

## Lithuania, the best kept secret of Europe

### *Entrepreneurs in the South of Holland get to know Lithuania*

*It didn't take him long to decide to organize a meet and greet between Lithuanian representatives and Dutch entrepreneurs and representatives of technological industry. Mr. Darius Semaska, ambassador of the Republic of Lithuania in The Netherlands, was our guest at High Tech NL last spring. It didn't take me long to decide to help him to fulfill this wish. Especially when FME-CWM, Koninklijke Metaalunie and Brainport Industries showed interest in participating. Lithuania is known for its excellent educational infrastructure and quality –especially on engineering- and for its technological specialisms, like laser technology and manufacturing of precision components. That sounds like us. Who is this relatively unknown European player on technological markets? Let's meet!*



### ***Did you know .....***

Lithuania. Where to find it on the map? That is not that difficult. One of the Baltic states having its boundaries with Latvia and Poland. By coincidence, the geographical center of Europe can be located in Lithuania. Lithuania is the only Baltic state not having his capital – Vilnius- at the coastal area. Instead, Klaipeda, (German: Memel) is one of the most important seaports of the Baltic Sea. Kaunas is known for its University of Engineering. Twice as big as The Netherlands, Lithuania counts only 3.500.000 inhabitants characterized by high educational standards and devoted to their country and their work. The engineering sector is counting more then 2.000 entities employing over 36.000 employees. You might be surprised by studying more in depth the activities of which the mechanical and electrical sectors are composed. Did you know? I didn't!

### ***You might be surprised***

Perhaps that is why Mr. Bert Pauli, deputy of Economic Affairs of the province of North Brabant, encouraged me recently to stimulate meets and greets with countries like The

Baltics. “You might be surprised to discover unknown specialisms at relatively short distance and at high quality standards. Getting to know each other is the first step to fruitful mutual cooperation. Either in innovation or business”. That idea was confirmed by Mr. Darius Semaska in his opening speech at the High Tech Campus in Eindhoven Friday the 15<sup>th</sup> of November. “Lithuania might be the best kept secret of Europe. That is why I think it is important to present our country, our activities, capabilities and culture and share them with you. I am convinced we can find complementary activities within the context of technological industry. Please judge yourself”.



*Mr. Darius Semaska: “Complementary activities”*

The audience consisted of around 50 persons. Both Dutch and Lithuanian entrepreneurs and representatives of industrial associations. I had been so lucky not to organize it all by my self. I had the support of FME-CWM, Koninklijke Metaalunie, Brainport Industries and Mrs. Marina van der Horst of Enterprise Lithuania, the business representation of

Lithuania in The Netherlands. She especially contributed to approach Lithuanian entrepreneurs and invite them over to spend some time in The Netherlands and participate to the event.

### ***Regional prosperity***

Mr. Semaska gave the floor to Dr. Gediminas Rainys, Director general of the Lithuanian Confederation of Industrialists. He brought Lithuanian economy to live by showing clarifying facts and figures with which he proved that, although Lithuania is a small country, its economy is stable, growing and contributes to regional prosperity. He focused on the importance of the mechanical and electrical sectors of industry. The Dutch visitors could easily identify elements of first tier suppliers and innovation partners the way we are used to. Lithuania dominates for example sectors like communication and laser technology.



*Dr. Gediminas Rainys: Clarifying facts and figures*

### ***We were right!***

Of course, the best proof of theoretical introduction is to share the experiences of entrepreneurs who do business in and with Lithuania. For that reason, Mrs. Van der Horst had invited Mr. Pepijn Bosman, who is holding a position in the managing direction of SBLi. SBLi designs, develops, manufactures and supplies metal products for medium sized

series. SBLi is specialized in products with an esthetic functionality and high quality appearance, like signing, furniture and specials. A significant part of their products is produced in Lithuania. Why Lithuania? Mr. Pepijn Bosman: "We visited various countries before we decided to start doing business in and with Lithuania. And to be honest, it is hard to trace back the real deciding arguments. Actually, it was more like the good feeling which ever since has never been disappointed. So, after five years we can conclude that we were right!" Of course, the visitors wanted to know why exactly the management of SBLi is satisfied. Mr. Bosman:



*Mr. Pepijn Bosman: Good quality*

"First of all, we meet nice and friendly people all the time. Actually, my name in Lithuania has been translated to Mr. Pepinas Bosmanas! I have never known that before. But, which is crucial for our business, we can count on good quality. Not only today, but next week, next month and next year as well. We deliver customers at the top of market. Their level of expectations is high. And that is exactly what we can rely on in cooperation with our Lithuanian suppliers!".

### ***Invitation***

Mrs. Marina van der Horst took over the floor. She explained some interesting facts about Lithuania. But, more than that, she was able to explain the reputation of Dutch industry and business culture through the eyes of Lithuanians. The best proof was the exportation rate of various products to The

Netherlands from cheese, smoked salmon and clothes to advanced laser equipment and precision tools. Finally, she invited the Dutch visitors to join next years Life Science Baltics exhibition which will take place September 12-14<sup>th</sup> in Vilnius. Why not!



Mrs. Marina van der Horst;  
connecting countries, connecting people

**Yes we did!**

Getting to know a relatively unknown country. Revealing well kept secrets of a surprising country like Lithuania. That was the objective of this informal and informative afternoon at the High Tech Campus in Eindhoven, The Netherlands. Did we succeed? First of all, Lithuania is not that unknown. As Mr. Gert Enning, regional manager of Koninklijke Metaalunie told: “We hosted a group of Lithuanian representatives a few months ago to get to know some of our member companies. First steps have been taken!”



A successful meeting

Mr. Michel Voorwinde is managing director of VIV, the branch organization of internal combustion engines: “I will contact the Lithuanian embassy at short notice just to find out if we can find a way to reinforce our member companies”.

Mr. Toine Cuyten is the owner of CMS, a well known SME company which focuses on maintenance and overhaul of liquid filling machinery in food & dairy and juices industry in The Netherlands and abroad. Together with his brother Mark he attended the introductions. “I might consider to participate in the internship for Lithuanian students on a vocational or bachelor level which will be carried out by FME-CWM. This might open doors to the Baltic markets”.



Tricolors. Symbols of connection!

What was the conclusion of Mr. Darius Semaska? While having a drink together at the end of the afternoon he told me this meeting exceeded his expectations! So, to come back on our initial question; did we succeed? Yes we did!

Jos van Erp  
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