

# Erasmus for Young Entrepreneurs

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### SUCCESS STORY

#### New Entrepreneur

Name and Surname: Antonina Pieluszcak  
Country: Poland  
Age: 22  
Status: Would-be entrepreneur  
Sector: Agricultural, horticultural, natural medicine and cosmetics



#### Host Entrepreneur

Name and Surname: Marina Kim  
Country: Italy  
Age: 42  
Experience: farm and country hotel management  
Sector: Agricultural, horticultural  
Name of business/website: La Selvella

#### Details of exchange:

Date of exchange: 06 August 2018 to 06 September 2018 - Duration of exchange: 1 month

#### Brief introduction

Antonina, 22 years old student. After 3rd year of studying Herbology and Phytotherapy at University of Life Sciences she realised that after graduation work perspectives would not be very wide - and the best option seemed self-employment.

After some researches she found information about Erasmus for Young Entrepreneurs Program. «I have thought that taking part in it would be a good opportunity to gain some practical knowledge about putting my interests (like herbology, permaculture, zero-waste, so called “natural” lifestyle) to a business – and learn if it’s possible to earn in this way.»

She found “a perfect Host”, Marina, who runs her agricultural farm -La Selvella- in the heart of Tuscany, province of Siena. She not only manages the farm, but also – during the season - cooks dinners for her guests, using products and herbs coming from local cultivations or from the farm, projected according to permaculture method. «Actually, I had not very clear idea, what exactly to expect from the exchange. I was only

convinced, that I want to learn, learn, and learn as much as possible during that month.»

### Activities undertaken

In her time spent at Marinas place Antonina realised how huge is difference between theory and practice.

«Putting zero-waste ideas into a practice is sometimes just impossible, and our convictions have to meet somewhere in the middle with such mundane issues like...financial viability.»

Working on the field and in La Selvella's garden Antonina learnt that permaculture space projecting is not always making huge changes in surroundings in one year, but small differences or problem solutions, which are huge changes in long-term distance.



«It's not only about tearing down and building from zero – level. It's rather way of thinking and... looking for compromises between the concept and the space we already have – especially when the possibilities of changes are limited, like in La Selvella, which is complex of very old buildings.»

Contact with guests, observing managing the reception and, generally, touristic side of agritourist, but also talks with Marina (who is wonderful, warm-hearted and very willing to share her experiences and knowledge person) have been fundamental elements for Antonina, because she realised how important is keeping the work-life balance and dealing with stress, which appears in everyday life in this kind of place, contrary to our ideas about simple and peaceful country life.

«Talks with Marina also has made me realise, how valuable is my hobby (or skill) of making my own, herbal cosmetics, which I always perceived as quite insignificant.»

### Benefits achieved

«The biggest lesson I've learned during exchange is that You cannot make everything on Your own, and really have to delegate your tasks, if You want to keep Your mental health (!). The condition is a strong team and people You can trust. It applies not only

to micro-scale, in managing the farm, but also in macro-scale, in promoting Your business.»

La Selvella is, since a few years, a part of project called “Biomavo”, which is a business network of small organic-food and herbs producers. Members of network work together on a share cultivation project where each specialises in own crops - the advantage is that they share all the expenses and obtain a larger quantity of products, which excellent quality is a result of smaller scale cultivation.

That larger obtained quantity allows to be more competitive on the market – and that way La Selvella starts to sell its products with label “Biomavo” in a few “healthy-food” stores in Siena and also in Netherlands. «About future prospect of cooperation – Marina had an idea to incorporate me to Biomavo network as natural cosmetics producer. The idea require rethinking regarding organisation of that long distance cooperation.»

After coming back to Poland Antonina joined the “Lubelska Kooperatywa Spożywcza” (food cooperative in Lublin) which is an alternative to shopping in stores. In October, she spent few days on herbal cosmetics workshops in Łódź, where she has learned a lot about creating formulas, preparing appropriate herbal extracts to different skin needs.

«During past few months, I was a customer of Cooperative, and from the end of this month (February 2019) I am going to be also a producer, supplying herbal, natural cosmetics.»

### **Quotation regarding the experience**

«Sometimes we receive quite unexpected effects of our decisions. I applied to a program with an idea of creating agritourism farm, but after seeing the practical aspect running it, I realised, that it is not exactly the dream job for me at this stage of life.

I had appreciated my skills and I had started to develop them even more, hoping for measurable results in not so far future!»