

Interview with Emine Baş

Internship at Ultimo

13 Sep 2004 – 19 Jan 2005

Emine Baş is a young student born in the Netherlands holding both Dutch and Turkish citizenship and continuing her higher education at the Hogeschool Ijselland Saxion in Deventer, studying International Business & Marketing, a 4-year study of which she is in her third study year.

1. Why did you decide to come to Turkey now?

A compulsory part of my education is a placement as a trainee at an organization abroad. My internship is obligatory and needs to be done abroad because I am studying marketing with an international focus. I have to see other countries and gain experience in different cultures. I have a Turkish background, but all my life I was brought up in the Dutch culture. I wanted to see Turkey and its culture not only in vacation times, but also experience living and working in Turkey. I have plans to live in Turkey in future, this also affected my decision.

2. How did you get the internship assignment in Turkey?

In January 2004 I started the search process for my training. After some research I heard that a friend has been working at Mercedes Turkey for years, so he arranged a training place for me. I was really happy, because Mercedes is a wonderful international organization. However, after a few training days I realized this was not what I was looking for. The finance department of Mercedes where I started to work was not interesting for me. The few days there were very stressful! I really thought about returning to the Netherlands.

In July Concordia had emailed our university regarding training possibilities in Turkey. Suddenly, I remembered this email and directly contacted the Concordia office in Istanbul. That same day I visited the office, was interviewed and then accepted as a trainee at Ultimo.

My assignment in Ultimo is focused on the role of a buying agency: “How can a buying agency set up for the Dutch Market function better?” It is a 5-months internship. The first months I worked with different departments; Apparel, Underwear & Nightwear, Home Textile and the Quality Department. After gaining some experience and analyzing these departments I will start with my project and using my knowledge of the Dutch mentality and Dutch market, I will try to find out how these questions can be answered. All this will help me to understand the functions of a buying agency.

3. Are you interested in the textile? Would you like to pursue a career related to this field?

Textile is very new for me. I had no idea before and I learned a lot in two months. It is a very active and innovative branch of business. I will do by best to learn all the details about Turkish textile. For example, I wear “made in Turkey” clothes from H&M, always bought textile items from Hema but never thought they were all from Turkey and that the Turkish textile market had such a depth.

I am not sure if I will pursue a career related to textile because my previous internships were in a totally different area. I have worked for ABN AMRO, and I really liked

banking & finance as well. I have not decided for the moment. I am open for all different sectors. I will see better as time goes by.

4. Have you noticed any differences between Holland and Turkey in terms of work conditions and ethics?

As a trainee you get a lot of attention in the Netherlands, of course they expect your self-reliance as a university student, but in spite of this they pay attention to you. They do not make you feel like a trainee, but like a real part of the organization. I believe this is not comparable with the attitudes in Turkey. Social motivation should be more in Turkey. Organizations have to give a better chance to the students. They cannot benefit from spending the whole day in front of a copy machine.

In Dutch organizations, at least at the bank, there is more of a team feeling. The employees trust each other easily and this leads to a positive and attractive work environment. This is true at all levels of the organisation, there is no barrier between the different work levels. Dutch people are also egoistic in the working area, but actually I see it as something positive. People first do their own work and only after that they help their colleagues with problems or questions. Whereas in Turkey, helping others comes first, even if it results in failure of your own tasks. I am not sure if this is right all together.

5. Do you consider yourself more like a Dutch or a Turkish person?

I always thought that I was more like a Turkish person. In the Netherlands, I am a very nationalistic being a Turkish person. I am always positive about Turkey, I have the biggest dreams and thoughts about Turkey. But now that I am in Turkey, I feel more like a Dutch person. I saw that Turkey is not exactly like I thought. As I lived in Holland all my life, I have absorbed the Dutch culture without realizing it. It is pure emotional I think, it is really difficult to explain because I have the two cultures melted in, but my brain is working in Dutch. For example, during the Monday meetings in the office we speak Turkish, but I translate everything to Dutch in my mind.

6. There are many Turkish people in the Netherlands. Do you think they have the same lifestyle and cultural values as people living in Turkey?

Firstly, we can divide the Turkish people in the Netherlands in two groups. The first group consists of the 1st and 2nd generations; their lifestyle and cultural values are the same as the time they left Turkey. They look from one perspective, and they are still living in their own world of 40 years ago for example. They did not learn to speak the Dutch language. If these people return to Turkey, they cannot survive either because Turkey has changed at the same time. The culture and lifestyle of this group of people has not developed at all. The second group of people consists of the 3rd and 4th generation which I am part of. Most of them were born in the Netherlands.

Of course there are some differences because the lifestyles are different. These people are left in between the two cultures, the Turkish culture at home, the Dutch culture outside home. It does not mean that they cannot live in Turkey but they will prefer to stay in Holland or feel at home in Holland.

7. *Do you think you will live in Turkey at some point in your life?*

Not yet. But in the future, in about 5-6 years, I may consider to spend a few years living and working here. I really believe that Turkey is growing and improving in all aspects, economically, socially etc. Many factors will influence my decision, it is not easy to leave Holland either because it is my country as well.

Interview by Aylin Sökmen
