

Have a Say

Jobs for internationals

SERIOUS SEARCHING

By Molly Quell
Photography MMH

Searching for work is rarely an enjoyable process, but it's even more complicated when you are looking for work in a country that is not your own. It's especially difficult when you're searching under less than ideal economic conditions.

ASTRID MARION

Astrid Marion thinks that there are a lot of opportunities for internationals, but finding those opportunities can take time. 'With certain qualifications, such as fluency in multiple languages, we place people quickly. But with other candidates, it can take a lot longer.' Her company, Unique Multilingual, primarily works with small to medium sized businesses and places people mostly in communication and administrative roles. 'In The Hague, we work with a lot of companies in the flower industry, as well as oil and gas and business services,' she says. 'At our office, we place approximately six people per week on average,' she continues. She suggests to clients that they'd be open minded about the type of work they are interested in. 'Getting experience in the Dutch market is key to obtaining gainful employment.'

Astrid Marion is International Consultant with Unique Multilingual

TERESA MOYNIHAN

'The employment situation has been very bad, but it seems to be improving,' according to Teresa Moynihan. She finds that in some sectors of the economy, such as finance and IT, talent is always in demand. 'There are always opportunities for programmers,' says Moynihan. She also cites language as the biggest hurdle for internationals to overcome, but points to obtaining work visas and a lack of recognition of skills as other hindrances. 'There is more of a value placed on work experience and education obtained in Western Europe or countries like the US and Australia,' she explains. For internationals who are having difficulty finding work, Moynihan also counsels her clients to have patience '...and to consider volunteering or temporary work until you can find the right position.'

Teresa Moynihan is Career Consultant with Moynihan HR Consulting

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Despite the prevalence of English, language is clearly a barrier for internationals seeking work. But it is not the only hindrance to gaining successful employment. A mismatch of skills between themselves and jobs available, an insufficient network and a lack of recognition of their experience play a role in preventing internationals from obtaining employment.

However, not all news regarding employment is bad. The Dutch economy grew steadily last year, and is projected to continue doing so in 2014, buoyed by growth in the Eurozone as a whole. And the ever-increasing rate of globalization leads to more opportunities for internationals.

In this edition's Have a Say, we talk to career and recruitment professionals about their impressions of the job market for internationals, as well as to internationals who are searching for work in the Netherlands about their experiences with the Dutch labour market.



'DIFFICULTY ACCESSING THE HIDDEN JOB MARKET'

ILSE VISSER

Ilse Visser's company specializes in recruitment for speakers of foreign languages and for the past eighteen years, Undutchables has only seen steady growth in the job market for internationals. 'Initially foreign language recruitment was mostly focused on call centre work. But now, big companies want to increase the amount of diversity of their staff,' says Visser. Undutchables focuses mostly on full-time, permanent positions, so the past few years have been especially challenging, as companies have turned to part-time and temporary work during the recession. She also advises job seekers to not wait for the right position. 'Experience with a Dutch company can be even more important than education level.' For her, speaking Dutch is less of an advantage. 'By the time employers come to us, they are convinced of hiring international staff.'

Ilse Visser, IT and Marketing manager at Undutchables

COLLEEN REICHRATH-SMITH

'The environment is slow,' says Colleen Reichrath-Smith. She primarily works with the accompanying partners of international employees and finds that, for them, finding work can be especially challenging. While learning Dutch may help in obtaining employment, 'People who are here for a limited time question the value of learning the language.' However, it isn't only language that acts as a barrier. 'Internationals can have difficulty accessing the hidden job market,' Reichrath-Smith says, referring to the fact that most positions are filled through informal means before they ever become public. 'Networking is crucial to professional success, wherever you are, but it's especially important for those who have relocated.' Colleen Reichrath-Smith, Career Consultant with CJS Career Consulting and author of 'A Career In Your Suitcase'

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Work & Life

Networking in the Netherlands

JOIN THE CLUB



Networking is radically changing nowadays, thanks in part to the rise of social media. Once the exclusive domain of student fraternities and old boys clubs in the Netherlands, establishing professional connections –both on a local and international level– can now be easily achieved with a click of a mouse. Nevertheless, it seems that there is no replacing traditional, face-to-face networking practices as the number of social events, associations and communities of like-minded professionals continues to grow. That being said, the incentives for joining a professional network have also diversified in the past few years.

By Phillip Gangan
Photography Greenberg Nielsen

Considered to be the most important tool for success, the conventional aim of networking is to generate new business opportunities by building strategic relationships with potential clients, partners and peers. With the advent of online social platforms such as LinkedIn, the network itself has significantly evolved into a medium for publication. Not only do these websites serve as virtual environments for professional interaction, members are also able to initiate and participate in relevant discussions, survey international trends and showcase their work to a global audience. Be that as it may, there is no denying the power of personal interaction.

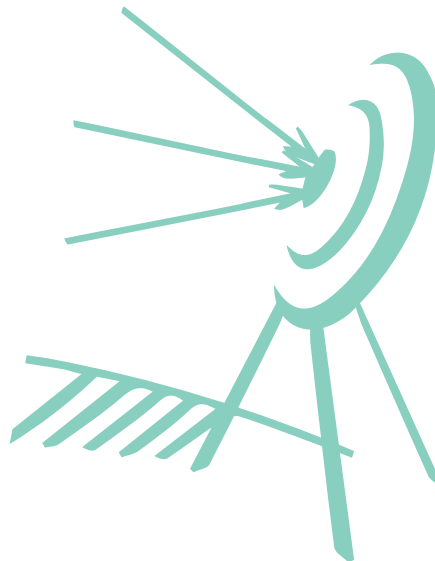
HANDSHAKES, NOT LIKES

'There is nothing like the feel of the handshake, the clearer interpretation of the spoken language or the spontaneous laughter of an entrepreneur or manager speaking to you in person,' says Dennis Cowles, President of the

Amsterdam American Business Club (AABC). 'Networking face-to-face is something that every businessperson should value. With personal meetings, a clear trust and business commonality can be more easily established.' With nearly 1,000 members from across the globe, the AABC has been organizing social events for more than 30 years, providing ample opportunities to build and maintain business relationships. According to Cowles, social media could never substitute the physical interaction between individuals. It could, however, reinforce the experience. 'After meeting interesting people at an event, the goal is to contact them within 24 hours. Make appointments, link up or send a follow-up email. These are critical things that keep the contact alive.'

BUILDING GLOBAL COMMUNITIES

In the case of the creative industry, networks play a significant role, not only as a means to attract future clients, but also as a



RACHEL RICHARDSON, USA

Rachel Richardson moved here in September 2013 with her partner, but didn't start looking for work until January 2014. She's primarily focused on her Dutch lessons, hoping the language will help her in finding a job. 'I haven't had any interviews with companies, but I'm registered with the employment agencies and I'm trying to network.' She's also spent a lot of time trying to tailor her CV to the Dutch market and doing research about the working environment. 'I'm open to different jobs, my experience is broad, but I'd like to find a position with the opportunity for training.' And she has a backup plan. 'I might go back to school to get my master's.'

WALTER WOODINGTON, USA/FINLAND

Despite growing up in the US, Walter Woodington has an advantage over the other Americans living in here. 'One of my parents is Finnish, so I have Finnish citizenship. Obtaining a work permit isn't an issue for me in the Netherlands,' he explains. Despite this, he isn't sure he wants to stay on here after he completes his master's in building engineering. 'There are more opportunities for me elsewhere, especially since I don't speak Dutch,' he says. His friends, who have sought work here, have mostly been successful. But for what he is interested in, he isn't sure he would. 'For technical jobs, I could find work here, but for positions with a management component, I would need to speak the language.'

MARYAM HALIMI, IRAN

Maryam Halimi has struggled to find work in the Netherlands. She moved here in 2010 with her husband, who is obtaining a PhD, but has so far been unable to find work, despite getting a second master's degree in supply chain management in the Netherlands. 'My husband and I ran a successful management consulting company in Iran,' she says, 'but that experience isn't valued here.' She has found that for management positions, Dutch companies want to hire native people. 'If I had a more technical background, I would probably be more successful in finding a job.' After her husband completes his PhD, they are considering moving to an English-speaking country like Canada or England, where she might have better luck finding work.

LUKE CHEN, TAIWAN

Luke Chen moved to the Netherlands to obtain a master's degree in interactive design and now wants to say with his girlfriend, who is working here. He's actively looking for work but isn't too concerned about finding employment. 'I just graduated in January 2014 and I'm optimistic that I will find a job,' he says. In the meantime, he is working on some freelance projects. He doesn't speak Dutch and was rejected from at least one company so far because of it. 'If I have a hard time finding a job, I might start Dutch lessons.' He's done a lot of networking during his master's and has worked in both the Netherlands and Germany. 'I've made a lot of real life contacts, so I'm not just searching for work online.' He's primarily reaching out to those people in his search for employment.

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