

## **Interview with Erwin van der Meulen**

Internship at Hey Tekstil

5 Sep - 22 Dec 2005

*Erwin, could you introduce yourself briefly and tell us the reason you came to Turkey?*

My full name is Erwin van der Meulen, I'm 24 years old and I'm currently in my fourth year of studying Commercial Economics at the Saxion Hogeschool located in Deventer, Holland. For over 2 years now I've been together with my girlfriend Patricia and we are planning to live together in February 2006. My other major field of interest is music, I write, play, listen and teach music back in Holland. I've also done a music education program in the USA from 2001 to 2003. My reason for doing an internship in Turkey is that I wanted international business experience and Turkey seemed the right place to do this, especially with the possible membership of the EU.

*What are your tasks in Hey Tekstil? Could you tell us some details?*

At Hey Tekstil my work basically consists of three parts. The first and most important thing was to do my research and write a plan about the recent changes in the international clothing market, the focus here was to let Turkey be one step ahead of the competition. The second "job" was to get to know the organization and its processes including some knowledge about fabrics and production methods. The last task was to help out the merchandisers with their daily work, the number of things I could do was limited though, because I do not speak the Turkish language.

*What do you think about Turkey's situation in Europe? Why all these long negotiations?*

I think it is a great opportunity for Turkey to enhance their financial position and become a global player in some world markets. However, I see many problems that are not easily solved, the rumor is that the Turkish Lira is overrated as a currency and that could have devastating consequences for the Euro. Unemployment is also a big problem for Turkey, because the real employment rate is lower than poor countries (like Poland) within the EU. The Turks also have a lot of pride in everything they created (rules, economy, the state and so on); all these things cannot be maintained when Turkey becomes a member. In short, Turkey has to overcome some major cultural, political and economical changes before becoming a member of the European Union. In my opinion membership seems unlikely in the near future but possible in over 10 years.

*How do you think your work in Turkey influenced you and your future expectations for your career?*

I think this internship has made me a stronger individual. Academically I learned to put the already gained theoretical knowledge into place at a real company. Turkish business life has also shown me that there is a thin line between efficiency and inefficiency. The cultural knowledge I have gained can also be used in my future life. I have great expectations for myself in the future to which this internship has definitely contributed.

*Are you satisfied with Concordia's services? What are the points, in your opinion, that should be taken care of more?*

The service that Concordia provides is a great initiative, and helped me a lot. Of

course there are details that I have experienced which were not pleasant. My biggest problem was that my house was way to far from my workplace that I had not much free time to visit the city (as much as I wanted) or follow language lessons. So looking for appropriate housing is something that can be improved in the future. None the less I would like to pose my gratitude towards the people of Concordia!

*Interview by Onur M. Ahmet*

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