



European  
Commission

# 5 Years of Erasmus for Young Entrepreneurs



EN

## A Springboard for Business Creation and Growth

Internal Market,  
Industry,  
Entrepreneurship  
and SMEs



Prepared by

EUROCHAMBRES

A photograph of three young people, two women and one man, smiling and looking at a laptop screen. The woman on the left has dark hair, the woman in the middle has blonde hair, and the man on the right is partially visible. They are all wearing light-colored shirts. The background is bright and out of focus.

## Erasmus for Young Entrepreneurs

### Supporting entrepreneurship

Erasmus for Young Entrepreneurs is a cross-border exchange programme which aims to help new and aspiring entrepreneurs acquire relevant skills to run and grow a small business by working with an experienced entrepreneur in another country for one to six months. It increases their know-how and fosters cross-border transfer of knowledge and experience between entrepreneurs.

It has demonstrated a positive impact in stimulating innovative business practices, the development of new products and services and expansion into new national markets.

Erasmus for Young Entrepreneurs was launched in 2009 by the European Commission following an initiative of the European Parliament.

Erasmus for Young Entrepreneurs is one of the key actions of the Entrepreneurship 2020 Action Plan, which aims to reignite entrepreneurial spirit in Europe, support new businesses in crucial phases of their lifecycle and help them to grow.



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# Erasmus for Young **Entrepreneurs**

## Foreword by Elżbieta Bieńkowska

Small and Medium Enterprises represent 99.8% of businesses in Europe and contribute 60% of European private sector employment. They deserve all the support we can give them. That is why I am happy to recommend to you a European Union funded programme which, most importantly, is highly appreciated by entrepreneurs themselves.

Five years after its establishment in 2009, we are proud to celebrate the Erasmus for Young Entrepreneurs programme which helps boost businesses in a tangible way. The concept is simple yet powerful: budding entrepreneurs get hands-on experience while immersed in the business environment of another EU country.

Entrepreneurs who have taken part in the exchanges report that their companies are more resilient, grow more, and create more jobs. As illustrated in the brochure: some 87% of the start-ups founded by the Erasmus for Young Entrepreneurs alumni are still in business nowadays – while the average survival rate of start-ups after three years in Europe is only 57%. Furthermore, as a consequence of cooperating with an entrepreneur from another European country, they are also more active in foreign markets. 65% of the experienced entrepreneurs who have taken part in the programme, have extended their operations inside or outside the EU, and 53% have actually implemented new ideas to develop new products or services since their participation.

3 000 exchanges have taken place already and the new COSME programme has the resources to support at least 10 000 exchanges by 2020.

I recommend this programme to all potential or new entrepreneurs, founders or acquirers of a business, as it will give them individual support and advice on how to better run and grow their businesses. I also recommend it to all experienced business owners – it offers them an excellent opportunity to develop and expand their businesses and realise their potential to the fullest.

**Elżbieta Bieńkowska**

European Commissioner for  
Internal Market, Industry,  
Entrepreneurship and SMEs



## Foreword by Richard Weber,

Erasmus for Young Entrepreneurs was launched in the aftermath of the global financial and economic crisis as a concrete response to the lack of entrepreneurship in Europe and the need to boost cross-border trade and cooperation within the EU. Five years later, the assessment is positive. The programme is increasing both in scale, with 1.000 exchanges organised per year and a growing number of participating countries, and in reputation, notably due to the high satisfaction rate among the participants.

The results of the study presented in the brochure show that Erasmus for Young Entrepreneurs contributes directly to revitalising the European economy through stimulating an entrepreneurial spirit and opening the minds of new and existing entrepreneurs to the opportunities presented by the internal market. Figures are encouraging with more than a third of the participating aspiring entrepreneurs having created their own-business after the exchange and the majority of the entrepreneurs having found a business partner to team up with.

Erasmus for Young Entrepreneurs is delivering results and promises to become an important tool to trigger more and better entrepreneurs – thus contributing to the reduction of unemployment in Europe, particularly among the young. Entrepreneurship is a critical but often overlooked ingredient in the creation of jobs and growth.

Having advocated the creation of such a programme to EU policy makers, EUROCHAMBRES was delighted when Erasmus for Young Entrepreneurs was established in 2009. We continue to show our commitment to the programme by acting as the Support Office and we are confident that Erasmus for Young Entrepreneurs will prove an effective vehicle to launch promising start-ups and nurture high-growth companies in Europe for many more years to come.



A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read 'Richard Weber'.

**Richard Weber**

President of EUROCHAMBRES,  
The Association of European Chambers of  
Commerce and Industry

# OVERVIEW

Since its beginning in 2009, Erasmus for Young Entrepreneurs has provided over four thousand entrepreneurs with the opportunity to meet another entrepreneur of a different country and develop their business.

## The programme in a nutshell:

- 2,500 exchanges have taken place, involving 5.000 new or experienced entrepreneurs.
- Italy and Spain have registered the highest number of outgoing entrepreneurs, followed by Romania, Greece and Poland.
- The most popular destinations are Spain, Italy, the United Kingdom, Germany and Belgium.
- The average duration of the stay abroad is 3,5 months.
- The majority of new entrepreneurs are below 40 years old (89%), while experienced entrepreneurs are mostly below 50 (74%).
- A third of the participants are women.
- The programme is open to all aspiring entrepreneurs, ranging from unemployed or employed people to students and to newly established entrepreneurs.
- Almost a quarter of the new entrepreneurs already had a company (for 1 to 3 years) when joining the programme.
- While the cooperation happens across all sectors, the three most popular ones so far are education and training, advertising and promotion as well as architecture and construction services.

Source: Information contained in this brochure comes from the Programme database and a survey conducted in 2013 among the participants. For more information go to:

[http://ec.europa.eu/growth/smes/promoting-entrepreneurship/support/erasmus-young-entrepreneurs/index\\_en.htm](http://ec.europa.eu/growth/smes/promoting-entrepreneurship/support/erasmus-young-entrepreneurs/index_en.htm)

# THROUGH HARDSHIP TO THE STARS

Sébastien Aubert's career began in 2008, with the creation of Ad Astra Films, a production and distribution company based in Cannes. His first production, The Danaïdes' Barrel, shot in the Moroccan desert, was shown at more than 50 international film festivals.

Sébastien learned a lot on his own, but without experience in the sector or on-site training he made mistakes that he could have avoided if he had had the guidance and support of a successful producer. Sébastien also remembers his difficulties in getting connected with key people in the sector.

*"I slowly built up my own network, but I was still far from being part of the exclusive world of cinema. Working with a successful producer helped me open doors and create connections that would have taken me years to develop",* said Sébastien.

The exchange in Berlin helped Sébastien increase his understanding of financing mechanisms, meet key film people and improve his communication skills, which contributed significantly to the marketing of his business.

Since his participation in the programme, Sébastien has developed various feature films including the documentary on the Versailles musical scene, "Lost in Versailles", increased the yearly turnover of his business by 20% and hired new employees. Most importantly he established a strong partnership with his host entrepreneur, who is expanding his business in Cannes.

*"Filmmaking is a competitive business. Without my participation in the programme and the support of my host entrepreneur, I would have never had the chance to meet the key people in the film industry, who helped me boost my business."*

New entrepreneur :

Sébastien Aubert

Company name: **Ad Astra Films**

Products/Services: **Films production**

Start-up year: **2008**

Number of employees: **2**

Key markets: **International dimension**

[s.aubert@adastra-films.com](mailto:s.aubert@adastra-films.com)

[www.adastra-films.com](http://www.adastra-films.com)

Cannes, France

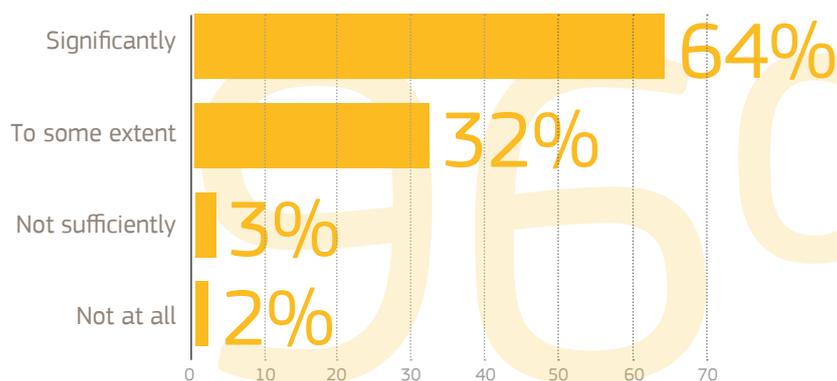


## Erasmus for Young Entrepreneurs reinforces entrepreneurial attitudes!

Erasmus for Young Entrepreneurs promotes entrepreneurial attitudes by supporting people with the ambition to become entrepreneur and helping existing entrepreneurs to realise their full potential in today's global economy.

Almost half (44%) of the new entrepreneurs who have participated in the programme, 'always dreamed of becoming an entrepreneur', and 96% consider that the programme has contributed to their ambition of becoming entrepreneurs. For start-up entrepreneurs the exchange is a real turning point.

Contribution to the entrepreneurial ambition of new entrepreneur participants



The long-term results prove that the exchange is a decisive experience for start-up entrepreneurs. 78% of the new entrepreneurs who created their company after the exchange consider that the programme contributed significantly to their ambition to set up a business.

Participating host entrepreneurs confirm that the scheme supports the sharpening of the entrepreneurial spirit by helping them to develop new ideas and expand their own businesses (64%). Most of them are also driven by the motivation of sharing knowledge and experience with a new entrepreneur and acting as a mentor (62%).

# TAKING THE OPPORTUNITY WHEN IT COMES ALONG...

Stefan always dreamed of becoming an entrepreneur. Concluding that his job in Austria was not challenging him anymore, he decided to shift his life trajectory towards his personal passions.

Initially, his business idea was an online consultancy company which would have offered services to newly established entrepreneurs in Portugal and Austria.

During his exchange in Lisbon, he soon realised that Portugal offers great tourist destinations that are very often inaccessible to travellers. The idea of a camper van rental company to explore these regions suddenly sprang to mind!

He decided to stay in Portugal and, together with the host entrepreneur, developed the business concept and founded the company Indiecampers, also involving a friend in the venture.

The programme contributed significantly to Stefan's ambition to start his own business. It brought him a wealth of opportunities and, more importantly, helped position him in the right market niche.

*"The Erasmus for Young Entrepreneurs programme changed my life! My business idea completely changed and when the opportunity came along, I went for it!"* said Stefan.

New entrepreneur :

Stefan Köppl

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Company name: **Indiecampers**  
Products/Services: **Tourism services**  
Start-up year: **2012**  
Number of employees: **2**  
Key markets: **Portugal and Spain**

[stefan@indiecampers.com](mailto:stefan@indiecampers.com)  
[www.indiecampers.com](http://www.indiecampers.com)

Lisbon and Porto, Portugal

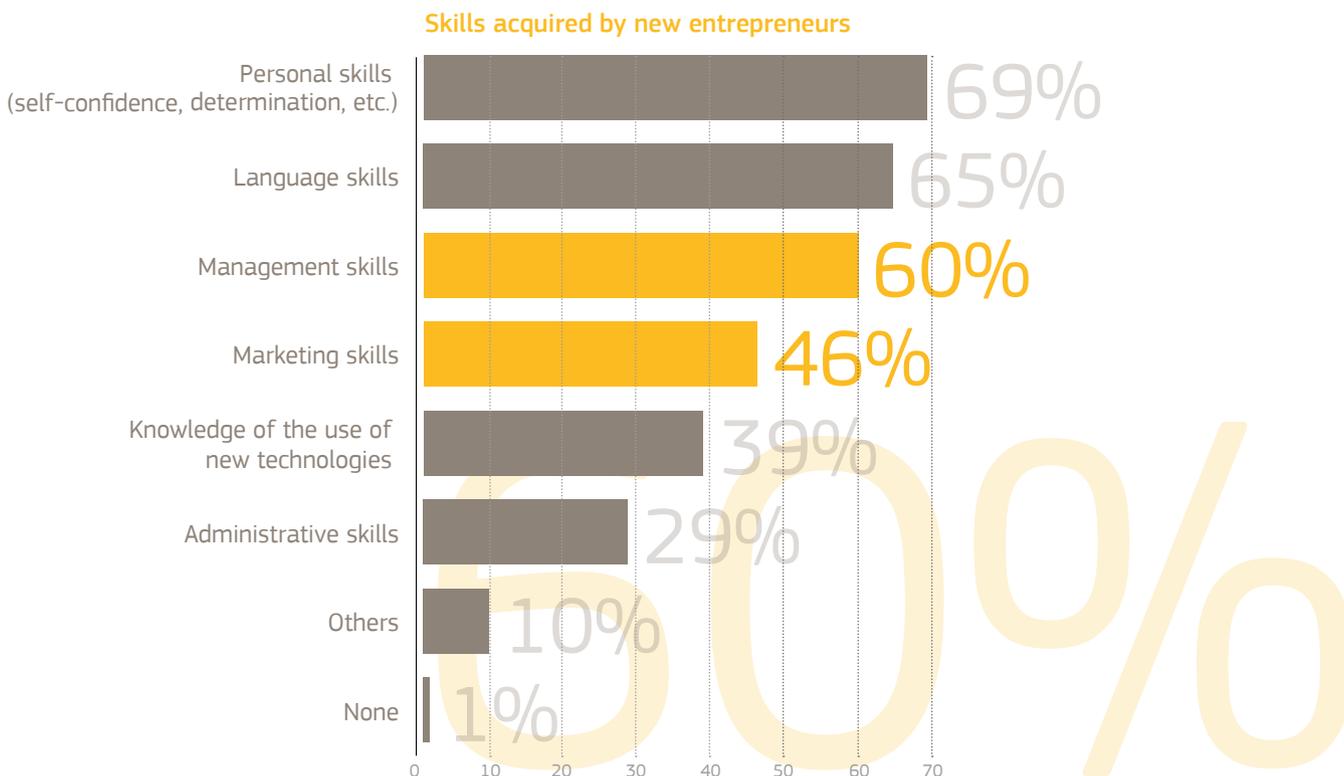


## Erasmus for Young Entrepreneurs equips new entrepreneurs with business skills!

To boost the entrepreneurial drive effectively, small firm managers need to be equipped with the necessary skills to successfully run and develop their company in a complex world.

Erasmus for Young Entrepreneurs supports the acquisition and strengthening of a wide range of entrepreneurial skills and attitudes, both soft and hard, ranging from confidence, managerial and administrative skills to more technical skills.

60% of the programme's new entrepreneurs fine-tuned their management skills and almost half of them acquired new marketing competences (46%).



# INCREASING REVENUE THANKS TO THE PROGRAMME

Rimvydas is one of the owners of Veloblic, a shop offering bike courier services in the city of Klaipėda in Lithuania.

He realised that the business was too seasonal and resolved to diversify. He decided to get into the bike courier and messenger game and went to Austria to test his new business idea and acquire new skills in finance, marketing and customer care relations.

Thanks to the programme, Rimvydas adjusted his business plan to the new market he was targeting.

With an increased understanding of service pricing, new financial management approaches and a new focus on service distribution strategies, Veloblic increased its revenue by 10% and hired two new bikers / employees. They are the first and so far the only company to offer this service in the Lithuanian city of Klaipėda.

*“For me, the key to success is to think globally and act locally to launch the business with zest and use the experience gained during my stay in Austria. I acquired useful know-how and skills to manage this type of business and it also helped me learn more about the cycling culture in Western Europe,”* said Rimvydas.

New entrepreneur :

**Rimvydas Butkus**

Company name: **Veloblic**

Products/Services: **Transport and Logistics**

Start-up year: **2006**

Number of employees: **9**

Key markets: **Lithuania**

[info@veloblic.lt](mailto:info@veloblic.lt)

[www.veloblic.lt](http://www.veloblic.lt)

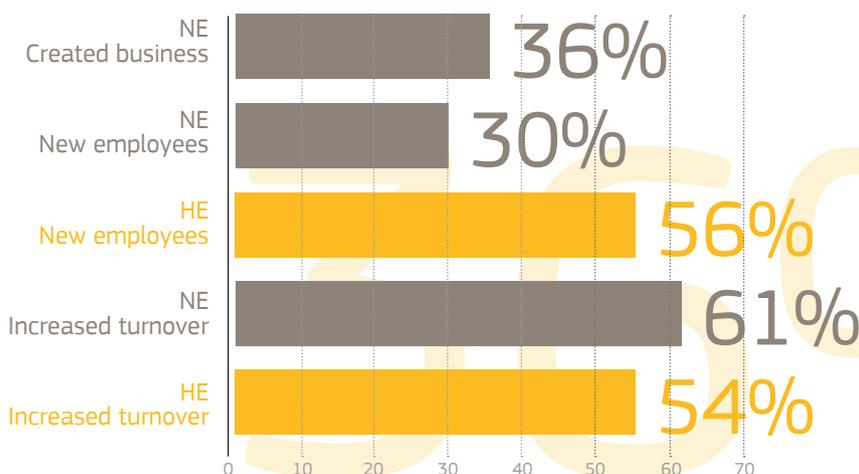
Klaipėda, Lithuania



## Erasmus for Young Entrepreneurs contributes to the creation of new businesses and jobs!

One-third of the aspiring entrepreneurs that have participated in the programme (36.5%) have created their own business and more than half of the new entrepreneurs (58.3%) consider the exchange made a considerable positive contribution to the start of their company. This is a positive and encouraging result considering the 5% drop in overall business creation in Europe from 2009-2011.

### Impact on business creation and development



NE = new entrepreneur  
HE = host entrepreneur

The business growth experienced by the entrepreneurs participating in the programme is stronger than the average performance of European small and micro-enterprises during the economic crisis. 61% of new entrepreneurs and 54% of host entrepreneurs surveyed increased their turnover after participating in the programme. Furthermore, 56% of host entrepreneurs and 30% of new entrepreneurs hired new staff after their exchange.

Newly established entrepreneurs that participated in Erasmus for Young Entrepreneurs programme exhibit considerably higher survival rates than average European SMEs. While 87% of new entrepreneurs from the programme are still in business after their exchange, the average three-year survival rate of companies in Europe stands at only 57%.

# NEVER GIVE UP DREAMS AND ALWAYS LOOK FORWARD !

The end of her employment contract was for Dimitra the right moment to create her own business. With a background in psychology, she wanted to offer therapeutic services to jobless people.

Her three months exchange in a production company in Nicosia (Cyprus) opened Dimitra to new horizons. She gained competence in event organisation and video making, developed skills in new technologies and built up a network of professional contacts.

*“The Greek market is very limited for entrepreneurs because of the financial situation in the country. With this experience, I discovered that there is a big market abroad that I can reach using new technologies.”*

Back in Greece with strong self-confidence and innovative ideas for her business, Dimitra opened PSY-CHE in 2013. The company offers virtual psychology services through web magazines, online workshops and events that Dimitra organises in Athens. She hired one employee and is now set to expand her services to Cyprus.

From just a good idea to a concrete business, Dimitra managed to put her plans into action. Her business is progressing well with several projects in the pipeline, ranging from organising events in her region, developing videos, to publishing a book !

New entrepreneur :

Dimitra Didangelou

Company name: **PSY-CHE**

Products/Services: **Psychology**

Start-up year: **2013**

Number of employees: **1**

Key markets: **Greece and Cyprus**

[didaggelou@yahoo.gr](mailto:didaggelou@yahoo.gr)

[www.psy-che.gr](http://www.psy-che.gr)

Pelion, Greece

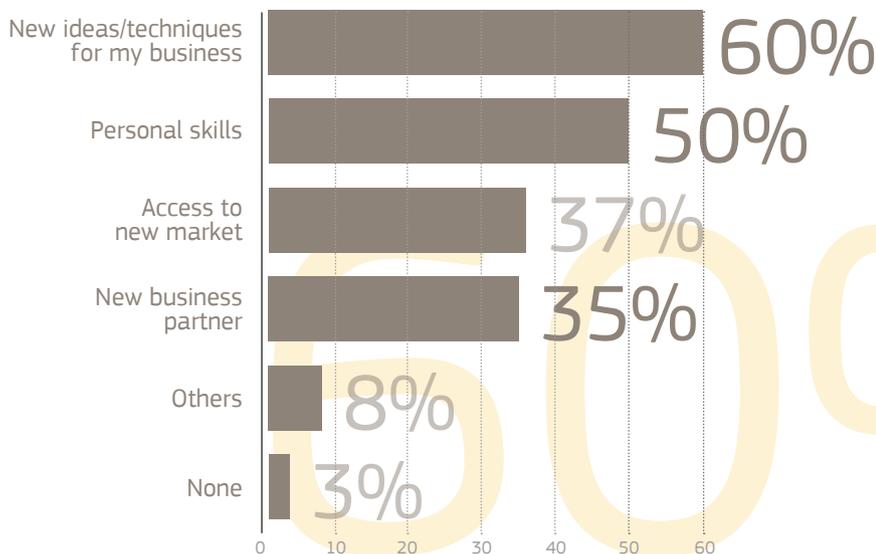


## Erasmus for Young Entrepreneurs strengthens existing businesses through new ideas!

Participating businesses have proved to be more active than the average SMEs in the EU when it comes to developing new products and services. 53% of the host entrepreneurs and 73% of the new entrepreneurs have developed new products or services, compared to the 35% of SMEs at EU level from 2007-2010.

The majority of new entrepreneurs (81%) identified potential new business opportunities and half of them found a partner to sell their products or services to or to purchase from during their exchange.

### Skills acquired by new entrepreneurs



Host entrepreneurs use the programme as a platform for low-risk experimentation in potential business expansion. 60% of them gained fresh ideas or techniques, some of which materialised in new products or services. One of the immediate positive impacts is that more than half of the host entrepreneurs increased their turnover.

# THINKING LOCAL, ACTING GLOBAL!

Sharing entrepreneurial knowledge through real-life experiences is essential for Tim Lagerpusch, who has been a business owner since 2006 and co-founded SugarTrends, an online marketplace offering products brought from local stores across the world, in 2012.

Thanks to the Erasmus for Young Entrepreneurs exchange, SugarTrends benefited from a remodelling of its business plan and a new online marketing strategy. This significantly increased the business' visibility and brought around 35 new local stores into its market place and an early stage increase in sales of 300%.

*“New entrepreneur Diogo Cruz from Lisbon, Portugal had the entrepreneurial abilities and skills we were looking for to develop our business further. Moreover, with his degree in business and engineering, he was the best candidate for this challenge.”*said Tim.

The fresh ideas of the new partner greatly contributed to the progress of Tim's business by creating solid business processes and the development of new IT systems to support the daily activities. The fruitful cooperation did not stop at the end of the exchange and the two entrepreneurs continue working on the development of SugarTrends into a global venture.

Host entrepreneur :

**Tim Lagerpusch**

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Company name: **SugarTrends**

Products/Services: **Online market**

Start-up year: **2012**

Number of employees: **9**

Key markets: **International retail**

[tim.lagerpusch@sugartrends.com](mailto:tim.lagerpusch@sugartrends.com)

[www.sugartrends.com](http://www.sugartrends.com)

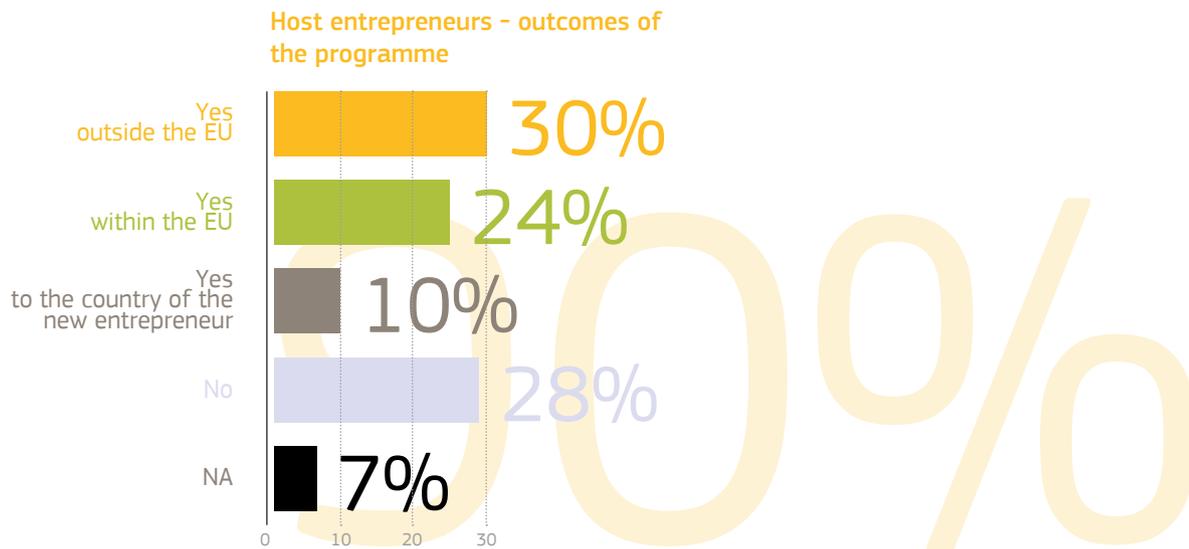
Cologne, Germany



## Erasmus for Young Entrepreneurs opens up new markets !

90% of the programme's new entrepreneurs gathered information about the new markets they are exposed to during the exchange. Furthermore 80% of new entrepreneurs established a broad range of international contacts and grew their business networks. Some also expanded their business activities to other countries.

By teaming up with partners from other countries, nearly two-thirds of host entrepreneurs (65%), a share above the European average, extend their operations to other national markets after the exchange, with a quarter of them going on to operate specifically in the country of the visiting entrepreneur.



# CREATING SOLID BUSINESS PARTNERSHIPS TO TAP INTO ENERGY MARKETS

Founded in 1992, Elettrofaenza (Italy) initially offered operational and technical services in the construction sector. Over the years, the business grew and has specialized in renewable energies since 2010.

In 2011, the slowdown of the Italian economy reduced domestic business opportunities, so Pier Giorgio Fontana, the owner, decided to go international in search of new markets.

Knowing that the Erasmus for Young Entrepreneurs programme offers the a platform to explore international business opportunities, Pier Giorgio applied for the scheme and came across the profile of Alena Pop, a 30-years Romanian entrepreneur.

A business partnership with Alena proved a great opportunity to access the growing renewable energy market in Romania. Sharing the same mutual interests, both entrepreneurs decided to work together for three months on the development of the businesses' activities in Romania.

*"It is very difficult for a small business such as mine to access new foreign markets, especially when we do not master the local language, have no connections and when there is no money to invest. The help of a new entrepreneur was essential in this case,"* said Pier Giorgio.

After the exchange, Pier Giorgio and Alena established a joint venture business. Elettrofaenza supplies materials and technological know-how in Romania and Alena offers consultancy services on energy efficiency and development of renewable energies and provides technical skilled workers when special plant installations is needed.

The exchange helped Pier Giorgio access a new market in another EU country, allowing him to re-vitalize his own company and contribute to the creation of a new business and consequently new jobs in Romania.

Host entrepreneur :

Pier Giorgio Fontana

Company name: **Elettrofaenza**

Products/Services: **Energy**

Start-up year: **1999**

Number of employees: **4**

Key markets: **Italy, Romania**

[elettrofaenza@elettrofaenza.it](mailto:elettrofaenza@elettrofaenza.it)  
[www.elettrofaenza.it](http://www.elettrofaenza.it)

Faenza, Italy



## Erasmus for Young entrepreneurs

### A network of contact points at your disposal

Erasmus for Young Entrepreneurs is run locally by support organisations (e.g. Chambers of Commerce and Industry, start-up centres, incubators etc.). These local contact points are selected by the European Commission and guide entrepreneurs throughout the exchange.

To obtain more details about the programme and to get in touch with your local contact point, visit the programme website: [www.erasmus-entrepreneurs.eu](http://www.erasmus-entrepreneurs.eu)

The activities of the Intermediary Organisations are coordinated at European level by the programme Support Office.





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