



1. Fruitful discussions at cross border meeting in Kristianstad, Sweden.
2. Yvonne Kievad, Levande Liv is one of the entrepreneurs in the cross border Success Team Eightpack.
3. Carmen Bauman, entrepreneur, Mecklenburg-Western Pomerania and Dr. Christiane Bannuscher, project partner Women into Business, Rostock.
4. Brigitte Thielk representative for equal rights in Rostock speaking at the opening conference in Rostock.
5. Laima Dockeviciene, project partner Rietavas Business Information Centre and Antanas Cerneckis, mayor of Rietavas.



Going abroad – connecting business potential across borders

Going abroad is a project amongst partners and associated organisations from Sweden, Germany, Lithuania and Poland. It is part-financed by the South Baltic Programme.

The project aims to promote female entrepreneurs in micro-enterprises to growth, by helping them tackle the problems associated with accessing new markets.

One of the means of achieving this is building cross-border networks in order to facilitate the steps to export and international trade.

The project is in line with the

European, national and regional strategies for development which highlight the importance of utilising the potentials in small and medium enterprises to create growth in society.

This potential for growth also has a gender dimension, since there are fewer women than men who start up and run a business.

Amongst women there may be many

successful entrepreneurs to be and it is this resource Going Abroad aims to target and support.

Thematic workshops

The crucial activities in the project are the development of a model for thematic workshops, the making of the success team handbook and the gender analysis of the present situation in Germany, Lithuania and Sweden in respect of labour market, entrepreneurship, cross border exchange in trade and business cooperation.



Conference on the entrepreneurs of the future in Rietavas, Lithuania

"It is pleasing and important that people come from other countries to evaluate the situation from a different perspective," said Mayor Antanas Cerneckis, opening the conference on entrepreneurship in the future, in Rietavas in Lithuania in February 2012.

Attending were a large number of local entrepreneurs, primarily women, and representatives from the project Going Abroad.

Rietavas is a small and nice city with around 10,000 inhabitants in western Lithuania.

Good prospects

He was seconded by Laima Dockeviciene, head of the municipal business and information centre and one of the partners in Going Abroad.

In both Rietavas and neighbouring Kretinga, where the Kretinga Women's Information and Training Centre makes up the second Lithua-

nian project partner, the prospects for women's entrepreneurship are good.

"Here in Rietavas there ought to be more collaboration in the area of agricultural products and countryside tourism but also more international business cooperation such as in Going Abroad," she said.

Rietavas Business Information Centre

The information centre offers, among other things, advice for newly-formed companies and arranges seminars about topical subjects, for example the recent one on local marketing.

Breakfast with the Mayor is a recurring event that allows people with small businesses direct contact with the political powers that be.

Consultant vouchers for business owners

Laimute Kalinauskiene, project leader for the state-run project for small and medium-sized companies told us about her work.

"Here in Rietavas alone last spring we distributed 1,700 individual vouchers that people have a limited time period to use. It entitles them to a number of consultations, both individually and in groups."

"It is worth 6,000 litas (a little more than 14,000 SEK) and among other things entitles the holder to 24 hours training."

Laimute Kalinauskiene's goal is to increase entrepreneurship in the country.

"Small and medium-sized companies make up 99 percent of the country's companies. They are the motor in the economy. We have too few small businesses, but attitudes are starting to change."

Products for export

One of those who have already got going with this is Palmira Mikalauskiene who, like many others, was initially a reluctant entrepreneur.

In 1992 the company where she was employed went bankrupt and her only way to get a new job was to start her own company. 18 years later some of the knitted products she makes are exported.

Together with the other members of the local resource centre Women's Employment Centre, she works to strengthen women's entrepreneurship. The resource centre cooperates with the entrepreneurs' centre which offers various sorts of courses.

The members' motto is to learn from each other and they have together presented themselves and their products in various connections at both local and national level.

Development of the method Success Teams

Christiane Bannuscher, partner Women into Business in Rostock was a teacher at the University of Rostock. She started her own company in 1998 in the field of management and career counselling. Also for her, starting her own company became necessary.

"I learnt the importance of being seen. And I started up my own organisation to help others who had ended up in the same situation to start companies.

At first it was difficult but now I understand that it was the best thing that could have happened to me."

Success Teams as a method originates from the USA, but it is Christiane Bannuscher who has developed the method for this particular application.

"The name tells you what it is all about, it's about organising your own success. The fact that others in the group work with different things gives you a different perspective on your own company. Equally important as to step by step train yourself to be successful."



Snieguole Benikiene, representative of Women's Information and Training Centre in Kretinga, together with entrepreneurs from Rietavas Business Information Centre.

Engaged entrepreneurs from Kretinga Women's Information and Training Centre.



Success Teams

The Success Teams will support and advise the entrepreneurs regarding new market opportunities and potential areas of cooperation.

Success Teams aim to bring about an exchange of experience on the basis of a structured meeting plan to improve competitiveness, growth and international cooperation to

develop new products, services and new ideas.

The entrepreneurs in the Success Teams will act as an international board in each other's companies. For information about success team members, please visit www.goingabroad.nu.

Methods for succeeding in business

There was expectation in the air when women who run their own companies in Lithuania in February 2012 met to discuss a new method for succeeding in business.

"I want to get in touch with other women who want to sell their products abroad," said Daiva Salienė in Kretinga; she has been selling handmade jewellery for five years. "I have a small shop and an internet shop, but I want to grow."

Daiva Salienė thought that a Success Team could be the answer for her. Christiane Bannuscher from Rostock had just described the basics of the method that has already been successfully used both in Germany and in Skåne, Sweden:

"Many successful women say that they have been lucky. But it's not a matter of luck, it's about goal-orientated work. It is important to say, not least to yourself, that I am competent and want to achieve my goals."

"Many women do not talk much about what they can do and do not make themselves and their companies visible."

"Moreover many struggle alone and are forced to solve all the problems by themselves. Success Teams are a way of breaking this isolation, enabling people to both give to and accept help from others."

International marketing

Several of the participants made hand-knitted products, shawls, wrist warmers and sweaters but also skirts and dresses.

One of them was Ausra Juknevičienė who had invested in expensive knitting machines and wanted to

improve her profitability.

"How is it with your website? Is your information material printed in English?" wondered Christiane Bannuscher.

Kretinga Women's Information and Training Centre

Sniegolė Benikiene, chairperson for the Women's Information and Training Centre in Kretinga, moderator-to-be for one of the Success Team groups, wondered if it would be a good idea to have a workshop on teambuilding before getting going with the Success Team. The answer was "yes".

Rietavas Business Information Centre

In Rietavas, half an hour away by car, there was so much interest that even leaders of large companies came to the meeting to see if they could learn something.

But here too most participants were people with small one-person businesses.

Palmira Mikalauskienė had just relocated her knitting company to the centre of town, renting a small room in the potter Rasa Bruziene's shop.

Virginija Lenksiene grows herbs and spices that she sells at markets. There is a long tradition of herbal medicine in the country and it's



Palmira Mikalauskienė in her company. Some of the knitted products she makes are exported.

"I believe in success teams as method", says Ausra Juknevičienė, showing her knitted products.



possible to buy tea to cure both bad moods and anxiety.

Elevator pitch

Christiane Bannuscher continued by describing one of her favourite methods, elevator pitch.

"When you meet someone you haven't met before, for example in an elevator, you can choose whether to be silent or to use the time to tell them about what you do. It's a matter of practicing small presentations that take just the amount of time it takes for the elevator to travel up."

Promoting yourself is not always easy. There were some embarrassed giggles and a lot of laughter when the participants practised elevator pitch on each other.

Local Success Teams

The next step after the meeting would be to form local Success Teams and take their first steps out in the world.

The articles are written by the journalist Anne Jalakas, Lund, Sweden. Anne Jalakas participated in one of the first Success Teams in Sweden in 2009.



Cross-border meeting

How are we going to be able to work together? What do we need to know? Are our language skills good enough? There were many questions as eager and expectant entrepreneurs from Sweden, Germany and Lithuania met for the first time.

“Of course we can help each other, by establishing new markets for women entrepreneurs and working together with import and export,” said Ulla-Britt Holmberg from Winnet Kronoberg, one of the organisers of the Going Abroad conference at Krinova in Kristianstad at the end of March 2012.

Entrepreneurs

Since those involved in Going Abroad visited Lithuania in February to introduce the Success Teams method, a great deal has happened there. In both Rietavas and Kretinga several Success Teams have been formed and started their activities.

A wide range of enterprises was represented at the conference. There were web designers, hoteliers, restaurant, café and event companies, and various types of companies in the health and wellness sphere. And of course there were companies that produce various products, from crispbread to clothes, birch sap beer to jewellery.

Dressed in Linen

Lotta Rolfsson, who runs the company KläddiLin (Dressed in Linen) described an example of successful exchanges across borders. Her linen fabrics are imported from Lithuania and her experience has been nothing but good.

“There have never been any problems at all, everything has flowed

smoothly. I produce two collections a year, 15-20 items of clothing that can be mixed and matched with earlier collections. It is important that the garments are eco-friendly, suit all body types, are timeless and can be combined.”

Chamber of Commerce

Peter Westher from the Chamber of Commerce in South Sweden, responsible for the Baltic Sea Business Network, told us about the work being done to strengthen the business climate around the Baltic Sea.

“Lobbying is an important part. Companies need access to competence, communication and customers. We have specialists who can help with the documents needed when you want to do business across borders.”

Business culture

What then should you bear in mind when doing business in the countries around the Baltic Sea? Tomas Pettersson, Region Skåne gave some concrete tips.

“As a public authority we can help companies by organising a trade fair or arranging a meeting with local politicians. In Sweden, English is the language normally used for international trade.”

“All markets in Scandinavia are open, easy to contact and easy to do business with. If you email an authority you get a quick answer. We can also supply



1. Dr. Christiane Bannuscher talking about Cross-border Success Teams.

2. Ulla-Britt Holmberg and a group of entrepreneurs.

3. Lotta and Kajsa Rolfsson, KläddiLin, Kristianstad.

lots of useful statistics. In contrast to Germany, Swedish registers are often free and easily accessible. It's possible to obtain lists of both companies and private individuals via the Internet.”

“Business cultures vary in different countries. The Scandinavian countries are highly computerised. Contact via e-post is the norm and anyone writing to a Swedish company can expect an answer within a few days.”

And for everybody, women and men, it is a matter of understanding that business is not only about money it is also about relationships.

“Try, at least at some point, to actually meet in real life and then make sure that you talk about something other than business.”

Cross border Success Teams

After the conference the next step in the Going Abroad project was taken.

Three Success Teams with participants from Germany and Sweden will work together during 2012 to establish contacts, develop their companies and do business.