

Entrepreneurs in Sustainable Transportation



New Entrepreneur Sylvain Lemoine in a Leitra velomobile.
Good protection in the cold winter, and keeps you warm through pedaling.

The idea comes first

The World is crying out for green growth and green jobs. We are in a period of transition where economical balance must be re-established with less resources and less damage to the environment. A change in life style is necessary in order to reduce the consumption of energy and materials, and this change calls for new products and services.

It is a challenge for inventors and new entrepreneurs to create such new products and services which can lead to a sustainable way of life.

As an example, people need mobility, and individual mobility gives a feeling of freedom. The motor-car has gained an overwhelming popularity worldwide in creating that freedom, but too many cars take up space in our towns and generate noise and poisonous air pollution. We must therefore ask: How can we make individual mobility sustainable and less harmful to our health and to the environment?

The company Leitra DK ApS saw the need for a new category of vehicle, with extremely low weight, and powered by pedals only or with assistance from a small electric motor. The company became a pioneer in modern velomobiles, a class of bicycle or tricycle with full weather protection, like in a car.

In order to promote the idea, the founder of Leitra DK ApS, Dr. Carl Georg Rasmussen organized a series of "European Seminars of Velomobile Design". Three seminars took place in Denmark, two in Switzerland, one in Germany and the next will be hosted by the Netherlands in September 2012.

Cycling
– all year, all weather

Yes, we can in...
velomobiles

The European Seminars of Velomobile Design
www.liggecykelforeningen.dk

TUBORGFONDET

The new entrepreneurs and their IOs

The velomobile became a popular design object, and today there are several producers in Germany, Austria, Belgium, the Netherlands and Denmark. Engineering students from Germany, Austria and France came to the small Danish company for practical training, and years later so did two New Entrepreneurs when the ERASMUS program opened for this opportunity.

The young entrepreneurs, both French, have been hosted by the Leitra company for a period of 6 months, supported by the ERASMUS program.

They did not make use of the automatic matching system of the program, but applied directly to the host company. They were accepted by the host because of their strong dedication to bicycle design, and they wanted to prepare themselves for a career as independent entrepreneurs in their own country.

They contacted their local ERASMUS IO (Intermediate Office) and got a relatively quick approval.

Sylvain Lemoine was serviced by ERASMUS Auvergne, and Yoann Baudin had Institut Européen de l'Entrepreneuriat Rural I2ER as IO contact..

Since there was no IO in Denmark, the HE (host entrepreneur) contacted the office in Brussels.

With the kind assistance of the ERASMUS Support Office in Brussels, we obtained a smooth administration of our NE/HE relationship.

As we shall see from the following, the mutual interest of the HE and NEs, and the strong motivation of the NEs, explains how a successful cooperation developed after the ERASMUS project.

Sylvain Lemoine and the company Velovergne

Sylvain graduated from Ecole Nationale des Arts et Metiers in 2001 and specialized with a Master Degree in renewable energies. Sustainable mobility became an important theme in his career, and he wanted to start his own company based on low-energy/low-cost transportation.

In 2008 Sylvain visited the Taiwan Cycle Show, where he contacted producers of recumbent trikes.

Shortly after he started import of TW-trikes to France. He also went to the world's largest show for special bikes, the SPEZI in Germersheim, Germany, where he met the Danish velomobile producer, C. G. Rasmussen. Soon after he bought a used Leitra velomobile, which he used for a preliminary market research and demonstration tour in France.

By chance he came across an article in the local newspaper telling about the ERASMUS program for Young Entrepreneurs. He wanted to learn more about velomobiles, the technologies and potential, so he filed an application for an ERASMUS grant.

The Leitra company was an obvious host for him. He needed weather protection for his TW-trikes, and he found a suitable fairing in Denmark (a glass fibre cover to put on the trike for all-weather protection).



Sylvain Lemoine, entrepreneur and artist.

Through six months, Sylvain built the necessary tools for making fairings and he learned how to work with composite materials.

At home again, he founded the company Velovergne (www.velovergne.fr), and started producing the "Wildcat" fairing based on a licence contract with Leitra.

The first royalties were paid in 2011 and 2012, but that is not the only benefit for the host company. Through



Trikes from Taiwan formed the first business opportunity for Velovergne. Production in France could be a future perspective.

Velovergne, the Leitra company has been able to offer TW-trikes to Danish customers. Electric motors have also been purchased through Velovergne.

Auvergne is a very hilly area, so Sylvain was early to introduce electric assist motors on the trikes.

By common import from Taiwan, the two companies can obtain a better price for trikes.



The "Wildcat" fairing makes a recumbent trike suitable for all-weather operation.

Yoann Baudin and the company Velomobilcenter.dk

Yoann holds an engineering degree from University of Tarpes (2011). During his study, he was in Denmark for his practical training, and he worked 4 months with computer aided design and composite materials at Leitra DK ApS. The concept of the velomobile as a way to future sustainable mobility caught his interest, and he returned to Denmark after his graduation.

In a period of 6 months, with the support of an ERASMUS grant, he gained considerable experience in repair and

maintenance of velomobiles and other special bikes and trikes.

His passion for human powered vehicles and his intention to make a living from this fascinating business brought him together with other Danish entrepreneurs with similar ideas, including his HE from the ERASMUS project. Together they started a new company: Velomobilcenter.dk.



Yoann and C G Rasmussen working on a Leitra velomobile (left) and Wildcat fairing (right)

Since the Summer of 2011, the Velomobilcenter.dk has become the importer of velomobiles to the Scandinavian market.

The center offers service and maintenance of all types of velomobiles, and it has agreements with the main producers in Europe.

When Yoann has gained more business experience from the work in Velomobilcenter.DK, he intends to establish his own company in France.

Velomobilcenter.dk founders.

NE Yoann, partner in the company, is second from the left . The old chap to the right is the HE.



Conclusion

The velomobile industry is gaining momentum. It has already created a number of new jobs, and will be able to create many more new jobs in the future.

Recycling and repair is essential for keeping velomobiles and special bikes running, and this business is very work intensive. It may also lead to sustainable mobility, which requires much less energy and materials than motor vehicles. It mainly relies on human resources!

Next year a group of more than a hundred velomobiles will ride 2500 km together in the EuroTour 2013.

This promotion tour will go through Germany, Switzerland, France, Belgium and the Netherlands, demonstrating that long distance tours are possible by velomobile. (www.logical-vehicles.org)

We will be happy to come to Brussels by velomobiles.



Yoann and his wife Olga at work in the Velomobilcenter.dk