

## Netherlands – EC-VPL and IVC den Helder

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<b>Institution</b>	<b>EC-VPL and IVC den Helder</b>
<b>Interviewed Person</b>	Amer (19), refugee from Syria

### I – Preparation

Amer (19) comes from Damascus, Syria. He lives in the Netherlands for two years. Three months ago, his mom came over from Syria to be reunited with her son. He was studying ICT in Syria for two years and he wants to continue his studies in the Netherlands.

### II – Awareness

When Amer came to the Netherlands he did not know anything about his personal capacities. In Syria, it is not common to speak about yourself in such a self-conscious way.

*“In Syria, it is really strange to tell people that you are flexible and positive, they will just laugh at you”.*

Amer has a very clear idea about the need for learning to find a job. When Amer was studying in Syria he already knew he wanted to study abroad one day. This was the only way to rise socially. In Syria, it is impossible to get an important function without having any connections. For Amer the highest purpose would have been having his own telecom shop, but he has bigger plans. The reason he had to leave Syria was of course horrible but he chose to go to the Netherlands very consciously. He thought the options for education in the Netherlands were most suitable to reach his goal.

When he arrived in Den Helder he rapidly learned Dutch and he started working for the IVC as translator. He was so interested in the trainings that he wanted to participate. He did the VPL-training.

### III – Starting up

During the ‘Spreek je uit’ training he started to think about his own capacities. Finding ways to validate his capacities was hard at the beginning, especially for skills he developed in an informal or non-formal manner. The training ended with an assessment where he needed to present his outcomes. Amer was really surprised by some of the outcomes.

*“When I was young my computer broke and there was no one that could fix it. I thought by myself why not do it myself? I never realized this way of thinking contains a lot of my strengths: solution-oriented thinking, determination and positive thinking.*

He always thought these experiences were nothing more than mere pleasant side notes. But in the end, they taught him a lot about his character.

**IV – Documentation and support**

There was not only guidance available during the training but also afterwards. Amer has close ties with the IVC and he still works for them as a translator so whenever he needs help it is easy for him to reach one of the trainers. Nevertheless, Amer is pro-active in looking for help. After attending the training, he contacted the ROC in Den Helder by himself and arrange an admission interview.

For documentation, he focussed first on formal learning. His mother, who was still in Syria when he arrived in the Netherlands, sent him his diploma by email. As the training continued he realised he had a lot more to offer and became aware of his informal and non-formal learning. It was much harder to find proof for these skills. To proof his construction skills, he made before and after photos. After all he build up his portfolio out of a mix between formal and informal learning.

**V – Assessment**

*“I was very nervous when I had to do my assessment. You have to present yourself and that can be scary sometimes. Also, because I had to do it in Dutch complicated it a bit more but in the end, it went very well”.*

The outcomes of the assessment for Amer were clear. He wanted to continue studying and his trainer helped him by pointing out study possibilities. The training is always in group but the outcomes are individualistic. During the assessment, the trainer looks at the goals the participants set for themselves and helps them to contact the right organisations and institutions to get them accomplished.

**VI – Impact**

Amer has (just like all other participants) used the training to gain more information on how to set his goals and how he could accomplish them within the Dutch society, with help of the IVC. Knowledge of the Dutch language is still one of the pitfalls for Amer.

*“I still need to work on my Dutch skills. During my translator activities for the IVC I learned a lot of Dutch. When I had to translate I had to ask often what a singular word meant and I remembered it. I want to attend more trainings at the IVC”.*

Another part that is probably even more valuable is the gain of self-confidence Amer. It can be said that the initial modesty of self-worthwhile documenting turned into a more positive self-esteem and in his case even as empowered or identity-enhancing.

*“I was studying ICT at the university in Syria for two years, then the war started and I came to the Netherlands. My mother sent my diplomas by email and I went to the ROC to see what they could offer me. They first told me I could start MBO-3, but I did not agree so I showed them my diploma and explained them my experiences and now they allowed me to go to MBO-4. I started last week and compared to the rest I already know a lot. I am always the first to tell the answer when the teacher asks a question. When I finish MBO I want to go to HE”.*