



**ASSOCIATION OF BUSINESS WOMEN IN SERBIA**

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**Association  
of Business Women in Serbia  
(ABW Serbia)**

**COMMUNICATION ON ENGAGEMENT  
to the  
UN Global Compact  
Reporting period  
2020 – 2021**

**Belgrade  
September 2021**

**Part I**  
**STATEMENT OF CONTINUED SUPPORT TO UNGC**

**To UN Global Compact Board Members and our stakeholders,**

I am pleased to confirm that the Association of Business Women in Serbia (ABW Serbia), registered in Serbia, reaffirms its support to the United Nations Global Compact and its Ten Principles in the areas of Human Rights, Labor, Environment and Anti-Corruption.

This is our Communication on Engagement with the United Nations Global Compact. We welcome feedback on its contents.

In this Communication of Engagement, we describe the actions that our organization has taken to support the UN Global Compact and its Principles as suggested for non-business organization like ours. We also commit to sharing this information with our stakeholders using our primary channels of communication.

Sincerely yours,

President of ABW Serbia  
Dr Sanja Popovic-Pantic

## **Part II**

# **ABOUT THE ASSOCIATION OF BUSINESS WOMEN IN SERBIA**

### ***Women's Entrepreneurship***

#### ***Promotion. Support. Networking. Learning. Development. Public Advocacy.***

The Association of Business Women in Serbia (ABW Serbia), a non-profit, non-political and no-governmental organization is the largest national organization of women entrepreneurs in Serbia, which gathers over 900 members and includes 10 partner associations. Its members are women owners of micro, small and medium enterprises, but also large companies, in different sectors and industries.

ABW Serbia is a strong, well-known, complete and respected partner in public-private dialogue, contributing to social and economic development in the country, with a special focus on female entrepreneurship as a factor of economic growth. It has a leading role in organizing women entrepreneurs and supporting them, as well as in promoting women's entrepreneurship in Serbia. By its engagement in public advocacy, it also provides improvement of the business climate and actively fosters networking on a local, regional and international level.

Since it was founded 23 years ago, ABW Serbia has defined as its main activity the provision of support to women in achieving gender equality and strengthening their position, first of all in domain of business and economy.

Objectives of the Association – to increase the number of women starting their own business, as well as the visibility of women entrepreneurs, encourage women business owners to expand their businesses, create and support forums where women entrepreneurs can exchange their ideas and gain new business contacts, influence the creation of SME development policy, strengthen links between women entrepreneurs at the local, regional and international level, promote social responsibility and high standards of business ethics, which the Association successfully implements through its projects and other activities, are in line with the global Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), primarily Goal 5, aimed at achieving gender equality and eliminating any form of discrimination against women.

So far, the Association implemented more than 150 projects, each of them representing a step forward in achieving balance in gender equality, primarily in the economic sphere. More than 6.000 women participated in the projects, education and trainings created by ABW Serbia helping them to start and develop their business.

In addition to trainings, public advocacy, socially responsible and educational projects, the Association organizes for its members mentoring programs, monthly networking meetings, networking on regional and international level, participation in various events, conferences and B2B meetings, promotion through its publications, media, social network channels, newsletters and catalogues.

## Part III

# REPORT ON ABW SERBIA ACTIVITIES

Despite the difficulties in the last two years, there were also unexpected results. In companies' effort to survive and continue their businesses, adapting to new circumstances, there were good, sometimes even surprising outcomes. Many of them have developed or reoriented their business, and online communication has been raised to a much higher level. The Association of Business Women in Serbia, like many others, has introduced a lot of innovations in its work. A number of events were transferred to online platforms and new opportunities appeared. There were very few live and face-to-face meetings. However, we organized and participated in many events and communication was somewhat facilitated despite lack of personal contacts.

ABW Serbia has achieved various results, implemented projects and activities aimed at development and promotion of women's entrepreneurship. We worked on improving business conditions for small and medium enterprises through public advocacy, in the crisis period we were active in strengthening and expanding local, regional and international cooperation, in promotion and education of young women entrepreneurs, as well as in raising awareness of the importance of women entrepreneurship.

In the last two years, we have started, implemented or successfully completed several projects. We have also organized two most important events of the Association, which are traditionally held for many years.

### Public Advocacy

In this period, ABW Serbia was very active when it comes to public advocacy. We addressed the governmental bodies, together with other organizations we participated in the appeals and proposed measures to help SMEs asking the Government to support them. [Read more](#) / [Read more](#).

### Projects

During the last two years, ABW Serbia completed or started a number of projects. We have achieved significant results in supporting women in rural entrepreneurship, we also provided support to vulnerable categories of women, Roma nationality women, returnees, single mothers, women 45+.

In 2020 and 2021 we started, realized and completed the following projects

**Strengthening Capacities of Women Entrepreneurs for Digitalization of Business Processes and Provision of Advisory and Technical Support for Market Launch of Rebranded Traditional Food Products from Southwestern Serbia**, supported by the Government of the Federal Republic of Germany through the German Corporation for International Cooperation GIZ. 15 women entrepreneurs, members of ABW Serbia, attended the Women Entrepreneurs on the Road of

Transformation in the Digital Age workshops aimed at informing women entrepreneurs in Serbia and improve their capacity to introduce digital transformation processes in their companies to ensure better productivity and competitiveness. [Read more](#) / [Read more](#).



**Support to Vulnerable Groups of Women for Inclusion in the Labor Market in the Context of the Consequences Caused by the COVID-19 Pandemic.** The project funded by the Open Society Foundations was aimed to improve position of the vulnerable groups of women affected by the consequences of the Covid-19 pandemic. The project was successfully completed by organizing a round table in Belgrade. [Read more](#) / [Read more](#) / [See more](#).

**Strengthening Business Capacities of Female Organic and Traditional Food Producers in Western and South Serbia.** The project realized in cooperation with the German organization GIZ and supported by the program Private Sector Development in Serbia (PSD). The aim of the project is to strengthen local networks of women producers of organic and traditional food in western and southern Serbia, in order to prepare them to participate in the local market economy. [Read more](#).

**Unlocking the Potential of Roma Women Returnees and the Other Vulnerable Groups of Women for the Inclusive Economic Development.** This project included three trainings (entrepreneurship, massage and website design). Project was a part of the global program Migration for Development (PME), implemented by the German organization for international cooperation (GIZ), funded by the German Federal Ministry for Economic Cooperation and Development (BMZ). [Read more](#).



**Integration of Roma women and other marginalized female groups in “new normal” on the labor market - new employment perspectives.** The project is implemented within the global program Migration for Development (PME), funded by the German Federal Ministry for Economic Cooperation and Development (BMZ) and

implemented by GIZ. Target groups for this project, as well as for the one previously mentioned, are Roma women (returnees and the local population) and other vulnerable groups of local women. This project includes free trainings (hybrid online / offline) in IT, catering and cosmetics. [Read more](#) / [Readmore](#) / [Read more](#)

**Building the Intergenerational and Intercultural Bridge of Economic Prosperity for Women in Raska and Sjenica**, The aim of the project was to connect and economically empower women in underdeveloped municipalities of Raska, Sjenica and Brus. The project was funded by the US Embassy and it ended with an online conference. [Read more](#) / [Read more](#).

**Look Up to Me! Innovative Entrepreneurship as a Woman Response to the Crisis.** Funded by the Cabinet of the Minister without Portfolio in Charge of Innovation and Technological Development of the Republic of Serbia, this project is aimed at promotion of women entrepreneurs, owners of SMEs, members of ABW Serbia. Project includes four activities, as follows: podcast (interviews with the most eminent members of the Association), talks with the winners of the Success Flower award, movie and publication about the innovative women's entrepreneurship. [Read more](#) / [Read more](#) / [See more](#)



## Events

Our two most visible events are the Success Flower and celebration of the international Girls in ICT Day.

In the last 15 years, the **Success Flower** award for the best women entrepreneurs has become the internationally recognized brand of ABW Serbia. Its main goal is to raise awareness and make the achievements of women in the Serbian economy more visible, as well as to promote women's entrepreneurship as much as possible. This year it will be held in November. Besides the most respectable members of the commission, the Minister of Economy will be the Honorary President of the commission for awarding the best women entrepreneurs.

The Women's Empowerment Principles (WEPs) defined by the UN Global Compact and UN Women are an important basis in our work, especially the Principle 5:

*Implement enterprise development, supply chain and marketing practices that empower women.* Inclusion of women entrepreneurs in the value chain of large companies implies cooperation with small women's companies that generally do not have the capacity to become a regular supplier due to expensive certificates, large quantities, long payment deadlines and the like. That is why small companies, among which women predominate as owners, are still excluded from cooperation. However, the process of recognizing the importance of this cooperation and connecting the corporate sector with the small business sector, especially owned by women, in Serbia is still in the development phase.



That is the reason why ABW Serbia, within the *Success Flower* manifestation, four years ago for the first time in our country introduced the recognition for large companies, *the Most Gender Sensitive Company* award. From the very beginning, the president of the Coordination Body for Gender Equality of the Republic of Serbia and the Deputy Prime Minister has been the Honorary President of the commission for awarding this now prestigious recognition. Large companies, which provide the best models for including small and micro women's enterprises in the value chains, which apply socially responsible principles in their business, treat all employees regardless of gender, guided by gender equality values, are encouraged by this recognition to be even more strongly connected with women-owned enterprises, providing them with the necessary support and setting an example to other companies.

So far, a total of 143 women entrepreneurs have received awards and special recognitions the *Success Flower* for the best women entrepreneurs and 15 companies have been declared the *Most Gender Sensitive Company*. The event is supported by many institutions, state bodies, local and international organizations, as well as by the Executive Agency for SMEs of European Commission. [See more](#) / [Read more](#) / [Read more](#)

For eleven years we have been traditionally celebrating the international ***Girls in ICT Day*** in April and in the last four years the Prime Minister of the Republic of Serbia is Honorary Patron. The objective of event is to encourage, empower and inspire schoolgirls of the final grades of primary school. By visiting companies owned by women, as well as ICT companies throughout Serbia, in conversations with business women and managers schoolgirls have possibility to consider various options when

choosing their future professions. In the last two years manifestation was implemented entirely online. [Read more](#) / [See more](#)

### **Networking**

Members of the Association of Business Women in Serbia attend the regular monthly ABW meetings of the *Women's Business Club*. Also, at the beginning of this year was established e-IBWC, an online section of the *International Business Women Club* (IBWC), with the idea to bring together women entrepreneurs from abroad, business women from our diaspora, as well as women who are not of our origin, providing them with certain packages of services and connecting them with members of the Association from Serbia. Online format enables women entrepreneurs from other countries to get together and network with our members from Serbia. [Read more](#)

### **Publications**

In 2020, ABW Serbia issued 5 publications, ***Success Flower 2020*** (printed edition), ***Support to Vulnerable Groups of Women for Inclusion in the Labor Market in the Context of the Consequences Caused by the COVID-19 Pandemic*** within the project of the same name, e-catalog of products ***Touch of the Sky*** within the project Building the Intergenerational and Intercultural Bridge of Economic Prosperity for Women in Raska and Sjenica (online edition), ***Unlocking the Potential of Rome Women Returnees and the Other Vulnerable Groups of Women for the Inclusive Economic Development*** within the project of the same name (Serbian and English version, printed edition), ***Catalog of products and services of ABW members*** (online edition). In 2021 two more publications are planned, *Success Flower 2021* and publication about innovation in women's entrepreneurship. [Read more](#)

In Belgrade, September 14, 2021