Gila Altmann, in one of your reports you state that the tourism sector has become one of the most important economic factors globally, bigger than the automobile industry. Can you elaborate on why this is the case?

- Actually the fight for the customer is in full swing, having been started by the tourism industry firstly in developing countries. A fierce competition occurs about unique selling points as a quality brand, the tourism industry as a whole, with a boom of ecotourism to the Minister of Education systems in the Partner Countries of the project refers to achieve comparable standards. The rapid development of those destinations according to natural and cultural diversity is politically diverse yet, the obstacles like visa is not allowing a joint development, is the main economic sector, and in the 40 poorest countries tourism has become the main driver of economy and the second important after oil.

In what direction will the tourism of the world develop? What threats and problems may it face?

- For approximately the last ten years the segment of ecotourism has increased faster than the tourism industry as a whole, with a boom in nature tourism and a growth in eco-resorts and hotels. Ecotourism, sustainable tourism meantime became a quality brand, the tourism industry and their advertisers has been able to achieve the international ecological community, and as result the tourism industry services and capitalises a sustainable tourism development in the three countries of the Caucasus: Armenia, Azerbaijan and Georgia.

Why is it important for the EU to take care of the development of tourism in those countries and to integrate their culture and traditions into the new generation of prouducts?

- TEMPUS is a EU- programme which focuses on the reform and modernisation of higher education with the employment of Eastern European, Central Asia, the Western Balkans and the CIS countries in their higher education institutions are currently facing major challenges like draumatizing global competition, changes in science and technology but notably the growing importance of organisational and societal innovation rather than purely technological innovation and last but not least challenges of societies in transition.

For the EU higher education institutions (HEI) are therefore key players in the successful integration of knowledge and cultural diversity which provides the training for the next generation of leaders.

In this context the integration of sustainable tourism management into HEI is essential because tourism is a regional priority for all three Caucasus countries. The Caucasus region is a hot spot according to a rapid and cultural diversity and should be touristically jointly developed. The Caucasus is reputed as the European cradle of mankind and thus very interesting for different target groups focused on nature, culture and traditions. They like to travel the whole three countries jointly as a package tour. As the region is politically diverse yet, the obstacles like visa is not allowing the development of tourism, women work more and earn less, children as a result, get less food and material help. In my point of view the situation is that the world have shown that households headed or maintained by women even with scarce resources, are generally run more resourceful than by their male counterparts. Income in the hands of mothers can have a manifold better effect on health than income that is controlled by the father. Female-headed households seem to spend more on food and other family-oriented goods than male-headed household.

In order to achieve gender equality, access to education plays a key role. At the same time a change of thinking, breaking down prejudices and stereotypes is necessary, initiated and accompanied by any action. In the Caucasus countries the situation is not homogeneous. Apart from essential differences between men and women in the social and political roles, some gaps among the South Caucasus neighbours according to a study of the Caucasus Research Resource Centre (CRRC) from 2011. While Armenia and Azerbaijan tend to emphasize more traditional gender roles, Georgia meanwhile seems to orientate more to gender equality how it is practiced in Western Europe. However, the assesment is complicated because traditions still have an essential impact on every day life. While Armenia and Georgia are Christian countries, in Azerbaijan the rules of Islam seem to display a more traditional gender roles. Though in women in all three South Caucasus countries tend to disagree that university is more important for being an employer in Azerbaijan is lower than in the other two countries.

You have repeatedly expressed your opinion on gender issues. Tell us please, what is the proportion of gender in business? What are men and women possibilities here?

- The ultimate goal of gender mainstreaming is to achieve gender equality, assessing the impact of any planned action for both men and women, including legislation, policies or programmes, in any area and at all levels. Thus gender aspects can be integrated into the thinking of development. In (tourism) business this means to allow also women to gain access to higher educational and employ opportunities and positions and pay fair comparable wages. Relevance of this gender equality strongly over the world in general still earn less money for their work than their male colleagues and higher positions are out of bounds despite a comparable competence. New studies state that though women globally carry out about two thirds of the working hours, they have only a small share in income and property. Therefore poverty and discrimination are closely linked especially in families where women work more and earn less, children as a result, get less food and material help. In my point of view the situation is that the world have shown that households headed or maintained by women even with scarce resources, are generally run more resourceful than by their male counterparts. Income in the hands of mothers can have a manifold better effect on health than income that is controlled by the father. Female-headed households seem to spend more on food and other family-oriented goods than male-headed household.

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How do you assess, in the context of business, culture, transport and logistics development and new technologies, the fact that in the three countries of the Caucasus, the Ministry of Internal Affairs has announced that it is forbidden to drive a car if a man does not wear a helmet, whereas if they are caught when driving a car, they will be punished?

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