

Team Building Week – Diary

Dear future students,

We are sitting in the Forum cafeteria thinking about how we can summarize the start of our ‘educational journey’ as our European Masters in Food Studies (EMFS) program is unofficially called. The *Team Building Week* that is where everything begins...

Monday morning, 9:00 a.m.: For the first time we meet our fellow students for the next two years - ten girls and six guys from nine different countries! All with the same inquisitive face, eager to start this ‘journey’ and full of excitement about their fellow students. Andreas from Greece was very pleased about the high number of female fellow students while our Dutch representative Marieke was a bit worried whether she could remember all our names.

However, the first week turned out to be not an easy-going getting-to-know-everybody-week but was full of entertaining exercises. Either Geoff, our senior consultant and coordinator of the team building week, was talking about communication skills, for example, or we had to decide on the best leader of the ‘New World’, it was always interesting and fun. Especially Carsten from Germany enjoyed Geoff’s anecdotes that varied from Kraft to Kosovo. The Portuguese consultant Mariana, a former student of this European Masters with a brilliant career, gave us valuable insight about our personal strengths and weaknesses. Apart from this, we also had to do some questionnaires about our personal team working styles and conflict management techniques, for example. Stella (Chinese/Canadian) liked “these psychological tests because they don’t only help me to see myself clearly but also to have a better understanding of other group members’ personalities and characteristics”. Nevertheless, we did not need a personality test to figure out that Lambros (Greece) was going to be the one who would calm us all down when we started to get stressed.

The fourth day ended with a well-earned Italian dinner together with the present chairman of the EMFS Board Jan Maat (Unilever), Anja Kleijn as the coordinator of this program, the director of the Food Technology Master program, Ralf Hartemink, as well as our charming consultants Geoff, Mariana and Jimmi.

By the end of the week, we could see everybody’s unique contribution to the European Masters group; from the communicative spirit of Agustín (Argentina), the six-headed cheerful French team (Emilie, Camille, Carole, Alix and Marine, as well as our “French adopted” Vietnamese Tuan) to our always kind “just-one-moment” Italian pizza-master Luigi. In our opinion, one of the best out comings of the team building week was not only the tools they gave us to work effectively in a team but also the fact that we realized that we were part of an outstanding project. We are really looking forward and excited about the next two years.

Elisa (Mexico) and Anika (Germany)

PS: Our match was complete when Anastacia from Greece joined us two weeks later.