

# MBL

# HM

Münchner Business Lounge  
Magazin der Fakultät für Betriebswirtschaft

**Verhandeln auf Augenhöhe –  
Erfolgsstrategien  
und digitale Fallstricke**  
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# The Best of Two Marketing Worlds



Lecturer team: Matthias Schlipf & Maurik de Groot

“The students work on real tasks, relevant to the company concerned. They talk to customers, employees, sales representatives and they understand what it means to make a relevant contribution.”



Participating students: Francesca Zelinski and Fabian Bartsch



Cruise on the canals of Amsterdam

As part of the bachelor module “B2B Marketing & Sales Management”, Munich and Amsterdam students work in cross-cultural teams on internationalization strategies for Dutch and German companies. The cooperation between Munich and Amsterdam Universities of Applied Sciences (AUAS) was launched five years ago. mbl talked to Maurik de Groot and Matthias Schlipf, the two lecturers in charge, and to the participating students Francesca Zelinski and Fabian Bartsch about their experiences in the sometimes challenging projects.

**Prof. Dr.-Ing. Schlipf, Mr de Groot, how did the project-based cooperation with AUAS come about?**

Matthias Schlipf It was four years ago, when the AUAS approached the International Office of our Faculty if there is an interest in a cross-border and joint marketing module about sales, export and internationalization between the AUAS and HM. Back in 2019, I gave it a try and as part of the bachelor module “B2B Marketing & Sales Management” we started the first cross-border project. Two years ago Maurik (de Groot) joined in as co-lecturer from AUAS.

Maurik de Groot The idea is that students from both universities form mixed teams and work for a client company on an international marketing topic. The kick-off and final presentation session consist each in a multiple day event one time in Munich and one time in Amsterdam – and in between the students work via digital communication tools together. As the curricula of AUAS and HM differ from each other - Munich concentrates on B2B Marketing, Amsterdam focuses on International Marketing – we merged the two directions to “International B2B Marketing” for the project and this topic proved to be very successful.

**How do you access the client companies for the projects?**

Matthias Schlipf That varies from time to time. At one point, I asked some tech start-ups within the Strascheg Center for Entrepreneurship if such a project could support them in their expansion and international plans. Last year, an alumna from our Master Marketing Program approached me for an export plan and go-to-market strategy for the company she was working for. For

the current summer module, we approached Schneider Weisse, which happens to be my favorite brewery, and the offer was well received. M&G Yes, this will be a great experience, also because we are going to explore new marketing strategies for a proud family-owned business and brewery that already exists for 150 years. It will be interesting to see how young people analyse and advise these traditional companies on competing successfully in these changing times. Up to now many of our “customers” were tech-start-ups with pretty innovative products and business ideas. Last summer, we had projects on marketing the first ultrasonic 3D sensors and a robot assistant for elderly people.

**What does the project framework look like?**

Maurik de Groot The prerequisite is that the company concerned wants to internationalize, usually to a European country, as the information on those is rather available to the students. Usually, up to five countries are given as possible internationalization options and the students must explore which of those has the most promising market for the product in question. After choosing the most suitable country, the student teams have to define a strategy for the company’s market entrance.

Matthias Schlipf The whole project runs over a period of 8-9 weeks with five to six students per team. Kick-off is on site at the HM. Halfway through, the teams will present their results to our clients, Maurik and me and get some coaching on how to move on. At the final presentation at AUAS, the company representatives and all students are present.



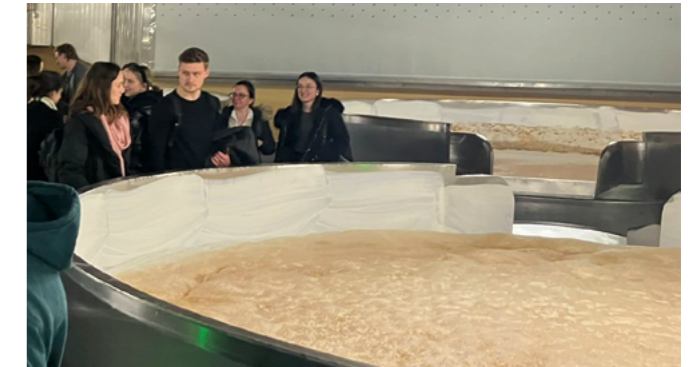
Business Campus of the Hogeschool van Amsterdam



Final Presentation in Amsterdam in 2022



Kick-off and project briefing at HM in 2023



Tour through facilities of Company Partner

**How much do the companies gain from the projects?**

Maurik de Groot There is always a lot of appreciation from the companies, they value the effort and the fresh ideas the students contribute. While the companies will not buy the strategy as a whole, they adopt parts and single features of it.

Matthias Schlipf The companies get indeed a large amount of fresh and innovative ideas and a comprehensive documentation about the analysis work done by the student teams. We should not underestimate the power and creative potential of about 20 students per client working on the given marketing task.

**What are the main benefits for the students?**

Maurik de Groot From my point of view they benefit most from the fact that they work on real tasks, relevant to the company concerned. They talk to customers, employees, sales representatives and they understand what it means to make a relevant contribution. That makes a huge difference compared to theoretical knowledge tests. By the way, this real business life experience is important also for Matthias and me – we listen carefully to the companies because we want to know what they really need.

Matthias Schlipf Equally important are the gains in soft skills of the students. As a rule, it takes about two weeks for the groups to team up. This process is not easy at all, they need a lot of energy to sort things out and encounter quite a bit of frustration. All of them have different curricula, there are two lecturers in this module, a challenging company task... Overco-

ming these obstacles feels like a real victory and releases the creative potential of the intercultural teams. Thus, the students learn to cooperate and align themselves in an international and cross-cultural environment. During the project period Maurik and I see a lot of progress in personal and professional development.

**So you are completely happy with the project process?**

Matthias Schlipf There is always room for improvement. I feel that the eight weeks are a bit short for achieving the best possible results. But the tight schedules of both the students from Amsterdam and from Munich do not allow for more time. Furthermore, I notice that the organization and execution of the kick-off and kick-out event in Munich and Amsterdam is intense and complex and not all students can or want to join in on-site, which of course is a pity. Still, I am very happy that we as a Faculty can offer our students such an international and professional experience. And of course, Maurik and myself appreciate the positive feedback from and learnings of our company clients and especially our students at the end of the projects.

**Fabian, we would like to know more about the student experience of the projects. How were the individual teams formed – did you have a choice?**

Fabian Bartsch There were five or six students per team. The German students could get together in pairs or trios as they liked, the Dutch team members were assigned to us. It is part of the project that you can't rely on already existing personal relation-

ships but rather have to invest some time to get to know the other members of your group.

**How did you learn about the task you had to work on?**

Fabian Bartsch In our module two companies, one Dutch, one German, assigned their international marketing issues to the project. My team worked with Munich based TOPOSENS. They invented and designed the world's first ultrasonic 3D sensor and want to expand their sales into another European country. At our first face-to-face Dutch-German meeting in Munich two representatives from the company presented their project and answered our questions. We had five major European countries to start with and the task was to determine which of those is most suitable for their export strategy. Altogether, two groups worked on Europe, two other groups examined export potentials in North America.

**How did you proceed in order to determine the best country?**

Fabian Bartsch We investigated the potential customers and competition in the five countries quite thoroughly. In the end we opted for Great Britain as the most suitable market. Obviously, that was not the only possible conclusion. The group working in parallel to us came up with Italy as their result. We had an intermediate presentation where the country was finally determined, the second half of the project was dedicated to the development of a suitable export strategy.

**Were you happy with your results?**

Fabian Bartsch Yes, I was quite happy, we presented a report of 80 plus pages which contained a lot of relevant facts and viable ideas. But to be honest, it took a real effort in the final days to achieve that. Altogether we had just less than three months for the whole project and it involved a lot more work than we had expected.

**Did you notice differences in the working styles of the German and the Dutch students?**

Fabian Bartsch Yes, our Dutch team members were a bit more relaxed where deadlines and agendas were concerned. We needed a bit of time to adjust to that. They also contributed some interesting methods which were new to us. I think we benefited from the cross-border cooperation.

**What did you personally gain from the project?**

Fabian Bartsch Travelling to Amsterdam was a great experience for me, especially because I won't have any other stays abroad during my bachelor studies. And I was really impressed by the great support we got from our company. They were always at hand when we needed them and provided a lot of valuable information.

**Francesca, tell us about your team and the company task assigned to it.**

Francesca Zelinski Well, in our team the Germans were slightly outnumbered – we had three Amsterdam and two Munich students. The company we worked for is called TINYBOTS and based in Rotterdam. They invented a small robot assistant for people suffering from dementia.

**What does such a robot look like?**

Francesca Zelinski Well, it is about the size and shape of a flowerpot, it looks like a doll and it is a "girl". Her name is Tessa. Tessa can't move, but she talks to the patients. There is an app to send orders to her, she also plays music. A typical task for Tessa is to remind the patient to drink something, the music she plays has a soothing effect and makes the patients more comfortable. In the Netherlands, Tessa is already a big success. The robot is not sold directly to patients or their relatives, but the distribution is achieved by a cooperation with the country's largest health insurer association.

**Which task did TINYBOTS assign to you?**

Francesca Zelinski They are looking for the best European country to go international. Six countries were given to us for analysis. We decided on Germany as the most suitable option and so did the two groups working in parallel to us. The distribution model could be much the same as in the Netherlands: no direct sales but a leasing system with the health insurers as lessees.

**Did you notice any differences in the Dutch and German style of working?**

Francesca Zelinski Yes, I think our Dutch colleagues were more flexible with the schedules agreed. They have to, as their situation as students is quite different from ours. Almost all of them have jobs in the catering industry, which means working at night and/or the weekends. They don't have student employees in companies or similar employment possibilities.

Sometimes it was really difficult to find time slots for our team meetings, but the communication was great and they were absolutely dedicated to the task at hand. Their feedback to us was also quite positive, they told us that they admired our commitment.

**Are you happy with the results you achieved?**

Francesca Zelinski Yes, I am. The final stage involved a lot of stress and effort, but in the end the performance was alright.

**What did you personally gain from the project?**

Francesca Zelinski I learned a lot about cultural differences and how to deal with them. It was a demanding project, but the additional value for the students from both universities was worth the effort. I think it was also a positive experience for our Dutch team members – they enjoyed the challenge and we are still in touch.

*Das Interview führte  
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