

Interview Dritan Gremi Gremi:

It's time to think about the future and recovery.

In response to the interest of the France-Albania Chamber of Commerce and Industry and an analysis of the situation of dental tourism in the challenge of recovery after the global pandemic Covid-19!

1. Since 2009, Gremi Clinic/Voyager et Sourire have enabled several thousand patients from Italy, France and Belgium to regain their beautiful smiles by providing professional dental care with the highest quality.
 - How do you think the market will move in the field of dentistry after the situation of COVID-19 pandemic in Albania?

The global Covid-19 pandemic profoundly shrank the world economy and caused 2/3 of the world, nearly 3 billion people, to be isolated at home for almost two months. Economic shrinking means shrinking tourism but that shouldn't make us fall into Coronavirus lethargy by deciding to leave our economy in stagnation. In these days where we have been inactive to run towards formal meetings in offices, we had to think about the strategy of re-establishing and adapting to the new reality. As in the rest of the world, the Albanian market has its own fluctuations in this regard. Gremi Clinic has been launching a marketing promotion campaign for 10 days now and has entered the market with new offers, believing in the rapid reopening of the territory and economic activities. At the same time, we are working on the implementation of a rigorous plan with strong anti-covid19 hygienic-sanitary protocols to cope with the situation.

Like any other sector, dental tourism has taken a heavy toll, but that doesn't mean we should give up quietly awaiting the bankruptcy of what we've built so far. The situation is dynamic and evolves day by day, we need to be able to read these changes properly and make the right decisions as soon as possible. I am optimistic and inclined to believe that every bad thing has its good side; after the storm comes the sun, therefore in these conditions we must see and find the positive sides and build with great care and confidence the strategy of recovery. We must move forward rapidly in drafting and complying with the anti-covid 19 medical protocols certified by the WHO, under strict monitoring of Albanian state structures, to guarantee the protection of patients and our employees, as a basic condition of our strategy in the continuation of activity.

I welcome the decision of the Ministry of Health to open dental clinics on May 11, by establishing strict safety protocols.

So the situation requires a good intuition of reading and resilience in decision making as the dynamics change day by day, we must forget the old schemes as the situation has changed and nothing will be the same as before!

In my opinion, tour operators should revisit their offers. They should not be discouraged by raising their hands and saying that the end has come, it is just a new beginning. We should not just wait for subsidies from the state, the most important thing is to resume activity and revive the economy, finding and using all possible spaces in compliance with the new conditions for the situation we are in.

The crisis of the most developed countries, for example, can increase the number of foreign tourists who choose to be treated abroad, taking advantage of the lower prices compared to the countries where they live.

During the quarantine period I launched two new Startups, a pizza restaurant with bio products and an ice cream production with the very best Italian experience. I had about 5 months working on these 2 projects, the situation forced me not to open them in the form and way conceived before, but within a few hours, at the moment when all of Albania was isolated I decided to launch two products with delivery service and things went well.

I believe that in June we will start the opening of the activity, hopeful in opening the borders, encouraged by the statistics of Albania with a low number of fatalities according to all official reports.

I have devised a strategy for reviving and launching some offers, certainly in the current situation. Together with the sales department and marketing staff, we have been working for almost 10 days and the results look incurable. So far we have 8 bookings for the month of June, mainly from Italy and Switzerland. At the same time, we have constant threats from France and Belgium.

We have undertaken to subsidize the plane ticket for all patients and any possible penalties in case the opening of the borders is postponed, or in case of any change by the airlines, we are in constant contact with all our customers.

Based on the above data, I have positive indications that medical tourism will have good days in a row. Despite the many ambiguities and difficulties of having a clear vision in this situation; I am positive about the future and see light at the end of the tunnel.

2. In times of crisis, staff management is very important. What are your ways to better lead your team during this difficult period?

The first thing I thought of in the moments when the crisis had just begun was my staff and their families. With the most of them I have a close, almost friendly relationship and I know their problems. Initially I made a restructuring plan, I decided not to suspend or fire anyone. I drafted a "shield" plan for 3 months, restructuring the staff and guaranteeing the minimum wage with the income of my activity, without subsidies from the state. I spoke openly with them, clarifying the situation we were in, at the same time I encouraged them by guaranteeing that no one would leave the job and we would all go through this situation together. We are all working together on a new

strategy for a speedy recovery, I am confident we will succeed.

We are currently awaiting inclusion in the expanded economic package as we are now moving towards the third month that we are suspended without any income.

3. A message for CCI France-Albanie members?

We have to look at the continuity of things with optimism, the summer season should not be considered lost. Rather, we need to find the right ways and mechanisms to further support it in the new situation. Of course, the "tsunami" we just went through will have its consequences, so I think not all businesses will survive. I do not rule out the possibility that almost 30% of them will go bankrupt, but each of us must rebuild your strategy by adapting to the "new normalcy" in this abnormal situation. Of recurrence, reopening comes only with the awareness of everyone in strict adherence to medical, hygienic-sanitary and re-dimensioning protocols of any clinic or work environment to guarantee anti-covid protocols 19. At this point, Gremi Clinic offers full warranty after has closed the entire dental tourism services chain. It is one of the few realities in the region and beyond that manages every activity directly, guaranteeing all services on its own without involving third-party actors who may not have adhered to strict medical protocols. This means that from the reception at the airport, accommodation, medical dental services, food in our bars and restaurants, are provided by us with the same care not to endanger anyone in this delicate situation. In the end, I would encourage everyone to look ahead with optimism as nothing is over, it is a new beginning for everyone.

