



Lifelong  
Learning  
Programme

# craftpreneurs

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## Start-up of Handicrafts Business in Cyprus

Within the framework of the Grundtvig Programme “Educating Entrepreneurs in Traditional Crafts and Arts” - CY-GRU-MULPART-2013 a questionnaire was conducted to 15 artisans in Cyprus. 7 of the responders were involved in crochet, 3 in Jewelry making and the rest in woodcarving, iconography, patchwork, ceramics and chutney and marmalade making. The artisans were primarily asked about their background, on what education they had. Nine out of the fifteen responders answered that they had received higher/university education in a different field than arts and only one of them had received a relevant to her current job degree in Fine Arts. The five rest had only completed secondary education, again, not relevant to their current job in handicrafts and in two cases some relevant seminars. Most of the artisans answered that they had a university degree, they stated that this is not something necessary for starting a handicrafts business and concerning their specific art most of them were self-

educated/instructed and improved their job through practice. The reasons for starting their own business in the specific field were as a hobby, as an alternative or extra income due to the economic crisis, as a response to being unemployed for a long time, due to retirement and the need to keep oneself busy, as a continuation of a family tradition or as a needed challenge. In most of the cases, it was a combination of some of these factors, mostly as a chance to develop their hobby and being unemployed due to the current worldwide economic crisis. The time period of starting up their own business varied among the responders between twenty years and six months ago. The average time period though was 5 years ago. The main problems that the responders meet in opening and functioning their own business in the specific field was to become known, the competition in the field, finding a good/appropriate location for the shop, lack of knowledge on how to promote their products, bureaucracy

and in some cases that this job has a limited market as in many cases people prefer to buy well-known brands rather than handmade products. The current economic crisis was also mentioned by several as a problematic factor. In relevance to the advantages of operating in the specific field, many of the respondents mentioned personal satisfaction rather than money-wise. They also mentioned the development of their creativity, the independence that the specific field offers, the flexible time schedule and in a few cases the income. The disadvantages of operating in the specific field were mentioned to be mainly the not secure/fixed income-that is financial uncertainty-, the fact that owning your own business demands a lot of personal hours, the rent of the shop, not knowing how to promote their products, the fact that the hands become very tired (for crochet) and that many people do not appreciate crafts.

### Research

The research was conducted during the Kick Off meeting in Cyprus at 13 & 14 December 2013, hosted by the Cyprus Research Institute of Social Sciences



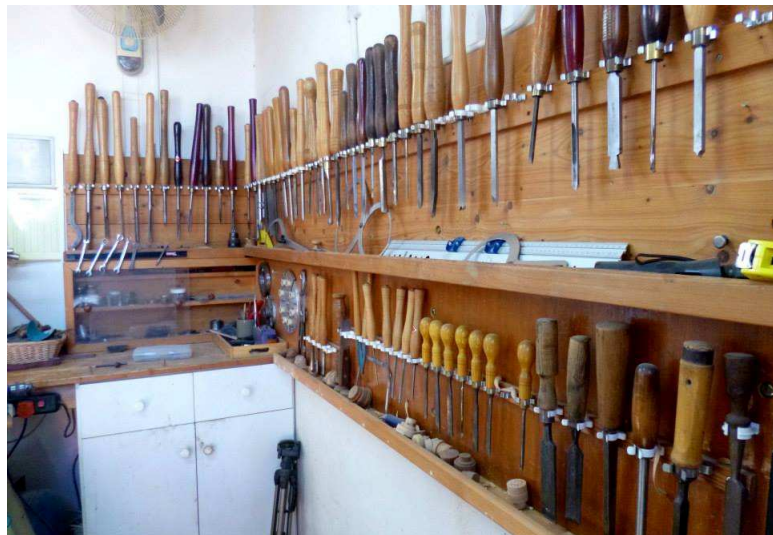
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*CRAFTPRENEURS visit at Chrysaliniotissa Crafts Center, Nicosia, 14 December 2013*

Some of them also mentioned that they spent an important amount of money on side things such as meeting with the clients and running and promoting their products by themselves.

When the respondents were asked on what knowledge they need in order to improve their business, many of them stated the need to know how to promote their products and the need for a relevant training on promotion and selling techniques. In these terms, the marketing dimension was of great importance. Also the need for training on managing a business and on technology advancements was also stated. Furthermore, a responder stated the need for exchange visits with other artisans from other countries involved in the same field.

Finally, when they were asked on whether they knew where to ask for support, most of them didn't know. Two of them mentioned that they knew where to ask for help and these concerned some business workshops. Some of them mentioned the social media but this, as they said, is not enough.

Handicrafts and traditional crafts business in Cyprus is a quite neglected area. Each businessperson works as an individual on his/her own, there is no Union to promote their needs and rights and the State does not really recognize their input in preserving and promoting the Cyprus cultural heritage. However, more and more small businesses are established nowadays and more people support them by buying from them instead from the international well known brands.

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