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**Literature Review**

Based on our research, we would like to present our literature review findings. As indicated in our previous communication, RomPraha has selected female Roma entrepreneurs ranging from 18 to 48 years as our focus group. We intend to work with established female entrepreneurs, mostly, but not exclusively, of Romani ethnicity, who have had considerable experience with entrepreneurship and have appropriate business skills, knowledge and technical expertise to support aspiring Roma entrepreneurs.

In the last 15 to 20 years, we have witnessed in the Czech Republic an increasing importance of self-employment in the largest national ethnic minority of Roma people, in particular the female part of the population. This phenomenon has been supported by the growing awareness of gender equality and equal rights. New opportunities for both employment and entrepreneurship have been created especially in the service industry. The expansion of the service, gastronomy and tourist industries has led to an increase in business opportunities on the market. However, based on our research, the chief drawback, which has prevented to a large number of individuals from taking advantage of the newfound opportunities is a lack of education, insufficient training and in numerous cases also an unawareness of the opportunities for starting a business in the first place. We find addressing these issues to be a key component of ensuring a success of the project.

The highest incidence of job and entrepreneurship opportunities tends to be in labor intensive-sectors and traditional service industries within urban agglomerations. In the Czech Republic such centers are Prague, Pilsen, Brno, Ostrava, Ustí nad Labem and Liberec. Our organization is targeting primarily residents of Prague and Pilsen to ensure direct contact among members of our organization, the mentors we have approached and the mentees. Another area which has significantly expanded in the last ten years is online services, such as internet shops, online trading, web design, etc.

When asked during the period between 1 November 2019 – 10 January 2020 what immediate opportunities they saw for engaging in entrepreneurial activities, 15 out of 17 responders stated that the prospect of starting their own business did not seem feasible, seemed hard to imagine, that they did not envision a specific way of entrepreneurship that would suit them or that they were not really interested in running a business since it seemed too complicated and/or too risky. When asked if they would benefit from training workshops or a mentoring program in which they could learn about entrepreneurship, their response was overwhelmingly positive.

We also asked them what kind of competencies and areas of knowledge they would find useful to learn. Their most frequent queries pertained to the ways of obtaining the financial capital necessary to launch their business. They also expressed an interest in learning the essential skills for starting and keeping up their business. All concerned replied that they would welcome a chance to enter into a mentor-mentee relationship and thought this would be a practical way for them to observe entrepreneurial practices of their more experienced colleagues.

The consensus was that by learning first-hand through observing and actively participating in business activities by way of an informal internship they could gain not only sufficient skills and knowledge but importantly also enough confidence to later brave starting their own business. We consider it significant that the vast majority of the young women we approached did not feel the necessary confidence to even seriously consider starting a business.

To address the concerns outlined above, we turned to the literature we reviewed. We found Violina Rindova’s published article “Introduction to Special Topic Forum: Entrepreneuring as Emancipation” to be particularly useful as it suggests practices for encouraging emerging young female entrepreneurs, including members of Czech ethnic minorities. Moverover, the paper authored by three academics working in the field of sociology Ondřej Kročil, Miroslav Dopita and Richard Pospíšil entitled “Social Entrepreneurship in the Context of Employment Policy – the Case of the Czech Republic and its Overview in Selected European Union Countries” proposes ways for aspiring business women to get support by applying for various grants within the European Union and also by partnering with other businesswomen, aspiring and established, to ease the beginning of their journey to successful entrepreneurship.

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REDI - Roma Entrepreneurship Development Initiative: https://www.redi-ngo.eu/career/