B meetings, and tailored training sessions to enhance the visibility and capabilities of women entrepreneurs. They also provide mentorship programs and lobby for better support and conditions for women in business. As a result, the association now boasts over 300 active women entrepreneur members, significantly contributing to the nation's economic development.



Key factors

Empowering women in business has been a key focus in North Macedonia's entrepreneurial landscape, with organizations like the Association of Business Women playing a crucial role. Several key factors contribute to the success of these initiatives, ensuring that women entrepreneurs receive the support they need to thrive.

1. Strong Institutional Support & Advocacy

- The Association of Business Women actively collaborates with the government, NGOs, and private sector to advocate for policies that create a more inclusive business environment.
- By lobbying for better financial support, regulatory reforms, and gender-inclusive policies, the association helps to remove barriers that women face in starting and growing businesses.

2. Access to Training & Capacity Building

- Tailored training programs equip women with essential business skills, from financial management and marketing to leadership and digital transformation.
- These sessions help entrepreneurs increase competitiveness and adapt to changing market conditions.

3. Networking & Business Connections

- Forums and B2B meetings create opportunities for women entrepreneurs to connect, collaborate, and form strategic partnerships.
- A strong network fosters knowledge-sharing and increases market access, helping businesses expand their reach.

4. Mentorship & Role Models

- Mentorship programs pair experienced businesswomen with aspiring entrepreneurs, providing guidance, motivation, and professional development support.
- The presence of successful female role models inspires more women to pursue entrepreneurship and overcome challenges.

The growth of women's empowerment in business has been a significant focus in North Macedonia's entrepreneurial landscape. Since its establishment in 2010, the Association of Business Women has played a crucial role in promoting female entrepreneurship by working closely with the government, NGOs, and the private sector. Through various initiatives, the association has created opportunities for women to develop their businesses and gain greater recognition in the market.

One of the key aspects of this growth has been the organization of forums, B2B meetings, and specialized training sessions aimed at enhancing the visibility and capabilities of women entrepreneurs. These events provide essential knowledge, skills, and networking opportunities, enabling female business owners to expand their reach and strengthen their market presence. Additionally, the association has developed mentorship programs that connect aspiring entrepreneurs with experienced businesswomen, fostering guidance, support, and motivation.

Beyond providing direct support to entrepreneurs, the association also engages in lobbying efforts to advocate for better policies and conditions that benefit women in business. By addressing challenges such as access to funding, market opportunities, and business regulations, they create a more supportive and inclusive environment for female entrepreneurs.

As a result of these efforts, the association has grown significantly, now boasting over 300 active women entrepreneur members. Their collective contributions have had a profound impact on the country's economic development, demonstrating the power of targeted support, advocacy, and community-building in fostering sustainable growth for women in business.



The introduction of mentorship programs has further amplified the impact, allowing experienced businesswomen to guide and support aspiring female entrepreneurs. This exchange of knowledge and expertise has led to greater confidence, resilience, and long-term success among women-led businesses. Additionally, the association's advocacy efforts have resulted in improved conditions and support for women in business, helping to remove barriers related to funding, regulations, and societal perceptions.

As a direct result of these initiatives, the association now has over 300 active women entrepreneur members who are making significant contributions to the national economy. Their businesses are not only creating jobs and driving innovation but also setting an example for future generations of women in business. The ongoing efforts of the association and its partners continue to strengthen the role of female entrepreneurs, reinforcing the idea that women's economic empowerment is a key driver of sustainable growth and social progress in North Macedonia.

Challenges



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One of the primary challenges is the lack of adequate funding and investment opportunities tailored for women entrepreneurs. Many female-led businesses struggle to secure financial support due to restrictive lending practices and a lack of awareness about available funding options. This financial gap often prevents women from scaling their businesses or even launching them in the first place. Additionally, gender biases and cultural expectations continue to present barriers, as entrepreneurship is still often perceived as a male-dominated field. Women entrepreneurs frequently face skepticism from investors, business partners, and even customers, which can limit their opportunities and growth.

Another significant challenge lies in balancing professional and personal responsibilities. Many women entrepreneurs find it difficult to manage their businesses while also meeting family and social expectations. The absence of adequate support systems, such as accessible childcare and family-friendly business policies, further complicates this balance. Moreover, women often have limited access to strong business networks, which are crucial for gaining mentorship, strategic partnerships, and market opportunities. Although the Association of Business Women organizes networking events, forums, and B2B meetings to bridge this gap, many women still find it challenging to integrate into mainstream business circles.

In addition to these structural and societal barriers, regulatory and policy-related obstacles also pose challenges. While there have been improvements in gender-inclusive policies, bureaucratic hurdles and a lack of targeted support for women entrepreneurs still exist. Many government programs do not specifically address the unique needs of female-led businesses, making it difficult for women to navigate the regulatory landscape effectively. Despite these challenges, the Association of Business Women continues to make strides in advocating for better conditions, providing mentorship programs, and raising awareness about the importance of female entrepreneurship. With over 300 active women entrepreneur members, the association has contributed significantly to North Macedonia's economic development. However, ongoing efforts are needed to address financial, cultural, and structural challenges to ensure that women entrepreneurs receive the support necessary to thrive in a competitive business environment.