

AN INTERVIEW

"I'm the cat lady, but I'm finding loving homes for the cats."

YELIZ GIJBELS

Founder MAU cat café


**#She
DIDIT**

The cat lady, no really.

Five years ago, Yeliz started without any preconceived ideas as a volunteer at an animal shelter in Genk. Her love for cats ran deeply to the point where she wanted to give every cat in the shelter all her love. She took care of the cats and made them ready for adoption, a feeling that was indescribable to Yeliz. Making sure the cats had a cat-tastisc loving home. Far too many cats end up in shelters, often because people have no idea how to take care of them, or their needs. Little did she know that her work as a volunteer would be the starting point of her entrepreneurial journey.

She teamed up with a friend and combined their love for coffee and cats, and voila: MAU! A catventure coffee shop for the animal lovers among us. Having a café with just cats was not the only goal for Yeliz. She focussed on raising awareness, staying in close contact with the ins and outs of the shelter, and help ensure that cats find a better home. All while you're having a cup of coffee!

If you ask Yeliz, she never thought about becoming an entrepreneur. That world didn't really appeal to her until she worked as a teacher for a couple of years. **She loved being in the classroom, but her curiosity about other opportunities was too strong to stay in class. Curious cat anyone?**



“You will find a way, but it won’t always be easy. Everything depends on your own mindset! If you really want to try, go for it. Life is precious and too short to hang on to something you have outgrown while your dream is waiting.”

– YELIZ GIJBELS

**#She
DIDIT**

If you don't try, how will you know?

She had to work hard to get MAU off the ground, but wouldn't have it any other way. Not only is she thankful for herself, for putting in the work and her perseverance. She acknowledges her grandfather who left his small village in Turkey to give his family a better life, with more opportunities.

However, when starting the business there were still doubts. As a result, Yeliz missed out on the perfect property because she wasn't ready for it yet. But somehow, a few months later, that same property suddenly became available again and they went for it straight away. If it is meant to be, it will be. Never give up or in.

She secretly also dreams of a second business. Not in the same style as MAU, but vegan in any case. For the time being, she only fantasizes about it, because they still have a long way to go with the cat café. Starting from not wanting an entrepreneurial life to saying that she only discovered her entrepreneurial side and that other projects will follow. Yeliz, life is always better when you turn over a new leaf.

YELIZ'S 3 GOLDEN RULES

Be prepared. Do your research. Increase your knowledge.
And don't be afraid to ask questions to the right people.

Take advice from people who you aspire to be one day.
Where they are is where you want to be. Friends and
family all mean well, but their advice won't be well
thought out or won't have the needed experience like
professionals do.

Don't be afraid to grow with your idea! An initial idea
may not work as well as you hoped. Then don't be afraid
to adjust your plan and take new steps!