

HE Victoria Gosling from The Reader Berlin and NE Gijs Van Koningsveld remember their Erasmus for Young Entrepreneurs Exchange in 2013.

Section 1. Introduction (background information)

HE: Victoria



My company, The Reader Berlin, has off to a flying start. Founded in 2010, we offer creative writing courses, events, and editing services. My background was as a writer, editor and teacher and The Reader brought all these things together. Even better, it created a community of writers and made me a multitude of new friends.

I heard about the Erasmus for Young Entrepreneurs Programme from a friend, a designer who was hosting new entrepreneurs in my hometown of Berlin. I decided to participate because I was hoping to fill a skills gap. By 2013, when the exchange with Gijs took place, I was looking to enter publishing – I wanted to create an e-book and print anthology of the winners of a writing competition I had organised - but had no experience

of the industry myself.

By joining the programme as a host, I was hoping to find a New Entrepreneur who could share their skills and experience – but what I got was a lot more than that. I was a bit nervous about how much paperwork there would be, or if mentoring Gijs who was in the process of setting up his own independent publishing imprint, would place too many demands on my time. However, neither proved to be the case. Together Gijs and I created the first Reader Berlin anthology (I've now published three with a fourth in the pipeline), but more than just his knowledge of publishing, Gijs proved a great sounding board, full of ideas and enthusiasm for what I was trying to achieve.

NE: Gijs



I was working as an editor at a publishing house in Amsterdam and had been thinking of starting my own business for a while. I wanted to use the new developments in digital publishing, such as e-books and publishing on demand, to launch an imprint solely devoted to producing English-language translations of important but overlooked European literature. The Erasmus for Young Entrepreneurs Programme struck me as a unique opportunity to learn from an already established entrepreneur and gain some experience abroad at the same time. As a company connected to the world of arts, literature and publishing, The Reader Berlin seemed like the ideal HE.

- When did/will you set up your company (if relevant)?

I founded my company, the publishing imprint November Editions, in 2014 – about seven months after my exchange. That same year the first three titles were published.

- What were your expectations before starting the programme?

I expected that the exchange would be a chance to learn from someone who already had the experience of setting up a business, as well as an opportunity to live abroad in an exciting city where I could meet interesting new people from all over Europe and gain a more international perspective on things. The Reader Berlin is at the centre of Berlin's English-language literary community and I was keen to learn how Victoria managed this aspect of her business.

Section 2. Activities (undertaken during exchange)

HE: Victoria

Gijs's exchange began during a busy period. I had just launched The Reader Berlin's intensive summer courses and I was hosting a visiting film director, Conor Horgan, who would show his film *One Hundred Mornings* and take part in an exclusive Q&A with the students. Gijs was super helpful – throwing himself into whatever was going on, from supporting the tutors to washing the teacups! Our main project together was working on the anthology and we spent a lot of time talking about November Editions, Gijs's imprint, and visiting places where the German Expressionist authors that Gijs planned to publish had once lived and worked.

NE: Gijs

- How does the HE run his business? How did you actively participate in the day-to-day activities?

Victoria was a fantastic host. She's very hospitable, skilled at what she does and pleasant to work with. Her professionalism and upbeat spirit were inspiring and quickly made me feel part of the team, so to speak. On a daily basis I helped her by editing and writing mailings, newsletters, web content and social media posts, but also with practical things like photocopying, preparing the course venue, making coffee or helping tutors rearrange the room for a course.

- Provide examples of activities carried out during the exchange (project activities? conferences? other?)

The first project we worked on was the publication of the Reader Berlin anthology. Here I could really contribute with my experience in working with designers, typesetters and so on. Another fascinating project was the Paths to Publishing conference organised by The Reader in cooperation with several European partners from the world of publishing. This was a great learning experience in terms of organisation and promotion, and a network opportunity to dream of.

Section 3 Benefits and Impact

NE: Gijs

- What did you learn from the experience? Do you feel more confident about your business start-up or have you changed plan?

Not only did Victoria have a wealth of practical information to share related to administration, invoicing, taxes and other less romantic aspects of entrepreneurship, but she also gave me the opportunity to help organise successful events and improve my social media skills, to give but a few examples. This definitely contributed to my gaining enough confidence to take the step of launching November Editions.

How will the exchange benefit your and your HE's business? New opportunities: Further partnerships? Cross-border trade?

It's no exaggeration when I say that the exchange was instrumental to the successful launch of November Editions, and almost immediately resulted in several new international partnerships. Through Victoria and The Reader Berlin, I met the person who would later build my website. They, in turn, introduced me to someone in the UK who became my designer and yet another person in Spain who became my typesetter. In 2018, my company collaborated with a Scottish and German-led theatre company on a major stage production based on our translation of *The Last Days of Mankind* by Viennese satirist Karl Kraus. The play featured a pan-European cast of 35 and premiered in Edinburgh on the centenary of the WWI armistice. The Erasmus for Young Entrepreneurs Programme and the Reader Berlin made all this possible.

HE: Victoria

As well as gaining new skills related to print-on-demand and ebook publishing, I learned how helpful it was to have someone committed to supporting my business. Entrepreneurship can be risky and a bit lonely. Having a supporter with whom I could discuss ideas, troubleshoot and just rely on when things didn't go as planned was marvellous. I think I benefitted as much from Gijs' insights as I did from his skills and experience in publishing.

Gijs and I are still in contact. In November 2018, I was delighted to go to Edinburgh for the final night of *The Last Days of Mankind*, the play based on his company's translation of Karl Kraus. It was a smash hit and would never have come about if Gijs hadn't started November Editions. I like to think the Erasmus for Young Entrepreneurs Programme can take some credit!

Section 4. NE testimonial/quote

"I learned so much from my exchange. I developed new skills, gained professional confidence, and expanded my network with new contacts from all over Europe. Victoria gave me a head start with the founding of my own company and made me feel welcome in a city that has since become my second home. I'd highly recommend the programme to anyone who is serious about putting their business idea into practice."

Section 5. HE testimonial/quote

"My time with Gijs was inspiring! I continued to benefit long after the exchange had ended: I had gained a new friend, a new network, new skills and was motivated to go on and host further NEs. In the five years since Gijs was my NE, I have hosted nine New Entrepreneurs and have learnt something different from all of them! The Erasmus for Young Entrepreneurs Programme is fantastic."

Section 6: Contact Details

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Please share our contact details on the website – internal and external