

Narrative Report 2012

2012 was our association's first full year and like for every little plant, we somehow moved between the enthusiasm of growing bigger and the fear of not managing to take the first steps.

Results are therefore mixed: There are many positive developments, but on the other hand, some actions took longer than planned and are still not completely on the way.

Tourism group:

After the first pilot trip at the end of 2011, the group did a detailed evaluation of the experiences, taking into consideration the feedback of the first participants. As the results were mainly positive, the group decided to go a step further and to organise more trips. A lot of advertisement was made: more than 5'000 Flyers were distributed around Switzerland, Spain and Austria. The group experimented with online advertisements on facebook and Google and tried to use the former participants as ambassadors that would convince others to join our trips.

At the end, we had a group of 11 tourists, which in February 2013 participated in the second social tourism trip in Ethiopia. Feedbacks were again very positive and all participants seem to be enthusiastic about the concept.

The big question mark is currently, if it will be possible to multiply the trips and to find enough participants for around 8 trips every year. For the moment, huge efforts had to be made only to find people for 2 trips. At the same time, there will be questions about professionalization or cooperation with established "players" in the tourism sector. At the current stage the group is trying to find such potential partners in Switzerland.

Poultry group:

The highlight was for sure the partnership with Prodavi, one of the biggest players in the chicken farming sector in Switzerland, which was established at the beginning of the last year. This cooperation guarantees to have the necessary know how in the project.

During the last months, focus was on finding the right structure for the investments. We still consider initial investments of around 60'000 Francs for a pilot farm of around 1'000 chicken. Some progress was made recently: Thanks to the consultancy of a legal counsellor we identified the legal form of "cooperative" (German: "Genossenschaft") as potentially the most appropriate form of organisation for the project. It will guarantee us that not only the amount of money invested decides about the control taken in the structure, but that different members can become members of the cooperative and guarantee that business will be done in conformity with the association's convictions.

Next steps will be to establish the structures and to do the final agreements between Ethiopia and Europe in order to start the project.

Games group:

The games group has become inactive. The board decided to focus on the other two groups and not to invest energy into finding new, active people for the group. However, if there are interested people motivated to continue, the concept could be re-activated very quickly.

General structure of the Business Machine

Besides the work in the groups, members of the board also participated in work for the association's general structure. The idea was presented during different workshops, for example in the framework of KWEAS, the Swiss Ethiopian culture exchange association.

Many efforts were made in fundraising. Board members contacted more than 40 foundations in order to explore possibilities for support. Unfortunately, none of these attempts was successful. Obviously, we are still too new and have no concrete record of achievements, which doesn't make us a preferred partner of foundations. In order to get more credibility, one member of the board participated therefore in a programme for social entrepreneurs (www.seif.org). The idea was to get a foot into the door of the social entrepreneurs' crowd. As a result, tourism group plans to hand in their business plan for the seif award, which will be announced in summer 2013.

At the end of 2012, an informal partnership with the economics department of the University of Applied Sciences was established. The current plan is to start a partnership between the University of Awassa (Ethiopia) and the FH in Bern and to create mixed teams of students, which will support potential entrepreneurs in Ethiopia with a coaching. The Business Machine will facilitate the first meeting between the universities, which should take place in August 2013.

As many activities are slow due to a lack of human resources, the board would like to put a focus on finding some more people, not only for the different groups, but also for the general structure of The Business Machine. We will therefore participate in two events of Euforiaction (www.euforiaction.org) in March 2013 and make some other efforts in Bern to create a group of people that meet regularly and take over operative tasks, which the board only partially managed to fill out during the last year.

February 2013, Stephan Brun