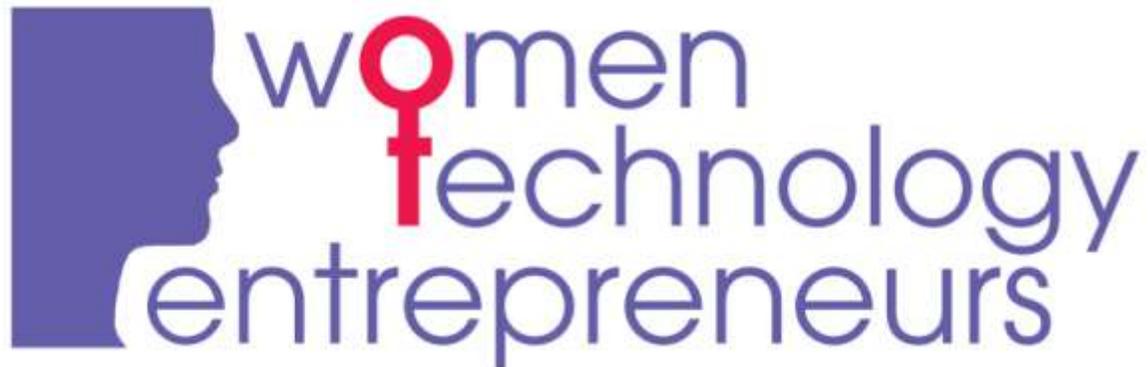




Education and Culture DG

Lifelong Learning Programme



Final Valorisation Conference

2nd December 2011
Malta

Report prepared by Meath Partnership
Secretariat

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With the support of the Lifelong Learning Programme of the European Union.

Background to the WTE Valorisation Final Conference

Women Technology Entrepreneurs is an EU Lifelong Learning Programme funded under Leonardo Da Vinci and over a period of two years from 2010 to 2011; the project consortium presenting 8 European countries developed an online training programme focused on the needs of rurally-based nascent and early start female entrepreneurs. The training programme and associated resources bring together core elements of entrepreneurship training sprinkled with key aspects of technology curricula and available for free once registered on www.wteche.eu. WTE offers a targeted and informative learning experience for female entrepreneurs assisting them to explore, understand and exploit technology for the benefit of their business whilst building key skills in terms of online marketing, web design, business management, communication and business networking.

The dissemination process instigated at the project outset and the involvement of key sectoral representatives in Stakeholder Networks throughout the project research, design and testing phases and public events and dissemination seminars held in each participating country provided an excellent platform for the future exploitation of results developed under this Project. The Final Valorisation Conference titled “*Get your Business Moving with Women Technology Entrepreneurs*” which marked the end of the project development phase, took place on Friday, 2nd December 2011 in Malta and this report features and documents the key highlights and findings of the Conference.

The Conference was well attended by in excess of 100 delegates from 10 European countries. The majority represented female entrepreneurs with VET policy makers, VET providers and tutors and women’s business organisations also in attendance. Each project partner invited one influential speaker to address the conference ensuring that the event had a truly international perspective and a significant policy impact. Invited speakers included representatives of education policy makers, VET senior management, women entrepreneurs and target group members. This report follows the conference schedule.

For information purposes: Ms. Jennifer Land acted as conference rapporteur on behalf of the project team. FWE from past experience and being the local organisation acted as conference organiser and host. The views reported herein are those of the conference participants and not those of the European Commission.

Opening the conference, Maryrose Francica of the Foundation for Women Entrepreneurs welcomed all delegates and outlined the purpose and format of the day. It was important that the event was seen as a valuable networking opportunity for all present as well as showcasing, launching and promoting the resources and tools developed as part of the Project.

WTE Final Valorisation Conference Report

It was a privilege for the Project Consortium that Dr Jason Azzopardi, Parliamentary Secretary with the Ministry of Finance, the Economy and Investment attended and addressed the conference.

Officially opening the Conference, Dr. Azzopardi stated that the EU Lifelong Learning Programme enriches the experience and the engagement of all concerned, welcomed the Women Technology Entrepreneurs initiative and the contribution of all foreign partners.

Dr. Azzopardi elaborated in the actions and supports that the Maltese Government had recently put in place to foster entrepreneurship, and stated that female entrepreneurship was high on the national agenda and reiterated his support for the Project and the work of FWE. He concluded by stressing the valuable characteristic of entrepreneurs, those of resilience, initiative and commitment and encouraged those present not to take themselves or their contribution for granted stating that many were the “unsung heroes of the economy”.

Following a rapturous round of applause, Dr. Azzopardi departed and all present were treated to a unique Belly Dancing experience. The aim of this exercise was to “release your inner spirit and have fun” acting as an ice breaker and networking activity. All delegates were given a belly dancing skirt and invited to participate in a 15mins routine lead by an experienced dancer.



Presenting WTE by the Project Consortium

Following a short refreshment break, the project consortium led by Angele Giuliano introduced the Women Technology Entrepreneurs project, using a chat show style format. Each Partner participated in this session elaborating on various aspects of the project from initial idea, through to the approach adopted, module selection, research conducted, testing of products, learning supports available to finally details on how to register for the training programme. A copy of the presentation is attached to the report.





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Be Inspired: Mr Paul Gauci

Once the project was introduced and the questions answered from conference participants, Angele introduced Mr. Paul Gauci, a motivational speaker and business mentor who shared many words of wisdom and inspirational stories and examples of successful enterprises led by females from Malta and across Europe. His 3 mottos were clearly “if it is to be – it is up to me”, “get good, get better and be the best” and finally “Don’t just think it, ink it! And then act on it”. It was evident from the response levels and number of questions that the audience greatly valued the input of Mr Gauci and took on board many of his insights and recommendations.



Get the Inside Track: Facilitated Q&A session with panel of Female Entrepreneurs: Maltese and European Female entrepreneurs

Following his motivational input, Paul facilitated a Q&A session with our panel of Female Entrepreneurs. He started the session by introducing each entrepreneur and asking them to tell of their story on becoming female entrepreneurs. This session was fascinating and dynamic and clearly highlighted the diversity of opportunities seized upon by each entrepreneur, their motivations for pursuing self-employment and the challenges they faced along the way. Each entrepreneur spoke of their involvement in the WTE training programme and outlined some of their favourite and most valuable elements of the programme based on their experience. This session was followed by a 45 minute plenary Questions and Answers session.



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WTE Final Valorisation Conference Report

In summary, the key learning and advice given from the Panel of EU Entrepreneurs is detailed below (verbatim):

- Customer's first – go the extra mile and give them something extra
- Communicate with your customer – personal touch is very important
- Have the energy and courage to just do it – there is never a perfect time to take the leap
- Try, Try, Try again – perseverance and patience are key
- Ask for help – don't be afraid or ashamed: first step is the most important
- You can make lots of mistakes - but keep going
- Look out for what is around: grants, supports, assistance
- Listening gives you fuel and energy for your business
- Identify opportunities for co-operative working with our female entrepreneurs, once its goal oriented and business focussed.

Positive Message: Final Thoughts - Zivile Nakciuniene & Chiara Assirelli Pandolfi

At 1.30pm, Zivile and Chiara provided the closing remarks of the conference, summing up the key points from the day's events and reminding all present to visit www.wteche.eu to avail of the support.

At the close of the Conference a networking lunch was provided and a bank of laptops set up at the venue to facilitate on the day registration.