

INTERVIEW WITH THE TRAINEES

By: Peter Keijsers

Just before the summer holidays, it seemed to me - and Antoinette - a nice idea to give the trainees a chance to speak. After all, they too do a lot of useful work for the foundation, and we never know if they will return after the summer. I met them at Antoinette's office, where they have their place at a table.

The two girls were a bit nervous. They did not know what questions I would ask them, and they wanted to put their best foot forward. To get the pressure off, Antoinette, who keeps an eye on them from behind her desk, suggested to take a few photos first. The girls were not prepared for a photo shoot, and first wanted to quickly rearrange their hair and make-up. After a minute or two, the ladies were back again. They took a seat and struck a pose, because they both wanted to show their best side. Then I sat down at the table with them and started the interview in an airy manner.



For starters, please introduce yourself/

M: I am Meltem, I live in Panningen, I am 21 years old and I am in my third year of the course legal-business service. I go to school in Venlo with Gilde Opleidingen.

J: My name is Jülíce, I live in Roermond, I am 23 years old and I also go to school with Gilde Opleidingen just like Meltem. I am in my graduating year.

So both of you are doing the same course at Gilde, and have a traineeship here at Groen Licht. What does the work look like here? Should I think about social issues?

M: They are mostly legal issues the students are dealing with. Together with them we try to solve those issues.

Can you give me an example, without getting into details?

J: For instance the intakes. One comes into contact with personal data of the client. We fill them in and enter them into the computer. But also questions from clients such holiday issues, clients who have children and are divorced. We need to find information on whether and how a client can go on holiday. This traineeship is also more focused on low literacy in combination with legal aspects. So it is in fact a combination of legal issues combined with a piece of social work.

M: There are also people who need help with completing their tax return, but we can not help them because that is too specialized. So we call the Revenue Service together with the client to make an appointment.

How did you get here at Groen Licht?

M: Last year I had my traineeship here. My teacher knew that Groen Licht was looking for trainees and offered me this place. He told

me very nice things about this foundation and I liked it a lot.

J: I found this place through Meltem, but in the past I've also worked as a volunteer with refugees' organisations. So I was quite interested in a foundation that offers help to people. I told my teacher about that and he gave me a number of options among which Groen Licht was as well. Meltem has told me a little about Groen Licht and that's how I ended up here.

So it's mainly about legal and social work. What else are you doing here?

M: Sometimes we go into the classrooms. Suppose that there is someone new in the group, who feels the need for a one-on-one, then we start a conversation with that person.

J: We also take part in projects such as the language café or eating with the neighbours. We also participate in projects like color and strength.

What should I think of concerning that project, color and strength?

J: With that project, women came together who did a number of things from their own potential, such as make clothing, preparing food; also there were information rallies, or shows by celebrities.

What did you notice here at Groen Licht, what you did not expect beforehand? For you that is further down in the past, Meltem/

Antoinette: That their boss is a berserk, hahaha! She is crazy!

M: I don't know how exactly to explain this. They need some sort of support.

J: Not only they need help, with the paper work, but also some personal assistance. They can tell their story here. But also the

volunteers who teach here, they can do their own thing. They can give structure to their own way of teaching.

M: Sometimes it seems like the people don't want it themselves, that they're lazy. But that gives the wrong impression. Quite often they do want to, but they don't show progression because they have insufficient knowledge of the language.

And that's where you come in, for support?

M: Exactly.

Can you tell me something positive about Groen Licht?

M: Groen Licht looks at everyone personally. Individual attention for each person, what they need.

J: They look further than one single problem. There are people here who have a language deficiency, but simultaneously encounter other obstacles. They can always come here with virtually any question they have.

M: We will always find a solution to each problem.

And what about something negative? Don't pay attention to that side of the office. Antoinette is not here for a moment. You can say whatever you want.

J: Do you mean in organisation? Or where there's room for improvement?

Yes, let's call them points of improvement.

J: The unsubscription of clients. That's a general problem. There are many clients who are negligent, they do not call off which means that their spot is still occupied and that means not enough room for new clients. Especially with people from Africa we see that

they just stop coming, and we see that Antoinette and Ron have growing trouble in dealing with that.

Antoinette fills in: It is quite disrespectful for the people who are teaching here.

M: Yes, their spot could be filled by someone else, but these people keep that spot occupied.

So the number of available spot is not infinite?

J: Yes, exactly.

How did you like it so far with Groen Licht?

M: I liked it quite a lot.

J: Me too. Not only from the school perspective, but also we encountered quite a few situations that have taught us a lot. And we took part in many activities of which we learned quite a bit as well. Before this traineeship I had some with a few museums, and I noticed that my heart lies with an organisation or foundation that helps people. The beauty of Groen Licht is that the people are doing it all as volunteers.

And what is your experience with the accompaniment?

M; Good, we can always come here with all the questions we have.

J: Antoinette is always prepared to answer our questions or to help us with any start up. Ron as well, by the way. Antoinette does not only treat trainees in her role as supervisor, but she can also take a good joke. It does not always need to be tight and structural. Some casual atmosphere is quite common here, and that benefits the work in itself.

Is there anything else you want to say?

J: One can learn so much here, in regard of social or legal work. The range of possibilities is also quite diverse.

M: Not only specifically legal work, but everything that has to do with it as well.

J: And that's what's needed anyway in any education.