Magda, 67, Seamstress, Nicosia

1. **Can you tell me a few things about yourself? Where/when were you born? Did you study? Did you live abroad?**

*Why do you want to know my age? [laughs] I am 67 going on 68. I was born in Yiallousa, beautiful village in occupied Cyprus. I went to school, not all the way through Lyceum. I liked school, but my parents had different views. At those times, girls learned the basics and then they had to learn a craft and get married and raise children. I got married young, at 19. Before getting married I helped around the house, I helped my mother to raise my younger brother and sister and I also contributed some money to the house … not a lot … I didn’t make much as a seamstress. I learned the craft from my aunt, Elenou. She was a very good seamstress. Everyone knew her for her skill. When I got married, I continued to work from home. We were a young couple so we needed every penny we could find. Then, the war came and everything changed. We moved to Nicosia and things were bad. So many people were unemployed so it wasn’t easy to find a job and start all over. My husband found a job at a garage fixing cars and I found a job in a factory making clothes. The salary wasn’t much but it was ok. Then the kids came so I started doing some sewing from home for extra money. In 1992, the factory closed down so I started working on my own from home. It suits me fine right now so I continue. I work for 4 days per week, 4-5 hours per day. The rest of the time I look after my grandchildren and do chores in the house, cook for the family etc.*

2. **Where you an owner of other businesses in the past? For how long have you been an entrepreneur?**

*Technically it is not a business. I don’t have any business cards but people recommend me, they call me and say “Mrs Magda, x person recommended you to me…I need this and that”. I don’t consider myself a business owner but a person with a skill that I offer to people for some money. I don’t pay any rent or anything…I just have my sewing machine. For as long as these hands [shows her hands] can sew I will continue. I like it, it is not tiring for me. When I stop, I think that will be the moment when I close my eyes for good.*

1. **Can you tell me the background of the business you have now? When and why did you open the business? Are you the only owner? Is the company registered?**

<See question 1, where informant already answered part of this question>

*I am just a seamstress working on my own, I get paid a few money from each client. Why register as a company? I started this job in order to help out my husband with the family income, business grew but I am not making tons of money. I don’t think myself as a company, I am just the neighbourhood seamstress. People in the area know me, they like my work and I know my clients … I’ve known them for years. We are all neighbours.*

1. **How many employees does the business have at the moment? How were they hired, based on which criteria?**

<Not applicable as the informant is working on her own>

1. **Would you say the business is successful? Which factors in your opinion contribute to its success/failure?**

*The business is going fine, for my needs I would say it is successful. I don’t expect to make millions from this job. In the old days, women used to sew clothes…dresses for special occasions. The job of the seamstress changed now as most buy clothes from shops and just come to us for alterations. Something that needs to be shortened or get tighter. Things like that. So the money of course is not the same as we could get if we were making clothes from scratch. But I am happy.*

1. **Can you tell me what are the main factors that led you to become an entrepreneur?**

*Like I said earlier, I wanted to make some money, not a lot, but some extra to help out with the expenses of the family. I knew the skill, I didn’t want to go and work somewhere else. Maybe they wouldn’t hire me as I didn’t have any other qualifications, I hardly finished school. Working from home was also convenient, when I didn’t have work I did chores around the house. Now I look after my grandchildren, even if a client comes I can still look after the kids.*

1. **What problems would you say you encountered in keeping your business in operation?**

*It is also difficult to find suppliers, in the past there were many suppliers of fabrics, now just a few shops so you need to know where to go. Otherwise, the client will not be happy. But today most clients want alterations. If a client wants something specific to be sewn from the beginning it is usually something they saw in a magazine, maybe it is difficult to make. I have a simple sewing machine. I can’t make wonders! If I had more money available I would buy a better sewing machine but at my age I don’t plan to be the next Michalis Aslanis! (Greek fashion designer)*

1. **Thinking about the experience you’ve gained and the experience you continue to gain as a business entrepreneur, would you say you are suitable and capable in maintaining a business even if it has internal or external problems?**

*I’ve done it for years so I guess I am quite good at it. Experience is important but you need to be good at what you do. Then people will acknowledge your work and spread the word about you. This is how you build a client portfolio. And you need to be polite and smile at the clients. Ask them how they are doing, establish a relationship with them so they will come back.*