

Netherlands – EC-VPL and IVC den Helder

Institution	EC-VPL and IVC den Helder
Interviewed Person	Afra (37), refugee from Syria

I – Preparation

Afra (37) is from Syria. She used to work for fifteen years as a primary school teacher. Now she is learning Dutch in order to be able to work as a teacher again.

II – Awareness

Afra was not aware of her competences when she was still living in Syria. She started to work as a teacher because she likes children and that was what she had to do. During the competence training she was given advice on how to proceed her career in the Netherlands.

“In Syria, I was not used to think about myself and my competences. I started working as a primary school teacher because I like it and for it is a good job for a woman”.

III – Starting up

Afra had no problem with thinking about her strengths and weaknesses during the training. The hardest part for her was the Dutch language and still is. She hoped the outcome of the training would help her find a job because she was not sure if she could work in the Netherlands with her former education and diplomas.

“I did not know if I was allowed to work in the Netherlands with my Syrian diploma in primary school teaching. My trainer taught me I can get my diploma translated to have access to HE and get a teaching certificate”.

IV – Documentation and support

During the training, she learned she is an optimistic person. She had a really hard time but with the help of the trainer and other participants she gained a lot of new friends and The IVC connected her to a volunteering job where she can practise her Dutch and get used to the Dutch work ethos. This volunteering job also provided her with the needed proof for the portfolio. By using the photos of her working in front of a class full of children she could prove she has teaching skills.

“I could prove that I was a teacher because I brought my Syrian diploma with me to the Netherlands. Because it is written in Arabic it needs to be translated to Dutch or English. So, my assessor could not understand it. I also had some pictures of me doing volunteering work in front of a classroom with children”.

V – Assessment

For Afra the assessment was hard because of the language struggle. Presenting her portfolio was less a problem. She was presenting her portfolio by naming the competence and showing the documentation while explaining why the competence was one of her strengths.

“I was not afraid of presenting my portfolio in front of the trainer and other participants because I am used to speak in front of people”.

VI – Impact

Afra is going to take extra courses in Dutch. She really wants to find a job. The training helped her to get more grip on the future. It provided her with the answers she was looking for and could not find on her own.

“The training made me more optimistic and gave me more motivation for the future. I know now what I have to do. I will have my diploma translated so I will have access to the Dutch job market. But the first step is improving my knowledge of Dutch