

**Interview with Ewa Kret**  
**the President of InTech company**  
[transcript]

0:05

Hello, my name is Natalia Mizera and I'm a member of UNIVERSEH project. Today with me is Mrs Ewa Kret, the President of InTech company. Hi. Hi Ewa. We would like to get to know you a little bit if you. Could describe yourself? I am a PhD hydrogeologist and environmental engineering with more than 10 years experience in the field of applied hydrogeology. Hydrogeology is related to the groundwater and all of the aspects

0:35

related to a planning, to the groundwater assessment, all of the problems related to the groundwater in the city or in the mining and whatsoever you will think about the water and the problems that we have with the water management. OK. So after this short introduction, I can see that probably your interests are really strongly connected to the profile of your spin-off. So I think that's a good moment to ask you what's your spin-off is about. My spin-off is about

1:08

ground water management and all of the problem and technical aspects that we provide, all of the solutions for the groundwater management. In our company it's related to the starting from the beginning of the project or the investment that we are planning. We are doing projects, we are doing some predictions of, for example, of the groundwater flow with the investigation and that's whatever we will think about we are supporting with our company. OK. So how did the idea come up?

1:42

Me and my partner and co-owner and co-founder of the company, we're working on the university, we are researchers, we cooperate more than 10 years together and

we are doing a lot of technical advice in the industry, but it was through the other companies. So we were thinking 'maybe we'll start the company' from time to time. When we're travelling somewhere on the conference we're just making up the name of the company, thinking about the logo and it was just for fun. And after that, there were some projects with the National Centre of

2:15

Research and Development in Poland, that at the end required to start the company. And I think that it was the trigger for us to think about for real to start the company and we did. So we established the company in 2019 in March and it's going on for four years so far. OK. So

2:37

as far as I know you got some support from our university, from AGH. Could you describe us how did it work? What do you have to do, how the corporation looked like? At the beginning when we were thinking about starting the company, we're a little bit afraid of this whole administrative stuff with those things that we have to think about or know when we are starting the company and we didn't have idea about that. So INNOAGH helped us, they came to us, they said that they're supporting some spin-offs. They are also

3:10

co-founders and co-owners of the company. They are taking some percents, from the input and then they helped us with all of the administrative stuff from

3:24

starting from the bank account, going to the lawyer with support of the lawyer from AGH and everything we were just needed and didn't know what to do and where to go. They are supporting us even with the templates of some paperwork that we have to do. So it was a lot of help that they did. OK. So when you say us, I'm really curious to know how big is your team? Who's exactly in? What's your roles? How do you

3:53

cooperate with each other? I'm the CEO of the company. So there's the Vice CEO, it's

3:59

my friend and co-owner, Mariusz, this is the second team member and the third one

is AGH, so this INNOAGH company. So there's only three of us. So it's this, we decided to have a small company. We're not hiring anymore even if there's only or maybe there's a four years of the company, but a small company is easier to get the funds later on to apply for the projects because the input for the project is smaller. So we decided that it will be a small company.

4:34

So far so good. We will think in the future, maybe we'll expand. So that's all with the company. So as you said at the beginning, you have an academic background. Yes. So what is your motivations? Why did you decide to swift a bit from academia to business?

4:52

With my background, the hydrogeology and geology, the whole one, it is quite difficult not to cooperate in the industry. We are doing a lot

5:04

projects for the mining area and all of the research that we were doing it was for something, there was the purpose for that. Even with my PhD we're doing waterworks some quite job and big project for them and I really like that. So for me, the research at the university and the company that we only doing for the industry, staff it's it's almost the same, because those two things are related. So that's what's not the idea that maybe I will switch because I didn't switch. I'm doing just both, that they are going parallel together.

5:37

OK. So do you think it's important that companies and universities cooperate with industry? Yes, I think that, I cannot imagine the research that is actually useless and you would just put it somewhere after you will finish some lab experiments. I think that it is very important to to do something that is actually useful for the industry and it's really, really nice feeling to see that, for example, your simulations or your research is actually applied somewhere and used somewhere in

6:10

the industry, it's, it's really nice to to watch it and see it.

6:14

OK. So what were your main goals when you started the company? I think that doing those projects by yourself and trying to maybe change, challenge yourself to actually

run the company. And for some of the projects, and some of the companies, they didn't want to do projects through the AGH, they wanted to have a company because B2B is easier to

6:43

to actually conduct then doing this academia and and business profile. So I think that it was the motivation, the main one. It was a lot of the projects that we would like to do instead of some other company. And of course the money, the salaries, because there are quite bigger than at the university. So me and my partner decided that, OK, we'll just earn more money if we were to run the company by ourself. OK. But at the beginning surely you needed some funding.

7:17

So I would like to ask, how is it with spin-offs, where you can look for money that could support your business? So we founded ourselves, with me and my and my partner, but also INNOAGH help us with that because co-owner put his input with the money and we just investor savings and we set up some deadline, OK, so within a year or a year and a half, we supposed to have those money back.

7:50

If not then we will be just reconsidering the company. And it was a very big risk for us. I was really afraid as a young person, as young researcher because my partner and co-worker is older than me. But he was just convincing me OK, Ewa, we can do it, we can do it, just think about it and do it. This business plan that we are just considering and reading and reading again, we were just talking a lot about that. And then we just decided that OK we have to do it and and it worked. OK. It sounds like your partner

8:24

is very supportive and self confident. So I would like to ask what do you think are just the characteristics of successful person? Because I think we can describe you as one of them. A successful person... I think that it has to be a very, very stubborn person

8:43

and maybe also self confident. It's just as you told about my partner. You need to have a lot of background and you have to not doubt yourself in your knowledge, in in

your background, that you have and what you know. Because a lot of people will be telling you that OK, you do know nothing. So we have to be really confident with that and you need to have a very, very strong attitude that you can do it. Because without that, with those doubts that you have, without my partner, probably it won't be easy

9:16

for me to start the company by myself or with someone else. And with him because for example, my organisational skill, it would be difficult for him to start the company. Because I'm doing the administration and he's doing other stuff in the company. So I think that we are just filling in each other with that. So we know that personal capabilities are very important. But I'm also interested in what do you think are the indicators that you can say make something successful that's you have a success

9:50

in your field of research or in company?

9:54

What do you think are just the key ingredients, let's say for that? It's very hard to tell, because we have a very specific field in the hydrogeology and I think that this knowledge that you have. I was I think

10:09

almost 10 years of my of my knowledge that I am using now in my company. And I think that you need to have this background with your university, with a lot of research and that nothing will just make you surprised with the the future research that you're doing and the company that you are starting. OK. So it's quite difficult to actually to tell me that. OK. So it was difficult to talk about the success. Maybe it would be kind of the great question,

10:42

to discover, to show young people that they're also some obstacles when you decide to start spin off. So could you tell me if there were any problems you have met on your way?

10:54

The problems... everybody was telling that me and my coworker, because we are working at the university and we have a, we have we actually a great team over there, and that we will be arguing a lot. About the money usually, because people

arguing about the money mainly. That they know a lot of people who cooperate together in their research very smoothly and they are not working together in the company and they were splitting. And with me and my co-worker was not such a case, he's not really taking care about some

11:27

very small details. He's really a person who is not worried a lot. I'm the person who worries about some staff. So he's learning me OK, but we have to just go back. we'll just step back and think about that, or we have to just take the risk. So

11:47

I don't remember if we were just arguing about something related to the company. Usually we are just talking and talking a lot, and the strategy and everything, that we are just doing in the future in the one year from now is discussed in the company. So I think it's very important to have the person next to you that you can trust. And even there are some checklists that you can just see and say that for example, the person with whom you would like to start the company, that you need to know of course this person background,

12:21

so what he's doing or what she's doing, in the research or whatsoever, but for example for a living, also the university background. But you need to know something from his private level, for example, when this person was born, in which family it was raised. So we need to know something or just discuss with that person earlier just to know it better. Because with this family background, with this university background, how this person behaved in the family or within the family, is also very important and you can just tell which

12:54

person it is and what is his character. I think what you said was really important, in a case that we should emphasise how important are people who we decide to cooperate with. And as I could treat it as some kind of advice

13:11

for the students, I would also ask you if you have any specific advice for the students who would be interested in starting spin-off, but in the field of space sector,

13:21

It's a very actually difficult to start because it's very difficult field, in the space sector. I

think that you have to be a very strict with your idea and very self confident with the idea that you have. That even if you will hear that OK, it's stupid, that it will not work or it will be expensive. Just try again, again, again and again and I think that then you will succeed. That you don't have to you, you cannot give up with the with the industry, with the ideas that you have because

13:55

that will just make you everything fall apart. Thank you so much for this advice and I would also like to ask you if you think there is any important topic that we could miss, but it's very crucial for the future students who will be interested in spin-offs.

14:12

I think that the first of all you need to have some background. Just read about it, how it works, what do you need, and to set up how much money do you need for example to survive one year? For me it was just a deadline with the money that you have to invest or just find some funders, if you don't have money by yourself, just like we have. And so if you would like to have some co-funders, just think about it about one or two years

14:45

earlier, even before you start the company because finding a founder it's quite difficult and it's taking a lot of time to convince someone to the ideas that you have. Our company is running for four years and with some ideas that we have, we didn't find any funds so far. So they are just waiting for their time

15:07

because people are convincing us that it's stupid. But after, for example, one year they said, OK, it was not so stupid, maybe let's start the research about that. So it's taking a lot of time. So take the time, take your time for that and prepare yourself for for the idea and for the path that you would like to follow. Thank you so much for your insights and the whole discussion. It was really interesting to talk with you. I think you have a very big experience that you can share with others and you're very motivating and also confident. So it was really nice

15:40

to listen to your story. I think all of us would be curious how is the things going with your spin-off. So where we could find more information about InnoTech? You can find them on the website. You can find them on LinkedIn also. So you can just research about that. You can also research me or my coworker when you find the the

names and then you will see what we are doing. OK. So thank you so much one more time. It was a real pleasure to have you here and

16:13

I hope to see you again and hear about you in some big news. Yeah, Let's let's hope so. Thank you very much. Thank you so much.

---

This project has received funding from the European Union's Horizon 2020 research and innovation programme under grant agreement No 101035795

UNIVERSEH – European Space University for Earth and Humanity is an alliance of

