

Interview with Henk-Jan Bassa

Internship with Rynart Transport

20 Feb – 31 Aug 2005

Henk-Jan is twenty-five years old. He was born in Leerdam, where the famous Leerdammer cheese was originally being produced. However, tracing back his family tree, he found out that he had relatives who fought in the navy of the Ottoman Empire.

Although he first considered going to the Police Academy and becoming a police officer, Henk-Jan is now studying logistics at the National Transport Academy in Venlo. In Istanbul he is working at Rynart Transport, concentrating on the implementation of ISO 9002 standards. He describes his decision to come to Turkey as coincidental: *“I definitely wanted to do my traineeship abroad and I was actually considering going to Germany. In the end, I am happy that it turned out to be Istanbul!”*

He does not think that knowing Turkish is particularly necessary for the duties that he is carrying out in Rynart. However, he adds that if he knew some, that would have been a plus point.

When asked about what had surprised him the most about life in Istanbul, he has a lot to say: *“ I was surprised to see how negligently people are throwing garbage on the streets. There are not many garbage bins around. Nevertheless, looking at their carefree attitude, it seems like, even if there were garbage bins, people wouldn't have used them anyways.” I was also surprised to realize that there isn't much of city planning in Istanbul. When the airplane is landing at Atatürk Airport, you are actually landing right in the middle of the city. Houses are constructed just everywhere! I have a feeling that if they had a chance they would not hesitate to build a house right in the middle of the street.”*

He believes that after his traineeship in Turkey, it won't be too difficult for him to find a job in the Netherlands: *“Logistics is a crucial subject for the market at the moment. Moreover, there are not too many students who work as a trainee in a foreign country. That is why I believe that I will find a job relatively easy.”*

Henk-Jan is very much interested in cooking. He goes to buy vegetables and spices at the street market in Mecidiyeköy and he gladly cooks for everybody in the house. Mezes and fish are so far his favourite in the Turkish cuisine.

Henk-Jan's answer to the question concerning his future plans may not sound very ambitious at first, nevertheless, it is ambitious in its own way: *“If I like the job that I am doing and enjoy the people that I am working with, than I could really work well. At the end of it all, I want to be able to say that ‘maybe I haven't been rich, but I've been happy!’”* We hope that he will be.

Interview by Elif Yarsuvat
