



Out of the Crisis

**Strategies to meet the
consequences of the financial
crisis for young unemployed
women in the Murmansk area**

Report 2009

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Content

1	Background	3
1.1	Partners	3
1.2	Resources	3
1.3	Project aims	3
1.4	Organising of the cooperation and joint work	3
2.	Content and process	4
2.1	Mapping the consequences of the financial crisis in the Murmansk Region	4
2.2	Recruiting of the participants	5
2.3	1 st Course week in Murmansk in September 2009	6
2.4	2 nd Course week at Svanhovd in October 2009	6
2.5	3 rd Course week in Murmansk in November 2009	6
3.	Results	6
3.1	Results and obtaining our goals	6
4.	Evaluation	7
5.	Dissemination to media.....	7
6.	Enclosures	9

1 Background

1.1 Partners

The project has been represented by one Russian and one Norwegian partner, in Russia by "Education, Innovation and Scientific Research Union "Socium+" International Centre "Women and Management"(Socium+), Murmansk, with project leader Olga Buch, in Norway by KUN senter for kunnskap og likestilling(KUN)/KUN center for gender equality, Nordfold, Norway with project leader Marit Alsaker Stemland.

1.2 Resources

KUN applied together with their partner for the funding of their joint project "Out of the Crisis" from the Barentssekretariat, and received in letter from 01.07.09, (project no 932522 BS) NOK 280 000, and from the Norwegian Ministry of Foreign Affairs (UD), (project no RUS-09/156) NOK 50 000. The application to UD was sent before we received the guidelines from the Barentssekretariat saying no funding from UD was accepted as co-funding.

1.3 Project aims

This project offers strategies to meet the consequences of the financial crisis for young unemployed women in the Murmansk area. The information from our Russian partner said that young women in the Murmansk area are more exposed to consequences of financial changes in the market than young men. They more often lose their jobs, and are also more often offered illegal working conditions that give them fewer rights and insecure income. This project aims at easing the situation of young unemployed women by increasing their competence, strategies and possibilities to create their own businesses or in other ways participate in business life, to obtain economic independence, stable working conditions and to contribute to sustainable development of the area. The project has been carried through both in Murmansk and in Norway/Kirkenes.

The project also includes a mapping of the situation in the Murmansk area concerning the financial crisis, with a special focus on young unemployed women.

1.4 Organising of the cooperation and joint work

The joint planning of the project was carried through by using e-mails and a meeting in Tromsø in August 09. Our earlier experience from joint projects was integrated into the project, especially concerning process work on gender, concrete tasks given the participants during the course, and on individual plans of actions and obligations that the participants had to fulfil. Focus on networking and cooperation was stressed. The Russian partner Socium+ was responsible for the main structure of the course, and for adjusting the professional content to the Russian context. Socium + was responsible for planning and carrying through the two weeks in Murmansk, and KUN responsible for planning and carrying through the week in Norway. Both partners have contributed with suggestions and feedback to the different parts. The Norwegian project leader took part in the first 3 days of the first week of the course in Murmansk. She contributed with process work on the topic "Gender in society and working life", based on the feedback of the participants of the similar project from 2007 "Back to Work" and on the wish of the Russian partner.

KUN has been responsible for completing the application and the financial work. Socium + has been responsible for mapping the situation and consequences of the financial crisis in the Murmansk area, with KUN as a critical friend in the writing process.

2. Content and process

2.1 Mapping the consequences of the financial crisis in the Murmansk Region

The documentation from Socium + includes the research work «Consequences of the financial crisis for the female population in the Murmansk region» (enclosure 3), and has been analyzing the consequences of the financial crisis for different groups of the population. They find that women and youngsters make up the most vulnerable groups. Negative consequences of the world financial crisis, the influence of which became visible in the Murmansk region in the 4th quarter of 2008, showed themselves even more in the indexes according to the results of the first half of 2009. (1H of 2009). The amount of industrial production, construction processes, and transportations was reduced, compared with the same period of the previous year. As a consequence the unemployment rate increased, the amounts of budget revenues fell down, and the real incomes of the population was reduced.

The studying of the consequences of the financial crisis for the female population of the Murmansk region is done according to several aspects:

- common impact of the financial crisis on the economy of the Murmansk region,
- employment,
- income and consumption, bank crediting / opportunities for male and female population, debt payments/bankruptcy,
- general feeling, social life, addressing crisis centers, birth rate, independence.

But the impact of the crisis on the female population in the region cannot be separated from the common consequences, not depending on sex, crisis tendencies in the economic and social spheres of the region.

The Russian partner has included a survey in carrying through this mapping. In September 2009 they organized a sociological research, the main objective of which was to study the income and expenditures of the female population of the Murmansk region, whether it had changed during the crises period. 692 women were questioned within the frameworks of the research. The conclusions of the documentation points at the fact that the International Labor Organization (ILO) cautions that this year about 22 million of the female population can lose the jobs (annual report of ILO concerning the tendencies of female employment). Experts forecast that in 2009 the employment rate among female population will reach the record high -7, 4%. Among the male population the unemployment rate will be less – about 7%. Thereby, the experts of ILO are afraid, that the financial crisis will be accompanied by the increase in inequality of incomes, earned by men and women. At the same time they note that this tendency will not touch all the regions in the world equally. The most significant gender gap in the sphere of employment during the crisis will be in the countries of Latin America, and it is most likely that the impact will be not so serious in the industrially developed countries and the CIS (Commonwealth of Independent States) countries. In the Murmansk region the level of general unemployment (according to the International Labor Organization) comprises 6, 9 %, and according to the experts it will remain the same in 2010. It is necessary to note, that unemployment in the Murmansk region has always had the female face. The female share among all unemployed has always exceeded 50 %, and talking about separate periods, especially in the mid 90s, it even exceeded 60%. And this tendency is more likely to increase to 5-7%.

Overall conclusion:

1. Negative tendencies on the Labor market, having manifested itself in the end of 2008 and having become stronger in the beginning of 2009, slowed down, nevertheless the character of the tendencies has not changed (remains negative):

- manufacturing activities continue losing positions in the industry,
- there are some successes in the fishery and agriculture (output growth),
- in the transport sphere, in conditions of general decline, the amount of sea transportations increased,
- the volume of retail sales and charge fee services, rendered to population decreased,
- inflation is less than one year ago,
- external trade turnover suddenly fell,
- foreign investment reduced,
- development of entrepreneurship and financial results: indexes became worse,
- regional budget: incomes reduced, expenditures increased.

2. In the employment sphere in the Murmansk region negative tendencies remain. The level of registered unemployment is 2, 7 %, it is higher than in the same period of 2008 (2%).

3. Women and youngsters make up the most vulnerable groups. (54% - unemployed women, 43% out of them are under 30).

4. It should be noted, that females often lack leadership qualities to start their own business, develop their own capabilities, be more insistent in the process of job hunting (character and the amount of vacancies in the Employment Centre demonstrate this, as well as the output of the discussion of this problem in the focus-group of the project, and the % of female members in the Regional Parliament (2009 – 25%, earlier less than 12%).

The documentation work was mostly carried out at the Murmansk Unemployment Office in cooperation with head of department Elena Sklyarova, and her employees.

2.2 Recruiting of the participants

The unemployment office has been crucial in recruiting the participants, in addition to the Russian partner's own network and contacts. One criteria was that the participant had to have a passport to be able to go to Norway in the second week of the course. This reduced the number of applicants. Those who have been interested and had a passport have filled in a form, and have been interviewed by a professional interviewer. About 20 women applied, 15 were selected to the course. 14 women fulfilled the course (see enclosure 1). One participant was not present in Kirkenes as she did not get a visa in time.

2.2.1 Reasons for unemployment among the participants

Among those who have children several find that they were asked to leave when it became known that they were pregnant. They experience a problem in returning to work/labor market after pregnancy and care leave. There is a need to secure the rights of reproductive women in the labor market.

Relatively many experience after a period of working in a business that their work/they are not formally registered, and therefore quit as this creates big problems and conflicts with the

employer in order to change the situation. According to the women this is due to structural and legal problems in the labor market, and there is a need for increase of competence and knowledge about the rights of employees, and an institutionalised centre for women to give help and information..

Several of the very young women between 21 and 24 with higher education find it very difficult to get access to the legal labor market because they lack work experience.

Long term unemployment is being marginalised.

Some women have unrealistic or unclear expectations, very little knowledge about the labor market, lack of networks and lack of knowledge of the mechanisms of the labor market.

2.3 1st Course week in Murmansk in September 2009

The first week of the course was carried through at a seminar room for a week in September at a hotel in Murmansk, the same building where Socium + has got its offices. The Norwegian project leader took part in the three first days, taking care of the process work on gender in society and working life the two first days. The other lecturers were Russian experts and entrepreneurial women (see enclosed program). Short evaluation after each topic showed that the participants were very satisfied with both content and form, as well as the organization of the days (see enclosure 2 for total programs).

2.4 2nd Course week at Svanhovd in October 2009

This week was originally planned at KUN in Steigen, but due to increase in transport costs and reduction in recourses it was carried through at Svanhovd research station close to Kirkenes. 13 participants came by bus to Svanhovd at 1300 Monday 24th October, and left the same way on Thursday 30.10.09 at 1600 hours (see enclosed program).

The program of the week included a presentation of the results of the mapping from Murmansk, work on individual strategies, plan of action and individual tasks/contributions to be able to fight unemployment as soon as possible. We continued the seminars on gender and society, politics and working life, and had a seminar with representatives from the Barents secretariat to get information on positive actions and strategies to develop the Northern region. We had meetings with female entrepreneurs especially within culture, tourism, green care, networking and consulting. We visited several female entrepreneurs, in addition to the local unemployment office where we were informed of the employment situation in the area.

2.5 3rd Course week in Murmansk in November 2009

After returning to Murmansk they continued working on their individual plan of action and their obligations guided by their Russian experts and professionals (see enclosed program).

3. Results

3.1 Results and obtaining our goals

- The project has documented consequences of the financial crisis for young unemployed women in the Murmansk region
- The partners arranged a meeting exchanging experiences in Tromsø before the project started.
- We developed and arranged courses in Murmansk and Kirkenes for the target group in cooperation.
- 14 female participants, participating institutions and enterprises in the project and the partners have established a useful network for further development.

- The participants have increased their possibility for personal and individual development and participation in working life by developing joint and individual strategies and tools for entering the labor market, and have assumed increased motivation and strength through among others increased social and professional networking.
- The participants have increased their knowledge about the labor market in the Murmansk area, its functions and the importance of gender in society and working life.

The participants have given very positive feedback on the course and the process it has started in them individually. They have all received a course certificate for their participation (see enclosure 5)

In January 2010

- 2 of them had started their own business
- 6 others had found full time jobs
- 2 participants had found part time jobs
- Everybody had several job interviews.
- The other are following their individual plans for entering work, among others taking contact with employers, participating in courses or checking out education needed

4. Evaluation

Partnership:

The project has had a strong focus on joint work in planning and decision making, and the partners have experienced a good cooperation and mutual respect. There has been a continuous evaluation through the project , with discussions after each presentation. Socium + finished the evaluation among the participants, and has taken responsibility for following up the participants through the network. Due to the evaluation of the former project ”Back to Work”, there has been a continuous focus on the understanding of gender in society and work.

The participants:

The feedback of the focus on gender in society and work was very positive, the participants claimed that they found the content useful and inspiring, and that the combination of lecturing and practical work/ process work, discussions, group work and role plays was new for them, but very engaging. The work on making professional CVs, doing well at interviews, meeting with entrepreneurs and women who had overcome difficult unemployment situations gave them new strategies that they expressed readiness to implement. They focused on the strength the new networking and joint coursing had given them. There was a continuous evaluation all through the three course weeks to adjust to the expectations and feedback of the participants, and at the end of the course (see enclosure 6)

5. Dissemination to media

In Murmansk the information concerning the project and its results was published in the following mass media:

- on the regional information portal www.murman.ru
- in the information and analytical magazine "Murmanshelfinfo" (N4/2009)
- on the radio State Broadcasting company "Murman"
- on S+ web-page,

In Norway information about the planning and carrying through of the project was presented on our web site www.kun.nl.no The project leader was interviewed on NRK Nordlandsakademiet.

The report will be published through the Barents secretariat network in Norway and Russia, and a press release about the project will be sent to relevant newspapers in the area.



KUN senter for kunnskap og likestilling and their partner ”Education, Innovation and Scientific Research Union “S+” International Centre “Women and Management”, are grateful for the support given to the project.

6. Enclosures

Enclosure 1 - List of participants

Enclosure 2 - Programs for courses in Russia and Norway

Enclosure 3- Documentation «Consequences of the financial crisis for the female population in the Murmansk region»,

Enclosure 4- Account

Enclosure 5- Evaluation from the participants

Enclosure 6- Course certificate



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