

**WOMEN IN FAMILY BUSINESS: EMPIRICAL FINDINGS**

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**ABSTRACT**

Women form a significant part of labour force in many countries, so in Austria and Germany. Although the percentage of women in entry and middle management positions is constantly increasing, the proportion of female CEOs and members of supervisory boards remains comparably low. Consequently, the issue of "the glass ceiling" continues to be a relevant problem. Combining the business operations with the complexity of interpersonal relationships, family firms expand the competences of the business community. Traditionally, women in family businesses have played supportive roles that were referred to the family rather than to the business. Today, an increasing number of women are taking on a more active role in family businesses. Although the differences in goals, attitudes, strategic orientation, ownership and performance between family and non-family businesses have been analysed in every detail, the role of women remains less researched. Family businesses might have a higher proportion of women at all institutional levels (owners, executive and supervisory boards). The aim of this study is to explore the role of women in Austrian and German family firms and to develop recommendations for the better use of the untapped potential of women.

Keywords: *women and business; family business; empirical study*