



Mentoring for mutual benefit: Aleksandra and Radostina

Aleksandra is the Deputy Director of Bexing, a company in Serbia that manufactures and sells fire fighting vehicles and equipment. Her father started the company in 1990, but Aleksandra first worked externally before returning to the family business. When her father passed away in early 2016, Aleksandra stepped in to take the lead.

Although she felt confident in her knowledge of the company, Aleksandra wanted to work with a mentor to gain new ideas to maintain the company's prestige in a turbulent economy and to expand to new markets.

Through her participation in the European Bank for Reconstruction and Development's (EBRD) [Women in Business Programme](#), Aleksandra joined our Mentoring Women in Business Programme in May 2016. She was matched with Radostina, a senior manager in talent, learning and development for an international cosmetics company in Bulgaria. With Radostina's background in business planning, operations and HR, she was perfectly placed to help Aleksandra achieve her objectives. Seeing mentoring as an opportunity for mutual learning, they set out an action plan based both on Aleksandra's needs and Radostina's learning objectives.

Together, Aleksandra and Radostina used their mentoring sessions to review her business plan and identify her long-term goals for the company. This included diversifying the company's offering to include consulting services and discussing strategies to enter new markets, as Aleksandra was keen to start exporting to Eastern Europe. They evaluated the business landscape and brainstormed ways to seek out new clients.

As a result, Aleksandra launched her consulting service and has already gained new clients including an airport and an industrial complex. Her revenue also increased despite the difficult economy and she is currently in discussion with potential investors about securing investment to continue growing the company.

Aleksandra developed a great relationship with Radostina and said, *“I would like to recommend the Cherie Blair Mentoring Programme to everyone. It is a great experience to be part of it... to learn about different cultures, to get new business ideas.”*

The mentoring relationship was beneficial to Radostina too: *“It was so satisfying seeing Aleksandra develop further her business. Both Aleksandra and I were motivated and dedicated time to build the relationship and gain from the programme... it inspired me to start a career as a freelance trainer!”*



Our partnership with EBRD

The EBRD Women in Business Programme helps women-led small and medium-sized enterprises to access the finance and the know-how they need to grow. The EBRD provides access to finance through credit lines to local banks dedicated to develop women-led SMEs, alongside business advice to help businesses become more competitive. The programme also offers mentoring, training and networking opportunities to promote women entrepreneurship and, more broadly, women’s participation in business.

Drawing on our expertise supporting women entrepreneurs through our pioneering and industry-leading Mentoring Women in Business Programme, we were pleased to partner with EBRD to deliver the mentoring aspect of their Women in Business Programme.