

## Women Entrepreneurship in Croatia: Issues and Policies

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**Abstract :** Women entrepreneurship is often regarded as the unused economical potential in many countries, including Republic of Croatia. Although women represent a majority in the population, they are still a minority in the field of entrepreneurship and face many challenges in fulfilling their entrepreneurship potential. The reasons are often hidid in historical distorted perceptions about value, credibility, competitiveness, responsibility and knowledge which women have, or can have. This is significant for at least two reasons. First, in terms of global economic crisis, the economy needs more quality, more skilled and educated people willing to face entrepreneurial challenges and create new jobs, new opportunities and higher living standards. Second, in the entrepreneurial activity, women finally have a chance to highlight their own abilities, such as knowledge, relentless work, organizational skills, communication and negotiation skills, responsibility, flexibility, etc., in order to insure their economic independence, for a better social position, and to increase confidence and faith in their own abilities. This paper empirically analyses characteristics of women entrepreneurship in Croatia and conducted policies for it improvement. An empirical research was conducted with the goal of discovering real life experiences and attitudes of Croatian women entrepreneurs. Results show that Croatian women entrepreneurs are usually highly educated, have previous work experience and operate in service sector, due to lower need for start-up capital. The biggest obstacle on their entrepreneurial path represents government bureaucracy. Although the number of women entrepreneurs is rising today and the gap between male and women entrepreneurs in Croatia, as well as women entrepreneurship levels lower than the European average, we believe that there is still a long way to reach potential and successful women entrepreneurship development. Research showed that by breaking down the barriers as access to finance, education investments, knowledge, skills and confidence development, women will be able to accomplish more significant and more efficient entrepreneurial outcome.

**Keywords :** Croatia, policy, SMEs, women entrepreneurial strategy, women entrepreneurship

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