

ENTREPRENEURSHIP ACROSS EU: SUCCESSFUL STORIES

In the collective imagination, there are several reasons why Belgium is highly regarded as a leading country. Beer, chocolate, European Institutions are some of them. If you have been at least once in this small country, you could have probably noticed its heterogeneous society and the kindness of its people, maybe even a pinch of disorganization that creates the impression of a country “less Nordic” of what it is supposed to be.

Belgium is far over its *clichés* and has surprises in store for everyone. This is the case of a very specific sector in which Belgium stands as one of the main leaders in Europe; and probably only professionals and enthusiasts are aware about it. We are talking about horses and their breeding, training and trade.

Recently, published data have showed the impressive numbers of this success: more than 350.000 horses in the country (a population that can be compared with that of largely bigger countries like Italy, Germany or France), about 11 horses for square meters, 1 each 31 inhabitants.

This time, the Erasmus for Young Entrepreneurs brings us to explore the exchange between Frantz Ducci, from Belgium, and Susanna Cremaschi, from Italy, respectively host and new entrepreneurs. They started their cooperation some weeks ago in this sector that sees Belgium as one of the World leaders. An excellence meets another excellence.

Frantz and Susanna started collaborating together in May. Frantz can prove a long entrepreneurial experience: since 2003 he has been breeding, training and trading horses and he has developed a precious experience at amateurish as well as at high professional level.

Susanna, on her side, has a long experience as manager of a recreational structure that hosts children and adolescents with the goal of encouraging them to enter in contact with nature through direct experiences with horses. She operated also as horse trainer and breeder for young horses, but always as employee. Now, she wants to do the next step and start her own business.

Dear Frantz and Susanna, is the exchange matching your expectations?

FRANTZ: “Yes, I found in Susanna someone who really wants to learn from my experience. Belgium is nowadays «the place to be» in the world of equestrian sport (in particular jumping),



and she seems ready to profit from this. Here she can see how far this passion and this job can go. In all directions, business, competitions, breeding, veterinary etc. All linked together. And even if she has some experience, some of these topics are totally new for her; she can enlarge her vision of this world, learn a new way of thinking and working, and develop an entrepreneurial vision of our sector.”

SUSANNA: “This exchange is proving useful for a first-level knowledge of the activity of breeding, training and trade of the horse in the specific reality of Belgium. I believe that this first period is however too short to say that I have already fulfilled my expectations. There are still many aspects that I need to look into, especially with regard to my specific sector, which is breeding. In any case, in this period all the horses were transferred to Frantz’s facilities and for each of them was found the most suitable accommodation according to their needs.”

What prompted you to select your counterpart for the Erasmus for Young Entrepreneurs?

F: “First, she is open-minded and she loves her job, despite all the challenges she has to face. Moreover, I like her approach, always asking questions and getting the best from each answer, rather than thinking she always acts in the right way.”

S: “I have identified and chosen Franz as host because of the characteristics of the structure he manages and his skills seemed to me a good point of support in the initial phase of my experience. My expectations were confirmed because not only I found in Franz a rigorous and competent professional, but also

a willing and helpful person ready to support and motivate me, especially in the initial, difficult phase of insertion."

Which are your expectations about the project? How do you think this can help you in improving or enriching your business?

F: *"Firstly, the possibility to help another person to evolve his or her own business. Positively contributing to this process thanks to my suggestions and experience would be a great satisfaction for me.*

Secondly, contacts are important in horse breeding as well as in other sectors. Indeed, sharing our network and relationships can provide me future business contacts in Italy. Finally, cooperation with Susanna can help me developing new skills in communication and teaching."



S: *"This experience led me to reconsider and better reflect on some of my initial expectations in relation to my business idea. Although my commitment in this sector will not change in substance, it will be improved to better identify risks, problems and opportunities in order to ensure the highest possibility of success."*



How the Erasmus for Young Entrepreneurs can be useful specifically in your sector? Would you suggest it to other colleagues? Can you detect some weaknesses and strenghts?

F: *"It is a little early to answer this question. This project can be useful to show young entrepreneurs how this sector works and that is possible to turn a passion into a job, despite the barrier to entry. So, you can become a horse breeder even without a rich family behind you.*

The Erasmus for Young Entrepreneurs could even be an interesting tool to convey to new generations of breeders those elements of precision, clarity in business and respect for colleagues and animals that must be the solid basis for equestrian sports."

S: *"Certainly, the network of relationships, which I have built so far and which I intend to further expand, has helped to make profitable the first part of this exchange. However, I believe that it takes longer to have more complete results and to make this exchange really effective, and I therefore expect to further extend my experience. In addition to the more specific contents of the exchange, other strengths are given by the possibility of putting into practice and perfecting one's own linguistic knowledge and experimenting, knowing new habits and lifestyles that help develop adaptability."*

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