



## Go for a job abroad!

*Being on your own in an unknown country, the excitement of a strange city, and the struggle of explaining yourself in a different language next to the fulfilment of making it on your own, money in your pocket and being on top of the world. That's what working abroad can be like! But before you start packing your bags and kissing your mom goodbye, realise this: working in a different country, requires a lot more than perseverance and a translated CV. Nannette Ripmeester – a specialist in international job hunting – explains whether this enthusiasm is justified for European graduates interested in landing a job in another European country.*

For many recent graduates, the glamour and allure of an international career is almost irresistible. After years of study they are eager to put their hard work to the toughest test of all: doing business in the international arena. The expected rewards include faster career advancement, more marketable skills such as strategic thinking, cultural sensitivity, flexibility and negotiation ability, improved decision-making, greater confidence and authority, more maturity and better people management proficiency. Well, are you up for a challenge? Would you like to make money, live on your own, meet new people and be a world traveller? Then why not consider working abroad for some time!

### Applications across Europe

Working in Europe may sound to many people as an exciting adventure. However, just realise you are bound to come across some unexpected differences. Job hunting in Europe means understanding the core values in each of the European countries, because what is common in one country, may be very unusual in another country.

For instance, the Netherlands and Germany are physically not far apart, but when it comes to job hunting there are some remarkable differences. In the Netherlands an application letter and maximum two pages A4 folded into an envelope will do. A German recruiter though will be utterly surprised to get a folded CV. That is not done in Germany. Your application letter in this country should contain information on starting date and expected salary and your CV contains precise data and every period is accounted for. You include supporting material and this package of around 10 to 20 pages is neatly packaged in 'Die Mappe' and send to your prospective employer. Due to the large (A4) sized map used, folding is out of the question.

Hence, the most important advice to those interested in a job abroad is to take national differences into account, if they want their application to be taken serious. Looking for work in another country entails more than writing your CV in another language. Remember that no matter in what country you are looking for work, the key element of your CV is to persuade the employer to invite you for a job interview.

### Marketing yourself

If you are clear about the country you are interested in and know the cultural guidelines for job hunting in that country, the next step is to look at your career to date. Remember that your student jobs, internships and vacation jobs have helped you build your CV, so make sure you highlight the abilities you have gained during those activities. This will help you to translate your experiences into skills. It is not just high-powered internships at large multinational organisations that earn you points with prospective employers! If you are able to show on your CV that working in a restaurant as a student gave you a customer-service mindset and communication skills, then you have mastered the trick.

For an international career, you need to show that you are flexible, culturally sensitive, able to adapt to new circumstances and cultures, and that you possess some perseverance and motivation (for the job, not the location!). And last, but certainly not least, you need to possess language skills. Many people believe that having studied a certain language at school or college means you are able to speak that language – but don't be mistaken. Having to convince your boss in a language that is not your native tongue could prove a lot more difficult than you might expect.

### Speaking the language

Tomasz Bronczyk (23) is a Polish student, working and studying sociology at the University of Limerick in Ireland. "By working abroad, I gained a lot of experience and self-confidence, developed myself to the full, and learned how to be well-organised and independent. I was only 19 years old when I left Poland, and feel more adult now. I can manage situations. My advice to others: earn the language of the country you are going to. It does for instance not make sense to come to Ireland without speaking English, because nobody will employ you. It is also good to have some money as the beginning can be expensive when you're not employed (yet), especially as far as renting concerns. And it always takes a little while to find a job."

So you do need to speak the language, understand the culture and be able to market yourself to a foreign employer. Does that sound scary? No worries! Because one thing is arranged well for European jobseekers: if you hold the EU nationality you are allowed to work in all the other EU countries, including Norway, Iceland and Switzerland. And although on paper job mobility is well arranged in Europe you still may come across some hurdles and red tape, but you should be able to overcome these. Working abroad will bring you maturity ... and a lot of fun too!

Article written for Eurograduate by Nannette Ripmeester. Ripmeester is a critically acclaimed writer and speaker on globalisation, migration and European issues. She is co-author of a series of guides on recruitment tactics in over 40 countries and founder of Expertise in Labour Mobility ([www.labourmobility.com](http://www.labourmobility.com) – careers and job hunting advice for over 40 countries.). Nannette has worked for 7 years for the European Commission in Brussels, which was the kick-start to her own international career that took her to 17 different countries.