



Success Stories
#ChangingCities



A Women's Start-Up Specializing in Preparing Medieval Dishes Launches in the Vinnytsia Region

In the autumn of 2020, a start-up project called "Queen Bona's Kitchen", focused on preparing medieval dishes, was launched in the City of Bar, Vinnytsia Region. It was named after the city's founder - Polish Queen Bona Sforza. Oksana Bas, a resident of the village of Haiove, in the Bar Rayon, started the gastronomic initiative. One of the important stages in developing the idea of the start-up was Oksana's participation in business basics training provided with the support of the Partnership for Local Economic Development and Democratic Governance (PLEDDG) Project. Such training activities help women unleash their business potential and provide fundamental knowledge not only about business planning, but also about product promotion.

“I knew that the training event would give me much more information than just 'how to register a private enterprise.' I learned how to effectively sell goods or services, which online sales platforms are currently available, how they work, and how to use them effectively. Moreover, I learned a lot from other participants: women who actively demonstrate creativity in completely different areas,” said **Oksana Bas, the founder of the Queen Bona's Kitchen Project.**

The idea of Queen Bona's Kitchen evolved gradually, drawing on lengthy experience in providing rural green tourism services in the village of Haiove, where Oksana Bas and her husband have been receiving guests on the Podilska Rodyna Estate for over 13 years. Oksana has long studied the facts and traditions of the Middle Ages. She knows dozens of legends about Queen Bona Sforza and is deeply interested in the history of the region. Oksana is also the founder of the Bona Sforza Women's Club which brings together about 25 local women to support and promote each other's initiatives.

“Our rural estate provides recreational services for tourists. It is very interesting here! For example, there is a children's program: 'The Interesting Village of Haiove.' Before the outbreak of the COVID-19 pandemic, student groups came to us to participate in hands-on workshops: children baked bread, made toys from corn husks or dried grass, got acquainted with ancient rural life, acted out theatrical courtship scenes, sang lullabies, learned to milk a cow, and to forge horseshoes. From an entrepreneurial perspective, the Podilska Rodyna Estate has come a long way from loans and debts to generating profits. Last year, I faced the following questions: how should I move on? Is it possible to change something or introduce innovations? Is it realistic to expand my business in a small village? It was important to find out what options were available at that time and whether they were viable and effective. That is why I decided to attend business training for women provided by the PLEDDG Project. After the training, I had many different ideas, but the pandemic created barriers. At first I thought that the quarantine would be temporary and I should wait a bit, but later I decided to change direction, adapt to new circumstances, and take action in a changing and uncertain environment,” said **Oksana Bas.**

In the summer of 2020, the business plan for Queen Bona's Kitchen as a "small craft restaurant with open spaces for enjoying food and experiences," was one of the winners of a competition of start-up business plans, conducted by the Vinnytsia Oblast State Administration and WALL (an association of entrepreneurs). The start-up recreates the atmosphere of the medieval times when the City of Bar was founded, including the way food is prepared and served, relevant accompanying music, clothes, etc.

“The location was not chosen by chance. In the village of Chemerysy-Barski, there is a small mountain with a wonderful view of Bar, the Riv River, and surrounding villages. This mountain was once called Lysukha, and recently it was renamed Bona Sforza Mountain – in accordance with the legend saying that the queen decided to establish the City of Bar here in 1533. Now a new tourist location is emerging on this mountain, and this is where we will open our restaurant. We want the place to have a special charm and become a popular tourist attraction. Bona’s Kitchen will by no means be a typical restaurant. Dishes will be prepared in the open air on the fire, as in medieval times. Guests can buy food served on paper plates or packaging and sit directly on the grass on their blankets. We will also arrange special picnic areas in plant labyrinths, where food will be served in wooden and metal dishes. We will start with a limited number of dishes: primarily those that were most enjoyed by guests of the Podilska Rodyna Estate. Next summer, we will test all this in practice, and we will do catering during the cold seasons of the year,” said **Oksana Bas**.

In October, Queen Bona’s Kitchen received its first order for catering services: it hosted fifteen participants in a business basics training event, organized by the PLEDDG Project. Although the hostess of the Kitchen had to cook all night and, the following day, drive 80 km to Vinnytsia, where the training event took place, everything went very well (and tasted delicious too!). Oksana uses only local seasonal products for cooking, guaranteeing ingredients of high quality and freshness, as well as supporting local producers.

“It was important for me to finally try to provide catering services in practice, to see the reaction of people and to receive their feedback. I am very grateful to the PLEDDG Project for the opportunity to demonstrate my skills. I provided women with muffins, baked apples with cottage cheese filling, panna cotta with fresh peaches, cookies in the shape of Bona Sforza’s seal, plus raspberry and blackberry teas. In addition, I made a speech to participants at the training event and told my story, so the catering case became an illustrative example. I am sure that communication and sharing best practices between women plays a very important role, contributing to greater strength and faith in their endeavors,” added **Oksana**.

PLEDDG-sponsored training activities provide women with new knowledge and inspiration to start their own businesses. They also serve as a platform for building useful contacts that later evolve into mutually beneficial cooperation. For example, Oksana Bas got acquainted with Lesya Zianaurova from Vinnytsia at the training event. Lesya is a designer and craftswoman who sews clothes, including felt items. Oksana liked the products so much that she presented the first Queen Bona’s Kitchen catering event in a themed dress designed by Lesya.

“I made a lot of contacts during training. This is a good opportunity to share best practices with women who are in business. I have been sewing clothes for a long time, and about six years ago I mastered a felting technique to make more exclusive designs. Oksana Bas and I immediately started active collaboration. She invited me to present a collection of clothes in Bar. We have complementary plans, and we hope that they soon will be implemented despite the quarantine. After the training, other women and I residing in Vinnytsia created a public organization bringing together craftswomen in our city. Thirty-two craftswomen have already joined the organization. They work in various creative areas: designing jewelry from beads, copper, and natural stone, making toys, knitting, embroidering, and painting. This year, we are actively using an online format for meetings – we learn to present ourselves and our own work, share best practices, and support each other,” said **Lesya Zianaurova, participant in the Business Basics training for women**.

Business training events for women initiated by the PLEDDG Project stimulate entrepreneurial activity in some cities and villages. Queen Bona’s Kitchen demonstrates that women can develop the region’s tourism potential, create new jobs, increase local budget revenues, and contribute to the growth of related businesses and surrounding communities. International studies¹ show that if women participated at the same level of activity as men in business, the global GDP could grow by 3-6%, a gain for the world economy of an additional \$2.5 to \$5 trillion², thereby strengthening the role of women as a driver of economic growth benefiting everyone.

¹ Boston Consulting Group analysis, 2019

² Boston Consulting Group analysis, 2019



The series of success stories #ChangingCities demonstrate successful examples and innovative approaches to democratic governance and local economic development in Zaporizhzhia, Vinnytsia, Poltava and Ivano-Frankivsk oblasts in Ukraine, that have resulted from the efforts of the international technical assistance project “Partnership for Local Economic Development and Democratic Governance” (PLEDDG) which is being implemented by the Federation of Canadian Municipalities and funded by Global Affairs Canada.

