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*A.I. Zablotskaya*  
*Belarus State Economic University*  
*Republic of Belarus, Minsk*  
*zi.anastasiya@gmail.com*  
**O.A. Morozevich**  
*Belarus State Economic University*  
*Republic of Belarus, Minsk*  
*moroa@yandex.ru*  
**S. Cardim**  
*Polytechnic Institute of Braganca*  
*Portugal, Braganca*  
*sofiacardim@ipb.pt*

## **INNOVATION, ENTREPRENEURSHIP AND GENDER: A COMPARATIVE ANALYSIS BETWEEN BELARUS AND PORTUGAL**

*Заблоцкая А.И.* Белорусский государственный экономический университет, Республика Беларусь, Минск; *Морозевич О.А.* Белорусский государственный экономический университет, Республика Беларусь, Минск; *Кардим С.* Политехнический институт Брагансы, Португалия, Браганса.

**ИННОВАЦИИ, ПРЕДПРИНИМАТЕЛЬСТВО И ГЕНДЕР:  
СРАВНИТЕЛЬНЫЙ АНАЛИЗ МЕЖДУ БЕЛАРУСЬЮ И ПОРТУГАЛИЕЙ.** В настоящее время с постоянным развитием технологических инноваций и рыночных условий растет число компаний и бизнеса. Тем не менее, число предприятий, возглавляемых или принадлежащих женщинам, несмотря на рост инициатив, политических программ и ресурсов, направленных на поощрение и развитие женского предпринимательства, несравнимо с бизнесом, который возглавляют или принадлежит мужчинам. Важнейшей целью этого исследования является продвижение существующих знаний и информации об инновациях и женском предпринимательстве путем анализа различных гендерных перспектив, практики и

*форм инноваций среди владельцев малых и средних предприятий (МСП) в Португалии и Республике Беларусь, а также изучения различий между этими двумя странами.*

КЛЮЧЕВЫЕ СЛОВА: инновации; предпринимательство; гендер; компании; менеджмент; Португалия; Республика Беларусь.

*Currently with the constant development of technological innovation and the market conditions, the number of companies and business is increasing. However, the number of business headed or owned by women, even there is an increment in the initiatives, policies, and resources designed to promote and develop women's entrepreneurship is not similar to a number of business headed or owned by men. The crucial aim of this research is to advance existing knowledge and information on innovation and women's entrepreneurship by analysing different gender perspectives, practices and forms of innovation among the owners of small and medium-sized enterprises (SME), in Portugal and in Republic of Belarus, and furthermore, to investigate these differences between these two countries.*

KEY WORDS: innovation; entrepreneurship; gender; companies; management; Portugal; Republic of Belarus.

The issue of gender diversity has been on the agenda in business circles for many years. In scientific literature, it is noted that the structure of modern society remains patriarchal: men, who are highly paid and prestigious, are usually engaged in work. Statistics show that in most countries in the world a woman with the same type of work gets less.

Access to professional activities and careers immeasurably increased for women compared to the beginning of the twentieth century. However, it still has a quantitative dimension and often does not lead to the necessary qualitative shifts. For instance, the report of the McKinsey Global Institute “Women Matter: Time to accelerate – Ten years of insights into gender diversity” (2017) gives an evidence that the gender inequality still exists. [1]

The main objective of this study is to understand and compare the entrepreneurial profile and some characteristics among Portuguese women and Belarusian women. Regarding the goal there were introduced 8 additional research questions:

- Question 1: Do higher education has a positive impact on business /entrepreneurial activities?
- Question 2: Does previous professional experience has a positive impact on the conduct of entrepreneurial activities?
- Question 3: Does striving for financial independence is the main factor for starting an entrepreneurial activity?

Question 4: Is it usually more difficult for women to succeed in business than for men because of the need to do household duties and solve family problems?

Question 5: Is there any discrimination based on gender when appointing to top-management positions?

Question 6: Do women entrepreneurs need additional programs/measures to support their business?

Question 7: Does participation in business associations and communities help in the conduct of business?

Question 8: Do women implement innovations (innovative projects) in their company?

The first step of the research was to study the historical background of women, or other words, women perception during the last century in both countries. The results of the research introduced below in the Table 1.

**Table 1 – Historical background of women in Belarus and Portugal during the last century**

Field	Belarus	Portugal
Women perception/ family	- Housekeeper with responsibilities of taking care of her husband and children - Secondary position in the society	- Family is the main nucleus of the state - The individuality exists only in the family
Education	- High level of illiteracy - Separate education of boys and girls	- High level of illiteracy - Schooling was not accessible to all
Work	- Different physical type of work that didn't require physical activity - There were practically no women in the top party leadership and in the government	- Could work outside the house or agricultural field for self-consumption
Legislation rights	- Reduction in rights: marriage, abortion divorce	- Reduction in rights: prohibition to vote -Social policies: protection of motherhood and defending the family
Women social organizations	- Committee of Soviet women	- MP - Portuguese Youth - MPF - Women's Portuguese Youth - OMEN - The Work of the Mothers

The gender inequality in Belarus has their roots from the Soviet Period. The usual and normal image of Soviet woman was a housekeeper with responsibilities of taking care of her husband and children. Moreover, women were obliged to work, and often on physically hard and harmful. It was propagated as "normal and natural" in numerous Soviet films, books and other mass media. [2]

Education was on the low level and illiteracy – on the high level. There were practically no women in the top party leadership and commonly in the government [4].

During this time in Portugal family was the main nucleus of the state and the individuality existed only in the family. Women were gradually losing rights, although sometimes in an underhanded form. For example, as far as voting rights are concerned, women with secondary education had the right to vote, contrary to men, who could vote, irrespective of their level of education, and if they only knew how to read and write [3]. Effectively, the Regime proclaimed not only the importance of the family, but also the importance of rurality, since schooling was not accessible to all, and the deteriorating economic and social conditions did not always allow to all children access to school, this being a privilege of some. Lack of schooling leads to a lack of knowledge, and the lack of knowledge makes people do not question what is imposed on them, accept them more easily and do not revolt.

The second step was research based on the interviews. The survey consisted of 40 questions that were linked to the research goal. This research was conducted in Belarus and Portugal between December 2017 and May 2018. The data was collected and analysed based on answers of eight female entrepreneurs (four from each country) who were chosen with use of random sampling. The script of the given research covers a broad range of topics including such topics as an impact of education, work and family, previous working experience, motivation and innovation on starting entrepreneurial activity between women.

It was used the non-probabilistic sampling technique. The data was collected in the three-stage procedure. In the first stage it was ascertaining and looking for female entrepreneurs willing to respond the questions; the second stage included interview that was conducted by mail; on the third stage the answers were receiving and collecting for analysis. All interviews were conducted in the local languages.

Participants and their companies were selected according to the following criteria:

- The companies must be registered in Portugal or in the Republic of Belarus (four cases in each country);

□ Participants must be female entrepreneurs and/or be directly linked to the top management of companies with the aforementioned characteristics;

□ Participants must be willing to participate in the study.

Table 2 introduces the responses collected from the female entrepreneurs.

**Table 2 – Comparative analysis of results of gender equality in entrepreneurship and innovation in Belarus and Portugal**

<b>№</b>	<b>Belarus</b>	<b>Portugal</b>
<b>Q1</b>	Higher education doesn't have a positive impact on business /entrepreneurial activities.	Higher education has a positive impact on business /entrepreneurial activities.
<b>Q2</b>	All the respondents declared that their previous professional experience doesn't have a positive impact on the conduct of entrepreneurial activities	All the entrepreneurs approved that previous professional experience has a positive impact on the conduct of entrepreneurial activities
<b>Q3</b>	The main motivation to start business became "The desire for self-realization, the implementation of their business ideas"	Most of the Portuguese respondents declared the following motivation "The desire for self-realization, the implementation of their business ideas"
<b>Q4</b>	They do not support the idea: "it's usually more difficult to succeed in business than men because of the need to do household duties and solve family problems	All the participants refused the stereotype that it's usually more difficult to succeed in business than men because of the need to do household duties and solve family problems".
<b>Q5</b>	All the women considered that in their country there isn't any discrimination based on gender when appointing to top-management positions.	Three out of four managers said there is a discrimination based on gender when appointing to top-management positions in their country.
<b>Q6</b>	The respondents said that in Belarus women entrepreneurs don't need additional programs/measures to support their business.	Most participants refused the fact that entrepreneur in Portugal needs additional programs/measures to support their business.
<b>Q7</b>	The participation in business associations helps to do the business.	The respondents, who participate in business associations, see the positive effect on business activities.

End of the table 2

<b>Q8</b>	Two entrepreneurs expressed that they implement innovations in their company and it positively affects their companies` activity.	Only one out of four applies innovations in the business and it gives advantages for the company.
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The analysis made after getting all the responses provided to build the common picture and level of women business and innovation activity in the country and compare results between Portugal and Belarus:

- the idea of higher education is different from Portuguese and Belarus participants since Belarussian participants consider that higher education doesn't have a positive impact on business and on entrepreneurial activities. However, both find important to have additional education or training, to broaden their knowledge in the managerial field;

- the previous professional experience has a positive impact on Portuguese participants when Belarussian respondents expressed negative position and didn't find any advantages in doing their business;

- the main motivation for starting a business is a desire of self-realization, the implementation of their business ideas. The motivation "Striving for financial independence" took the second place only;

- during the interview, it turned out that the family does not interfere in business activities and does not distract them from work, on the contrary, their business spends a lot of time and energy and often brings harm to family and personal life;

- in the whole according to the answers of the interview, the discrimination based on gender inequality in entrepreneurial activities still exists. Moreover, the Portuguese respondents actively supported the opinion that there is gender inequality when appointing to a top-management positions;

- the implementation of special supplementary programs regarding financial, administrative, informational and training support can contribute to the growth of the number of enterprises established by women and improve the business activity of existing companies;

- the members of business association reviewed that participation in such entrepreneurial organizations simplify to do their business in the field of education, finance and provide a lot of useful business information;

– innovative activities have a positive impact in doing business: attract new customers and consequently contribute the profit growth.

However, it should be noted that this work has some limitations in the research and performed analysis. Firstly, these limitations include a small number of responders. There were interviewed only eight entrepreneurs (four from each country were randomly chosen). There are hesitations relatively to understanding the whole picture of the women-owned enterprises in the country. Secondly, the lack of answers or shortage explanation of the response to some questions of the representatives of the companies may decrease the effectiveness of the research.

The best way to improve women entrepreneurial activity is to implement special business financial and educational programs. For instance, give additional benefits for women entrepreneurs in certain business areas, make special conditions for attracting financing for women entrepreneurs and provide women entrepreneurs with information of opening their own business and to open access to study. Additionally, it's clear from the responses that participation in special business association gives plenty of advantages such as free educational training for employees, financial support and helps in solving some business problematic issues.

At present, more attention is paid to such a trend as gender equality in all spheres of life, and a particular attention is paid to the consideration of women as entrepreneurs and innovators. However, despite several events carried out by special business associations, educational programs, legislative changes, conventions and several other measures that contribute to the disclosure of the potential of women as an undertaking, gender inequalities persist in the world.

Quite often, researchers who study the gender aspect argue that companies run by women are less successful than men-led companies.

However, in several studies that have been conducted on the issue of women as entrepreneurs and innovators, it has been found that the presence of women among the owners of the company increases the likelihood of introducing innovations. Innovation is one of the most important potential sources of economic growth in both developed and developing countries. This leads to the conclusion that more active involvement of women in business can have a positive impact on the country's economic development.

The topic of women entrepreneurship and innovation is quite new, especially for Belarus. Based on the results received it is clear that the further research could be directed, first, on the development of special programs for increasing business and innovative activities among females. Secondly, creation of special business forums and association that will actively support women entrepreneurship and implementation of innovation in the country.

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***К.И. Краенкова***

*Белорусский государственный экономический университет  
Республика Беларусь, Минск  
Kristina-zhavrnk@rambler.ru*

## **РАЗВИТИЕ СОЦИАЛЬНОГО ПРЕДПРИНИМАТЕЛЬСТВА В РЕСПУБЛИКЕ БЕЛАРУСЬ**

*Krayenkova K.I. Belarus State Economic University, Republic of Belarus, Minsk.*

**DEVELOPMENT OF SOCIAL ENTREPRENEURSHIP IN THE REPUBLIC OF BELARUS.** Modern trends in the development of society, countries and their economic activity leads to the creation of new forms of business, which include social entrepreneurship. In the Republic of Belarus, the interest in social entrepreneurship has