



STORYTELLING

“YfEj was really my first job ever!”

Hamburg is a beautiful city in Germany, second for population after Berlin, but equally fascinating thanks to its magical atmosphere made of large green spaces and waterways crossed by 2496 bridges, an extraordinary port and many places to visit such as the baroque church of St. Michaelis; the Rathaus, the impressive Town Hall Palace; the Elbphilharmonie, one of the largest concert halls in the world; the Reeperbahn, the famous red light district; the Miniatur Wunderland, the largest scale model in the world; the Hamburger Kunsthalle Museum; the Oldsdorf cemetery and much more.

THE TESTIMONIAL

European mobile worker: M. Francesca

Age: 28 years old

From: Basilicata, Italy

Currently engaged in: Hamburg

Contract: Pedagogist in a school

Here is where we reach Maria Francesca by phone, on leaving a working meeting. The Headmistress of the school where she works as a Pedagogist, she tells us, asked her support during a job interview with an Italian young man who is about to be hired in the same school thanks to the YfEj project.

Maria Francesca, 28 years old, comes from the Region of Basilicata, in Italy, who first held a bachelor's degree in Education Sciences and then completed her university studies with a master's degree in Pedagogical Sciences.

“Your first EURES job - Maria Francesca tells us - was really my first job ever! Never has the name of a project been so prophetic! I left for my job mobility adventure a month after graduation and my only work experience, in my field, until that time had been the mandatory internship within the course of study. I always had a great passion for children, a passion that goes beyond the simple 'love for children'. I have always been interested in observing them, understanding their approach to new experiences, following and stimulating their growth, strengthening their abilities and weaknesses (if any), thus outlining a path to support them to build up their personality. Pedagogy is a fascinating science, but when you go from theory to practice you really realize that every child is different, unique, peculiar ... I will never meet two equal children and I will never be able to plan the same educational path. Precisely for this reason I can tell you that it is not only a demanding work, but above all stimulating, because I know that every day I will never be faced with the same situation!”

It is with great enthusiasm that Maria Francesca describes her current work, but how did this young Italian Educationalist arrive in Hamburg? “Before telling you how I got here - she tells us - I would like to say why I decided to participate in this story-telling activity, telling about me and my experience: the reason is related to the fact that I would like to motivate all those who give up having a mobility experience abroad, due

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to a 'character weakness" or to the strong bond with their Homeland and loved ones. I want to be honest, I had never considered working abroad, because emotionally I thought I was not able to, that I was not able to withstand so much distance ... After the University, however, we created a group chat with my former colleagues to exchange news and job opportunities and everything started there, from an YfEj job advertisement".

One day someone shared in chat the advertisement of a 'Recruiting Day' organized by Città metropolitana di Roma Capitale, partner of the Your first EURES job Project, concerning the recruitment of educators in Germany: "... I was moved by a sense of duty and guilt - Maria Francesca confides to us - I participated knowing the great difficulty of finding a job, rather than driven by the desire to expatriate ... I can almost say that 'the project found me', not the other way around. I was lulled into the idea of not being able to do it, having never taken part in a job interview, not having previous work experiences and being aware of the difficulty of a totally new language!! ... I wanted not to do it, given what it would entail, that is, to pass the interview and the German language exam".

Recruiting Days are events that aim to connect work demand and supply and to provide information to guide young people. These events, promoted at local and national level, are generally divided in two moments: the first part is aimed at presenting the company, its history, career opportunities and vacancies. The second part is dedicated to individual and/or group interviews and selection tests. The EURES network often organises these events online as well: online European job Days are dynamic recruitment events, enabling job seekers and employers across Europe to meet and interact through the dedicated www.europeanjobdays.eu platform. During the event, employers have free access to thousands of CVs while job seekers can get in touch with registered companies, apply for jobs available in different sectors and countries and take job interviews on line.

And so, a few months later and thanks to one of these events, we found Maria Francesca fully inserted in Germany; ... "I was skeptical about the outcome of the Recruiting Day, there were fifty of us and I initially did not want it to go well, yet the interview attended with some Kindergartens where I was supposed to work, seemed immediately stimulating. They wanted to get to know me in depth, they asked me interesting questions, asking me, for example, how I would be able to bring out a child's talent, how I would behave in front of 'special' children or what I would have done if a child's parents had complained about another teacher's behavior and so on. In short, the more we talked the more I had the feeling that the interview was going well and that that was my destiny. A few days later, I was notified by the YfEj Adviser that I had been hired on a six-month probation contract with the possibility of transforming it on a permanent base."

Yet, despite the favourable outcome, Maria Francesca was still assaulted by a thousand doubts, to the point that she accepted with the hope of not being able to pass the German exam, a next step and fundamental for her final departure. In fact, since she had never loved the study of foreign languages, she felt she would never being able to find the determination to pass a B2 level exam of German: "... I only had 6 months to take a course and pass a difficult German exam".

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Now, thanks to a more favourable environment and a greater knowledge of the language, I can say that I am happy with my choice of mobile worker in Europe”.

My advice to those who want to have a mobility experience in Europe and have some doubts? Go “against” yourself!”

Maria Francesca successfully passed the exam and reached Hamburg. “... I passed that exam and I forced myself to leave, to give myself an opportunity. When I arrived in Hamburg, when I received my first salary, something happened inside me because the desire to achieve my own economic autonomy, the desire to be able to contribute to the sacrifices that my family made for me and to accept this challenge, took over. I had to stay for six months, the time it took to realize a worthy job experience, but, instead, a year and seven months have passed and I am still here”.

Maria Francesca, on arrival, was able to count on the collaboration of some colleagues with whom she had participated in the selection process and on a “Relocation Grant” provided for by the Your first EURES job Project: thanks to this “benefit”, in fact, you are entitled to receive an allowance in order to meet some travel and stay expenses related to the transfer to another country. This is a predetermined amount, which varies depending on the country of destination. Thanks to the benefits received from YfEj and the attention of the employer for new hires, Maria Francesca was able to face her mobility project without asking her family for financial help.

Her first week of work went very well: “I did a first week of reception in a Kindergarten with children aged 0-3 y.o, supported by a Principal who spoke my language ... after this first week, I started working in the kindergarten that had been assigned to me with children aged 3 to 6 years old. Here the experience became more difficult because, honestly, I did not have a good time with the work team, the environment was competitive, chaotic, certainly uncooperative and my initial Level of German was still insufficient to manage an articulated conversation with my colleagues. In short, it was a huge challenge for me: I did not give up and even though it was a partly negative period I worked hard to find the solution each time. In fact, after some time I looked for a second school belonging to the same company (Elbkinder) and I found a kindergarten that was looking for Pedagogists with Italian school education. Now, thanks to a more favourable environment and a greater knowledge of the language, I can say that I am happy with my choice of mobile worker in Europe.”

Maria Francesca, as already mentioned, works today in another Kindergarten, where she follows a group of German children (krippe: 0-3 years old) from the welcome, to the educational and play activities following them throughout the day and following their growth with great passion: “I am happy to do what I have studied for so many years, to contribute to the development of emotions, skills and personality, to the strengthening of the weaknesses of the children entrusted to us. I am happy to be totally free to do my job according to my professional method. I like the idea of giving space to 'emotional' experiences such as play, art, music, expressive dexterity; paths that activate very significant emotional processes, which restore enthusiasm to children and to us, as Pedagogists. Today I can say that it is not only an experience for me, but an added value for my employer”.

“My advice to those who want to have a mobility experience in Europe and have some doubts? Go “against” yourself!” This tells us Maria Francesca at the end of our conversation, aware that the best results can arise from difficult choices: “Don't you want to do it? Just Do it! It's true, everything will look bigger than you, but just don't think about it and do it anyway... if things don't go well, remember, you'll always have a chance to go back. Of course, you can also fail, but it will never fail “because you have not be able to do it”, rather, you will in any case be “grateful to yourself for having tried”.