

# LAW FIRMS AND ENTREPRENEURSHIP

Another Successful Story from the Erasmus for Young Entrepreneurs Programme

**L**aw Firms are never seen as real businesses. In the common imagination, legal consultancy is the only activity they conduct. Yet, a relevant entrepreneurial component underlies the everyday work in this sector.

This time, the Erasmus for Young Entrepreneurs programme brings us to explore Ms. Dominique Bogaert's opinion. She is partner lawyer at the well-known Daldewolf Law Firm in Brussels and member of the Belgian-Italian Chamber of Commerce, besides participating in the Erasmus for Young Entrepreneurs programme as Host Entrepreneur. She has been hosting Lavinia Panerai since September, a young lawyer from Italy seeking to run a multidisciplinary law firm of her own.

We asked Dominique Bogaert some questions about her entrepreneurial exchange ongoing.

**Dominique, how do you think this exchange programme is helping you to enrich your law firm and what is the added value a New Entrepreneur from another European country can bring to your already successful business?**

*This question must be placed in the general context of our profession. Although they are self-employed persons (therefore, each of them being his or her own enterprise), lawyers do not always feel comfortable with the concept of management. Managing requires very specific skills, in parallel with the professional competence and expertise. Our profession is currently facing a lot of changes and challenges. Law firms are indeed facing an increasing competition from other professions (accountants, consultants, etc.) which are not necessarily submitted to the same ethical constraints, there is a growing orientation towards niche sectors, the exercise of the profession requires additional specific know-how (such as digitalization, marketing, etc.). The reality of law firms in the EU vary also very much from one country to another. No firm (as big or as well-established as it may be) can ignore these challenges. They have to be tackled (taken "à bras le corps" as we say it in French). That is why at DALDEWOLF we have opted (amongst other) to focus on diversity, on the promotion of our insider young talents and on the development of our presence in expanding markets like China or Africa.*

*In this context, I believe that having the possibility to exchange views on this profession and its future with a New Entrepreneur is totally sensed and valuable. After all, they will represent and build up the future of our profession. Of*



*course, the success of the programme will depend on how each Entrepreneur will address the project and how far each of them is willing to dedicate him or herself to the project.*

*Due to the conditions of exercise that are proper to this profession (mandatory training practice), a young lawyer freshly graduated will (at first) not be immediately involved in the management of the firm. He or she will however be concerned by it from the beginning of his or her activity and, with a fresh and different look. This is why I believe that, although the young lawyer has no experience in the management of a law firm, a New Entrepreneur coming from another country can bring a valuable contribution to a well-established law firm.*

**Do you think this exchange programme represents a useful experience to build or reinforce the European entrepreneurial identity within our single market?**

*I believe that the organization of exchanges in an entrepreneurial context will contribute to create or strengthen a foundation of common values within EU. A confrontation with the diversity in cultural backgrounds and professional habits or constraints will necessarily mutually benefit both the law firm and the young lawyer. Building a professional environment that takes into account this diversity, and benefitting from its richness, can only be worthwhile to forge a good common understanding and develop of smooth professional practices throughout the Union.*

Would you suggest this experience to other colleagues in your sector? Why can this international entrepreneurial experience be relevant to legal firms?

*I would certainly recommend this experience to my colleagues for the reasons partially explicated in my first answer. It sounds like stating the obvious, but exchanging experiences and views from professional realities in different countries is always profitable. In our case, we had a particular interest in hosting an Italian Colleague as, due to the presence of an Italian Desk in our law firm, this allows us to improve our knowledge of Italian law and procedures and, consequently, to provide to our client (either Italian or Belgian) a 360 degree view about the differences between both Italian and Belgian legal systems. Creating and strengthening the professional contacts is also a must for a law firm which wants to expand its international footprint and presence in the (local and international) market.*

In your opinion, which are the strengths and weaknesses of this exchange programme?

*In my opinion, the strength of the exchange programme is the ability to create a win-win professional exchange as well as creating lasting professional contacts. It will also contribute to enhance the mobility of the entrepreneurs within EU. Some weaknesses may lie in a wrong understanding of the objectives to be achieved by limiting it to a simple practice that would be performed in a foreign company. It is very important to involve the New Entrepreneur in any aspect of the hosting enterprise. In any case, the success*

*of each individual experience will depend on the concrete implementation of this project.*

The entrepreneurial component outstands in this interview kindly granted by Dominique Bogaert, which explicits the relevance of this international entrepreneurial experience in all kind of sector.

**Erasmus for Young  
Entrepreneurs**  **Global**

It is after years of successful stories coming from the extremely successful 10-year-old Erasmus for Young Entrepreneurs programme - the Erasmus programme fostering relations between Entrepreneurs within Europe - that the European Commission launched the Erasmus for Young Entrepreneurs Global pilot exchange programme. Also known as EYE Global, it is a programme supporting exchanges between New Entrepreneurs based in Europe and Host Entrepreneurs based in USA (States of New York and Pennsylvania), Singapore and Israel.

As Belgian-Italian Chamber of Commerce, we play a crucial role as Intermediary Organisation involved in the selection of Host Entrepreneurs from Singapore and Israel desiring to be part of this entrepreneurial experience. This exchange programme, partially financed by the European Commission, aims at fostering entrepreneurial relations between New and Host Entrepreneurs at an international level. Young or aspiring entrepreneurs can have the chance of applying for an exchange period abroad to learn strategies and methodologies from experienced entrepreneurs beyond European borders.

If interested in this challenging entrepreneurial opportunity, do not hesitate to contact us.



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