

Our story - The Dream

"I have a dream, a European dream" - Arnold Smeink

History

My career in employment services started in 1986. In 1991, I became an independent entrepreneur in this sector, and in 2008 I decided to move to Spain with my family. However, my business was still located in the Netherlands, which meant that I had to travel back and forth all the time. In 2011, the effects of the financial crisis became clear to me and I started to focus on my future as an entrepreneur. Apart from ensuring the continued existence of my company, I also wanted to develop my vision of providing transnational employment services. In 2012, I decided to return to the Netherlands, and with the financial aid of a good friend, I started trying to make my dream a reality.

A dream

2011. While living in Spain, I got in touch with Monica, a Dutch nurse who was living in Spain with her family. Monica confronted me with the growing number of unemployed and qualified nurses in Spain, which made me think about a possible solution. It soon became clear to me that there was also an impending shortage of nurses in the Dutch healthcare sector. I was informed about the fact that the Netherlands was no longer training enough nurses due to stringent entry requirements for nursing degrees.

This combined with the out-flux of older nurses from the 'baby-boomer generation', made me understand the reasons behind the shortage of nurses in the Dutch healthcare sector. This made me see potential in Spanish nurses and allowed me to understand the possible implications of employing these people in the Netherlands. Monica taught me everything I needed to know about the working conditions of this forgotten generation of Spanish nurses, the workload, the level of training, the cultural differences, nursing registration, the personal contact between nurses and patients, and the hierarchical system of nurses and doctors. In short, useful and valuable information. So, when I first spoke with a few of these Spanish nurses, I was touched by their motivation, warmth, empathy, skill, humility, and knowledge. These people simply cannot and should not become a 'forgotten generation'. This thought motivated me to use the contacts I had maintained in the Netherlands and show them what the Spanish nurses could bring to the Dutch healthcare sector. Thus, by creating a link between two untenable situations in different parts of Europe,

I set out to help people in both countries; talented young individuals in Spain, and healthcare organisations and their patients in the Netherlands. My dream had come true! Making my dream become a reality quickly turned out to be very difficult. I felt like I was transported back in time to the 80s when I still had to explain what the benefits were of using flexible labour for businesses. Thinking at a European level was also not yet part of the mentality of the Dutch healthcare sector. However, as an entrepreneur it is important to remember that persistence pays off. The idea of employing foreign nurses in the Dutch healthcare sector was definitely not a new one. Many organisations had tried their luck, but never really succeeded. These nurses came from countries such as; the Philippines, Indonesia, Poland, Hungary, Czech Republic, Ireland, and South Africa. Crucially, the reason why these initiatives never took off was that these nurses were employed without previous language courses or training. Courses in Dutch culture were often also not provided. Without these, it appears that communication between nurses, patients and organisations proved to be too difficult,

often leading to homesickness.

The key to achieving what I wanted therefore appeared to be rooted in providing a language and culture course that would allow the nurses to understand their future working environment and their employers; everything they needed to make their career in the Netherlands a success.

European Multi Talent Group

Then I had to come up with a name for my company that would embody my ambition. I would eventually choose the name 'European Multi Talent Group' (EMTG). 'European' because I want to promote the European principle of the free movement of labour, regardless of where you earn your wage and decide to spend it. 'Multi' as a reference to the name of my first company 'Multi Job'. 'Talent' to convey the message that every human being is unique because of the talents of every individual. 'Multi Talent' because of the great education Southern European nurses have received, which now allows them to use their skills in practice.



Arnold Smeink
EMTG Director

The beginning

I started the old-fashioned way; travelling from city to city. Pioneering, organising job fairs in many Spanish cities, introducing local to my ideas, approaching government branches and encountering many problems along the way. I, together with my former agent in Spain, then managed to convince some nurses to come to this low-lying country called the Netherlands. EMTG as a company was now starting to take form. We started with Dutch language and culture lessons via Skype, and so the first class was formed in 2013 in Jávea, Spain. We preferred training the nurses in Spain instead of immediately bringing them to the Netherlands, but my idea was always to gradually bring them all to the Netherlands. Since Dutch is a complex and difficult language, I thought it would be better for the nurses to learn the language in their own environment. In this way, their surroundings and the context of their learning would only change gradually. The European Multi Talent Group thus started to function as I had envisioned.

After the summer of 2013, the first nurses came to the Netherlands. Together with a few former colleagues we organised all the accommodation, work-related coaching, the BIG-registration and even accompanied some nurses to hospitals in the middle of the night.



The challenge

At the start of 2014 we experienced a major setback. The Dutch government decided to both cut back on the healthcare sector and reorganise its finances, which led to extreme uncertainty for those working in healthcare. As a result, many flex workers and nurses lost their jobs. Meanwhile, we at EMTG had to continue paying wages and salaries. Since this was an untenable situation, the nurses were forced to return to Spain. We had to get rid of workers on permanent contracts and so the project to bring Spanish nurses to the Netherlands reached a complete standstill. However, I knew deep down that things would work out. There was still demand for healthcare and I understood that the demand for healthcare professionals would soon increase again. It was, therefore, very important to maintain my international contacts and explain the situation to them. Meanwhile, I stayed in touch with many healthcare companies in the Netherlands and helped freelancers return to a suitable working environment. In this way, I maintained a very strong connection with the Dutch healthcare sector and eventually noticed that the situation was improving.

In the second half of 2016, healthcare companies slowly started expressing their interest in the project and so I started to rebuild a network of agents and



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teachers. In a humble office in Naarden I started with one employee in charge of social media and content building. From 2017 onwards, the demand for nurses started to grow so strongly that I faced the challenge of hiring new employees and moving to a larger office in Naarden close to the Naarden-Bussum train station. Before I knew it, we were in March 2019. Now our team in the Netherlands consists of 17 experienced colleagues, who in turn are all very experienced in their respective fields. In other European countries we have 25 employees working for EMTG; an international team of professionals from Spain, Italy, Portugal, the Netherlands, Polish, Romanian, Czech, and even two from the United States.

Dutch language and culture

In September 2017, we began offering Dutch classes at a teaching centre for language and culture in Jávea, Spain. The premises consist of a villa, where the candidates live and relax, and a teaching-campus. We started with three teachers and, as of January 2019, we have a team of 12 qualified teachers led by a very experienced manager. The candidates receive a very intensive language course spread out over a period of 13 weeks. Very intensive, but also very effective. We also have on-site coaches who prepare the nurses for their new life in the Netherlands. Subjects such as

culture, behaviour, living conditions, salary, identity, protocol, the power of empathy, and leisure are also discussed in one-on-one discussions and workshops. EMTG will grow this year from 30 candidates to 100 candidates per cycle of 13 weeks. These candidates are talented nurses coming from Italy, Portugal, Spain, the United Kingdom, Romania, Poland, etc.

After having lived in Spain for 13 weeks, the nurses come to the Netherlands and at that point have a sufficient command of the Dutch language (B1-Level of the CEFR) to function in a Dutch working environment. Further language training is provided by our teachers in the Netherlands with the aim of helping the nurses pass the Dutch B1-Level exam assessed by DUO.

The arrival of the nurses in the Netherlands is prepared together with our clients, who are the future employers of the nurses. Every healthcare company and group of nurses is assigned to a personal coach who will help them with this preparation. They welcome them at the airport, help them with furnishing their apartments, guide them through all the administrative and governmental processes in the Netherlands, lend a sympathetic ear to the nurses, explain work processes and protocols, and help them enjoy their free time in our beautiful country.

Objective

My dream has finally come true and every day we continue to fulfil the wishes of new nurses, patients, and healthcare providers. Nobody is left to fend for themselves. We at EMTG aim to provide personal service by providing personal attention to everyone. Our clients, the healthcare companies and organisations, are all extremely happy with their new motivated colleagues. However, we will not stop here. EMTG aims to provide these same opportunities to many more nurses in the future, and so we will continue to invest in improving our healthcare sector and the training of our nurses. The Northern European motto of 'lifelong learning' is something that isn't well known in Southern Europe, and this poses a new challenge for us at EMTG. We also want our nurses to further develop themselves academically with extra courses. We will aim at helping them become specialist nurses by facilitating specific training courses and creating new specialised jobs in the healthcare sector. In this way, we will avoid the creation of a lost generation of qualified European nurses and fulfil my European vision. So, by bridging the language and culture barrier between our nurses, patients, and healthcare providers, my dream has finally come true.

A dream by Arnold Smeink