

Interview with Yasmin Youssef

Internship at Concordia

15 Aug - 15 Nov 2005

I first approached Concordia in 2004 in they hope that they could help me with finding a suitable internship position at a company in Istanbul. On one of my trips to Istanbul I visited the Concordia office and we talked about what kind of internship I was looking for exactly. I was about to graduate and doing an internship was not an obligatory part of my program. I therefore wanted to do a practical internship instead of a research oriented one. After our talk, Concordia decided to offer me an internship position at Concordia itself. I was informed about what Concordia does and I learnt that it was much more than only providing internship placement services. Their main activity involves offering services related to design. The offer seemed interesting to me so I accepted.

Mid August I started of with my 3 months internship. I was assigned different projects. I have assisted Concordia's sister companies in creating the design and content of their websites, I have done research on how certain activities can best be carried out at the Concordia branch in the Netherlands, and many other things.

I have enjoyed my time at Concordia a lot. I was very lucky to find a team that is very welcoming and friendly. Although I was an intern, I really felt as if I was part of the team. Also almost everyone knows English at Concordia, which helped me a lot. I have noticed that work life in Turkey can be quite different than that in the Netherlands. In general the hours are much longer than in the Netherlands and you spend much more time in traffic. As I have experienced, things also take longer to get done.

What do I think about Istanbul? It is a beautiful city and there are many things to. One of the things I like most is that the shops are open until late and that people are always out. In the Netherlands shops usually close at 6pm and most people stay in-doors after work. Istanbul is a big city and it is not easy to get to know it very fast. Quite some time passed before I started to feel at home here. I guess not knowing the language was also one of the reasons for this. Also going from one place to another can be quite stressful since public transport is not comparable to that in the Netherlands. Everyday I go to work by bus and mini-bus. Especially the minibus was a new experience for me. It also forced me to speak Turkish since you need to tell the minibus driver where you are going and when you are getting of.

For now I am planning to stay in Istanbul. In order to fully participate in life here, knowing the Turkish language is very important. The percentage of people that know English in Istanbul is a lot lower than that in the Netherlands. I have learnt some simple basics of Turkish during the time I have spent here, but it is not enough. Since I am planning to stay here, my aim is to master the language as soon as possible. It won't be easy, but I've seen other foreigners do it, so it is definitely possible.
