

Report host - Andris Visnevskis Obelisk Farm

- **Profile of the host organization**

Introduction: Obelisk Farm is a family hemp farm located in a rural area in Latvia. The farm is nestled in a 2.5-hectare land and produces different hemp products such as hemp tea, hemp seeds, hemp oil and more. The farm also provides workshops, courses, tours and tastings that are meant to raise awareness of the uses and benefits of the hemp plant.

Background: Obelisk Farm story began when a young family of four - Andris, Debora, Gabriela, and Fredis - moved from London to the Latvian countryside with just a handful of seeds and a big dream. The family was searching for a more nature connected life. As they settle in a 2.5-hectare organic farm nestled in the eastern part of Latvia, Latgalē region – at Obeliškas village and with a flourishing grasp of farming, hemp growing became a priority at the farm. The family believes that hemp is one of Mother Nature's most extraordinary plants and they have no doubt that hemp can and will feed, clothe, shelter and heal the entire world. Over time, they realized that the hemp plant still raises misunderstandings. Thus, the family decided to open their doors for tours around the farm where visitors explore how the farm grows hemp and turn it into useful products. In addition, they provide learning opportunities that are meant to raise awareness of the uses and benefits of the hemp plant. To this extent, the farm aims to break stereotypes regarding cannabis sativa as an agricultural crop while introducing visitors to the endless potential of the hemp plant.

- **Learning from an outside view**

Hosting Mafalda was, without a doubt, one of the best hosting experiences. From a professional point of view, the experience provided the opportunity to improve several competences including: interpersonal skills such as leadership, communication skills, practical skills such as planning, organizing and decision making. Being Mafalda's mentor also provided from the personal point of view, the chance to discover more about the family, which after the experience proved that the bond is stronger. The sense of empowerment one gets from this experience is impressive.

- **Evaluation**

The first week Mafalda arrived at the farm, she was introduced to the family and farm history. This was very important so Mafalda would get to know us better. She also became more at ease and aware of the work done at the farm. There were many ice-breaking games that let us know her more as well. This was without any doubt, crucial to the good environment felt throughout the traineeship.

This week, besides helping with work-related with hemp, Mafalda also had the opportunity to help in the garden. The garden is a very important source of food during the winter for the family. She helped pick up fruits that were later made into jams. There was also work of maintenance in the garden that Mafalda also participated and give her feedback.



The first picture taken with Mafalda and Obelisk Farm family



Mafalda in the family garden picking up blackberries

In the second week, Mafalda learned more about hemp plant uses and benefits. She also got to know more about the hemp products produced by the farm and learned how to make hemp paper which was fundamental to the events that she participated. Additionally, as defined in the working plan, Mafalda also got to know more about hemp as a building material and helped prepare for the training course that took place after Mafalda's traineeship.



Mafalda taking part in a local event doing hemp paper



Mafalda helping to prepare for the hemp building course

- **Recommendations**

A working plan is a very useful tool to develop before the traineeship begins since in our case it proved to be a crucial resource for both the host and Mafalda, as it details helped to ensure the experience was fruitful for both.

Including Mafalda in all activities and family traditions made her feel like part of the family and it is believed that encourage her involvement in sustainability & rural development.

Definitely staying in contact with Mafalda is a great resource to maintain a connection and see how she blossom professionally and personally.