



**Module:**  
**MENTORING IN CCI SECTOR**  
**Unit 4: WORKING IN SLIPPERS**

**Partner name: ARTeria – [www.fundacja-arteria.org](http://www.fundacja-arteria.org)**

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## **WORKING IN SLIPPERS**

### **training for people wanting to conduct business or work as freelancers in the cultural and creative sectors**

The case study was selected as the most representative for the purpose. In Poland, there is no officially established tool for supporting young people employed in the cultural and creative sectors similar to Talent Match. The aim was to present the most typical barriers and challenges, deficit areas and needs associated with career in the creative sector through analysing a practical example. It concentrates on a different aspect (lack of entrepreneurship education, self-acceptance problems, communication issues etc.). Some of the problems seem to be common and concern deficits of a rather horizontal nature (lack of social acceptance for working in the creative or cultural sector or a limited knowledge of legal aspects). The case study has been prepared based on individual interviews

**VENOS STUDIO Przemysły Kultury** - (originator and provider)

for the Miasto Ogrodów Institution of Culture (commissioner)

project duration: **six month**

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This type of training provided by VENO'S STUDIO for the Miasto Ogrodów Institution of Culture was a result of analysing the research results that revealed that the cultural and creative sectors (owing to their ability to produce original knowledge, products and services) may play a key role in the creation of a modern, post-industrial economy. Owing to their specific character, both sectors require much less capital and are able to draw on the varied cultural resources Upper Silesia has to offer. At the same time, the analysis of the Polish cultural sector reveals the prevailing role of micro-entities, whose key characteristics are flexibility, cooperation with other entities, quick decision-making processes or the ability to find and occupy new niches in the market. The main difficulty they have to overcome in their development is limited access to human and financial resources. This affects the development opportunities for most small businesses and determines their weak financial and organisational conditions especially when confronted with certain structural economic obstacles (such as the bureaucratic burden). The training also originated from VENO'S STUDIO's many years of experience in the field. From 2005 to 2009 the organiser carried out a project, co-funded by the EU, titled "Active in culture? Start a business!". Later the organisation provided courses devoted to entrepreneurship in the cultural and creative sectors.

The course "Working in slippers" consisted of twelve 3-hour sessions (36 hours in total). The recruitment was open and carried out by the commissioner (the Miasto Ogrodów Institution of Culture). Finally, an 11-people group was formed, consisting mostly of young mothers (20-25 years old), and a small number of women over that age (the oldest was 40 years old). The participants were mostly unemployed or professionally inactive because of their family obligations (maternity leave or raising children), some women cooperated with NGOs as volunteers ("in order not to go mad from idleness").

The situation of young mothers was particularly difficult and, unfortunately, reflected the situation in other fields nationwide. During the first meeting that was supposed to determine the participants' training needs, the women pointed to a number of obstacles and barriers (internal and external) resulting in their low self-esteem, fears about their ability to find employment after fulfilling their parental duties, restricted flexibility on the job market and outdated knowledge. The patriarchal family

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model was also to blame together with the persisting conviction that artistic activity *“may be a passion but not a profession”*.

The participants had had no or very limited previous experience in conducting a business or working as a freelancer (they also had problems with distinguishing between those two types of professional activity), most of them had not worked before and had had no professional life (also because of early motherhood or the preferred family model where the mother looks after children and the father supports the family, which caused the feeling of dependence and discouraged them from leaving the husband’s side). A few participants had had negative experience of working in the corporate environment, which they described as completely incompatible with their “artistic and free spirits” They were also convinced that completing artistic studies was pointless when it came to finding an interesting job in Poland and regarded the activities of job centres as irrelevant to people wanting to find an occupation in the cultural or creative sectors (this included the lack of job offers or specialised consultancy).

What all the participants had in common was their dream of independence (professional, financial and emotional) and their wish to use their interests and artistic passions as the basis for establishing their own businesses in the creative and cultural sectors or to work as freelancers.

Consequently, the training course was tailored accordingly and implemented such forms of work as motivational workshops, group coaching, lectures or case study analyses. The course combined working on soft skills and developing a practical knowledge necessary for establishing and conducting businesses, including the legal aspects of economic activity, applicable accounting regulations and forms of taxation, the labour code, marketing and market analysis, financing sources (such as loan funds or EU grants), brand and corporate identity or customer service.

Another important element of the training was analysing the specific aspect of conducting a business activity in the creative and cultural sectors. Additionally, such issues as stress or time management and maintaining relationships with business partners, clients and contractors were also given sufficient consideration. A lot of attention was also given to analysing the participants’ professional abilities in the context of the life roles they performed, creating their personal and professional brands (based on [The Talent Matching Europe Project has been co-funded with support from the European Union. The project publications and communications reflect the views only of the author/s, and the Commission cannot be held responsible for any use which may be made of the information contained therein.](#))



their talents), and developing psychological resilience (overcoming stress, pressure and stage fright and dealing with difficult personalities). The questions of “How to create a business that will let me use my passion and earn a profit” as well as the copyright law were also discussed.

The participants also attempted to define their strengths and weaknesses and use the former to create the concept of their professional development followed by a business plan.

The final product of the course was interesting business ideas and complete business plans. All the participants received course certificates. According to the information obtained 3 months later (incomplete feedback) two people started working for creative companies, one person decided to establish her own business (after receiving a subsidy).

In conclusion, the participants pointed to a large deficit in advisors/mentors who would know the specificity of the creative and cultural sectors (people who could provide practical and psychological support), deemed Polish entrepreneurship education inefficient and described the system of artistic education incompatible with the needs of the job market.