

STAGE at A&F

After University, the main and more frequent wish of all students is to find a nice job related to his/her background. I wasn't an exception and once I had finished my masters, I began to apply to all kind of positions concerning, in my case, Biology and/or Biochemistry. But this quest is not easy without any previous experience. Luckily for us, beginners in work world, a very valuable initiative has been arisen in order to solve this little detail: it is called the Leonardo program which includes, as far as I know, ARGO grants (for graduated) and FARO grants (for students) along the European Union. Given my interest to know more about countries different than mine, this was a very good option to consider. Fortunately, I have been awarded an ARGO grant offering me the opportunity to improve my English as well as my professional experience and to meet new people in this beautiful country.

I got started at the research institute Agrotechnology and Food Innovations in Wageningen for a total period of nearly eleven months, distributed in two different stages. One of a bit more than six months at the Fibre and Paper Technology department and one of four months at the Food Quality department. This change was due to the fact that I am still in the exploring period of different fields in science to eventually, make a choice and decide in which area I would like to focus on. I am deeply grateful equally to the ARGO office and A&F for it. It has been very helpful indeed.

In the Fibre and Paper Technology-group my task was more related with the environment, whereas in Food Quality I could experiment a totally different field: biochemistry. From both of them I have gained in my laboratory skills and I have learned how to write a report which I will probably need in the future. From my supervisors, who have meant the support needed in these projects, I learnt how to raise questions, be from time to time a bit sceptical regarding the results and to go further in the experiments.

I also learned from first hand that not all research can be successful which occasionally can be a bit frustrating and some patience is necessary. But then a little support from the colleagues over coffee or lunch can cheer one up. It was possible to find and get very good and international friends thanks to a noteworthy idea: the so-called flex room. In this room all the trainees have their own computer to work with at the same time that they integrate in the working ambience. Coffee breaks, coping together with the printer or the PC, help with the Dutch lifestyle in the case of foreigners, excursions and explanations around the building for novices in the company...

To sum up, this has been the experience of a lifetime and I would like to end these lines encouraging other students to make up their minds and enjoy as much as I did.

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