



EMWOSE
Women from ethnic minorities in social enterprise

Interview form

Overview

Name: Justyna Cwojdzinska

Company: Polish Arts Festival

Website: <https://polishartsfestival.ie/>



Justyna is originally from Poland but has been living in Ireland for the past 15 years. She's a mother of 3 and runs the social enterprise known as the Polish Arts Festival, which she helped found 13 years ago. It aims to promote the different faces of the Pole abroad, not just as a worker but as an artist, a member of the local community and a contributor to European cultural heritage.

Justyna outlines some of the steps she took in establishing a social enterprise. These included knowing how and where to go for funding or get benefits in kind and she also outlines the importance of volunteering.

Volunteering is a beautiful, absolutely beautiful way of integrating with the society, giving back, showing what you have there and that we are eager to share so I really encourage you to sign up for volunteering programs.

Justyna also outlines her experience in relation to funding.

Try get to know what is the application process is. There is plenty of help there from the site of the embassy and consulate to give you a hand on how to write, what to write, what resources to use to support. You are applying for funding a year before your event so get familiar with your local council and consulate section. Send an email and they will reply to you and there is definitely a strategy behind to support you.

How Polish Arts Festival became at the very moment of the most important events on the island for the Polish embassy. They were with us as a first founder and as a first supporter and we were able to grow with them and without their support and help that would just simply not happen.

The reason behind the development of a social enterprise is also important to focus on.

Interview transcript

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It's very important for yourself to think why you're doing this because why makes it basically, the whole world different. If you know your why, then even if there are obstacles you will be able to complete it cause you know your why. It can be very personal. It can be and the more personal the better because then you will work on the resources that you have within you to support it.

Justyna also approached the Polish community and Polish community businesses.

Make them feel that by contributing to that cause they're contributing to the perception of Polish people abroad. So I made it very personal for them why they should take part in it, why they should sponsor us and sponsorship is not always money because sponsorship can be like they gave us catering, or they gave us a benefit in kind in terms of printing which is a massive cost.

As well as offering advice, Justyna also outlines a number of the challenges and barriers that she has experienced.

There are always obstacles and challenges. First of all, is to get people that are committed to do it so that you don't end up doing it yourself. Funding was always the challenge and getting the money but there are ways around it and if you put your heart into it and you go to the meetings and you are eager to learn, and access the workshops that are available, you can actually be successful. Maybe not the first time. Maybe the application will be turned down the first time but submit another one and another one and another one.

As well as the challenges she has faced, Justyna also offers some final advice for aspiring women.

Everything is possible if you know why you're doing it and it makes you happy so if it's in line with your inner self and your space and just run it in harmony with yourself I'd say and everything will be fine.

