



# **WOMEN ENTREPRENEURS IN RURAL TOURISM**

## **WERT**

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## The role of women in rural tourism



The role of women in rural tourism has been always very important

Women were asked to perform tasks that traditionally belonged to their realm:

- Taking care of clients' bedding and food
- Preparing home-made delicacies
- Producing traditional handicrafts

Women also de facto managed agro-tourism businesses although the man of the house was legally the owner

Women owners of agro-tourism businesses often had a difficult time with the banks

## 1. Laivi

- Supervised a sizeable investment and runs it
- Places great emphasis on quality of services, food, environment, accommodation
- Wrote a book about local food (Seto recipes)
- Does not believe that her business can make a profit
- Rather she sees it as a social enterprise, providing employment to a number of local people
- Seems to be at a loss with marketing her agro-tourism unit

# Examples of women entrepreneurs



## 1. Laivi



### 2. Stavroula

- Made her village known by opening a creperie! her village in north western Greece, is one hour's drive from the nearest town, up in the mountains
- By attracting visitors she stimulated the economy of the village – the visitors bought local products and had meals in local tavernas
- She was elected Councillor
- She was forced to close her creperie by her landlady who asked for an exorbitant rent!
- She won a subsidy from LEADER and built a guesthouse, despite problems with the banks – who do not trust women!
- Did not succeed to market her guesthouse

# Entrepreneur case study





## Cooperatives in Greece



Rural women in Greece had traditionally no motives or opportunities to take business initiatives of their own

Women's cooperatives provided a promising alternative to women's entrepreneurship in rural areas

After 1981, the cooperative movement in rural areas gained ground, supported by the policies of the socialist government

In the 1990s more cooperatives were formed, supported by funds from LEADER or the Community Support Framework (CSF) measures for the integrated development of rural areas

In the 21st century, EQUAL helped further to finance some of these cooperatives or set up new ones.

109 registered women's co-operatives in Greece, active in agro-tourism, traditional handicrafts and food products

## **Problems experienced**

Confusion created by the “top down” rather than “bottom up” approach of their establishment

The average age is high

Financial problems appeared, after the public subsidy run out

Business skills, marketing and financial management skills are generally lacking

Not prepared to face strong competition



## Benefits gained

Supplementary income contributed to fragile family economies

Economic activity and social capital generated for local development

Pioneers in organic food and preservation of rural culture

Sustenance of traditional skills that are at risk of extinction

Enhanced role of women in their wider community

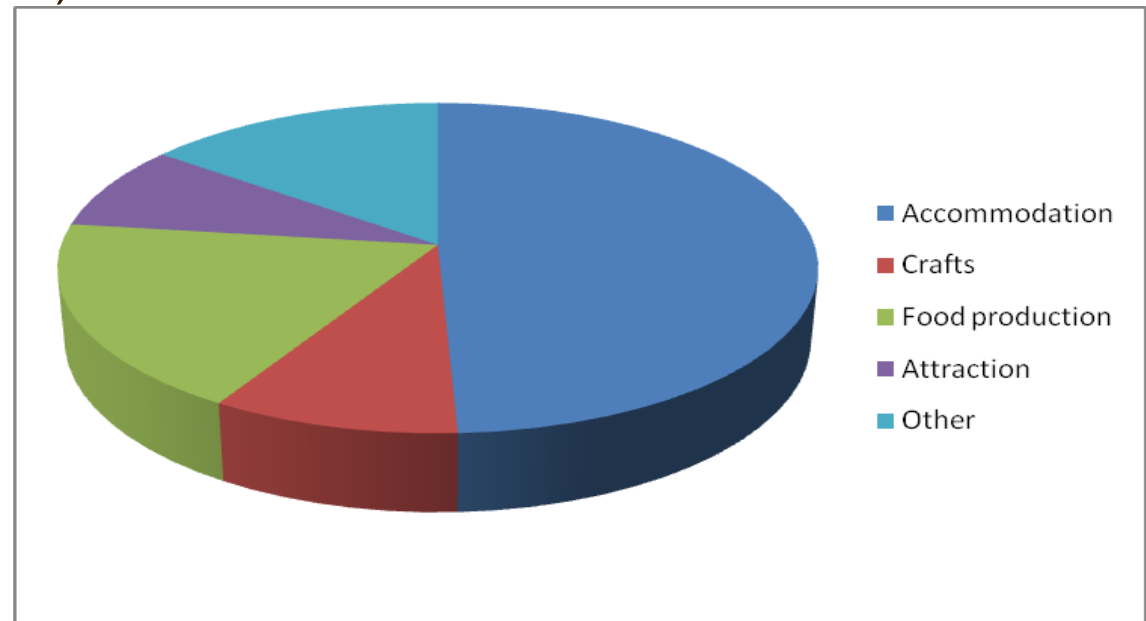
Women improved their self-esteem and self confidence

## Who are the women entrepreneurs?

### The WERT survey

157 women were surveyed in 6 countries. These women either managed their enterprises or a cooperative

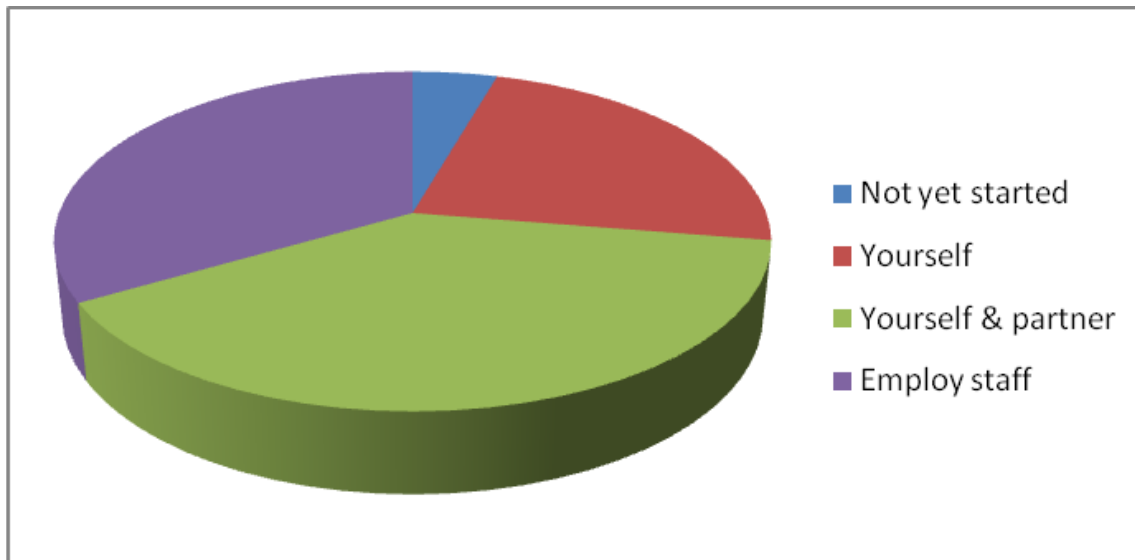
- accommodation - most widely represented (101)
- food production (38)
- crafts (19)
- attractions (17)
- 'other' (30).



## Who are the women entrepreneurs?



- 30% worked with the family
- 25% employed staff,
- 18% worked on their own
- 4% had not yet started their business



## What skills they need



Training would be useful	Mean (1=not useful, 5=very useful)
How to market your business and develop your product	4.01
Using computers and the internet for marketing – websites, search engine optimisation	3.81
Financial management e.g. sources of finance, cash flow, profit & loss, pricing	3.78
Developing a sustainable rural tourism business	3.70



## What skills they need



Developing a tourist business which is accessible to all	3.66
Legal aspects - finding out about regulations	3.65
Developing a quality customer service	3.63
Ability to diversify	3.61
Business planning and research	3.56
Cultural awareness and foreign languages	3.56

## What skills they need



### **Skill needs differ between countries**

- Cultural awareness and foreign languages received very high scores in Spain and Cyprus
- Making government authorities more aware of current conditions in rural tourism was an issue in Spain and Greece
- Estonians suggested creativity training and mentor programmes.
- In Cyprus and Spain building confidence and networking were seen as key training needs

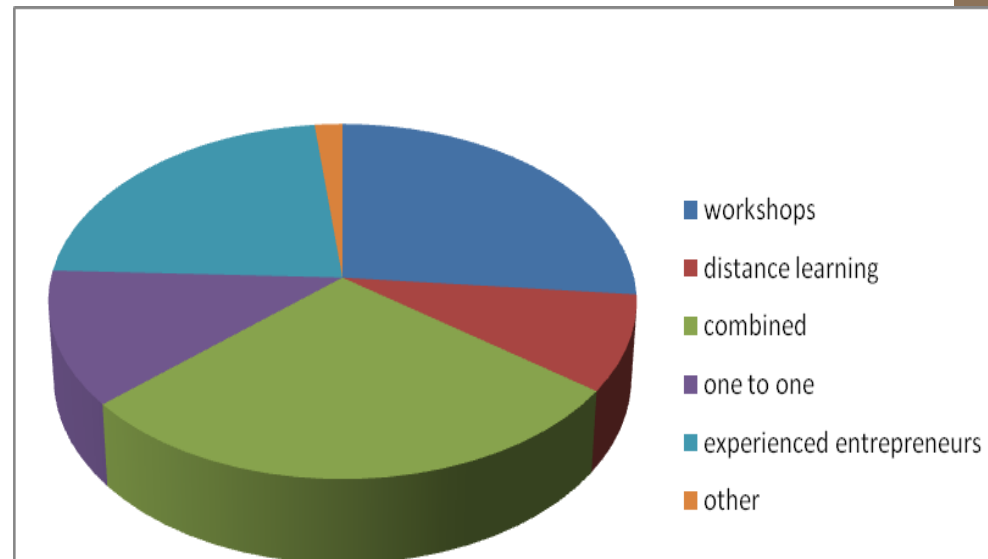
## What kind of training they prefer



## What kind of training they prefer



- training should be local, travel time up to one hour
- blended learning (workshops and distance learning combined) was the most popular (29%)
- learning from experienced entrepreneurs (23%)
- workshops (27%)
- coaching was favoured by new entrepreneurs
- online learning was the least popular – only appreciated by those living in remote areas





### **25 women entrepreneurs took part in two workshops**

1. Marketing topics attracted most interest
2. Practical example: a marketing plan was composed by all the participants on behalf of one of them who planned to start a new business – this was greatly enjoyed!
3. Interactive learning – had the most lasting effect
4. A “collective game” was introduced by the teacher asking the question: what incentives would you give to your clients under the present crisis, to minimise your loss?
5. Cooperation between participants was decided as a result of the game
6. The game gave the participants an example of how their individual decisions affect the development of their community and their area.



### What was most appreciated by the participants

1. Learned about the value of social networking as a marketing tool
2. The presence of so many different views and experiences was by itself instructive
3. The discussion among participants was the best part – received answers and found solutions
4. The teacher operated as a catalyst in the group
5. The swot analysis was important – you can see what you want to do and what you can do
6. Met other interesting and energetic women – cooperation opportunities emerged

# Conclusions



- Women entrepreneurs lack essential entrepreneurial skills
- The majority are aware that they need these skills and they openly accept the lack of marketing skills
- Despite the hopes built on elearning, face-to-face workshop-training seems to be the most effective method of training
- Networking, exchange of experiences, cooperation have a high value and must be promoted