

Emigration from Serbia to Germany

Case Story 1: "Return to Serbia is not an option"

Interviewee: Female, 10 years in Germany, a molecular biologist at the Public Health Institute in Berlin.

Initially, the interviewee and her family came from Serbia, more precisely, she was a refugee from Bosnia and Herzegovina, and due to war-related reasons, she had to flee to Serbia. At that time, there were several reasons for emigration from Serbia to Western Europe, including dissatisfaction with the political situation, remuneration, and professional and quality-related reasons for professional development. This dissatisfaction resulted in existential fears and seeking a survival solution for a person and her family. After graduating as a molecular biologist in Serbia, she applied for PhD candidate position in Austria. During her PhD studies, she lived in Austria for 5 years. She found a different foundation setting in Austria; the interviewee described that there were definitely problems with the origin; you had to prove to everybody why you were an emigrant in the country, and also being called "Yugo" - she found extremely inappropriate. Due to her expiring contract, she had to look for a new job. Unfortunately, she could not find a new job, and she had to return to Serbia. In Serbia, she became increasingly aware that she did not want to live in her home country and would like to move to a bigger city.

She came to the University Clinic Charité (Berlin) and worked there on projects as a postdoc, and she got a job in Berlin in 2013. Many acquaintances and friends of hers have also gone this way to become active in Europe. A major motivation for emigration from Austria and Serbia was, among other things, the German social system, the diverse career opportunities and also financial aspects. The German legal system allows qualified professionals from all over the world the opportunity to work as qualified specialists in Germany on the basis of the Blue Card (residence permit). There were difficulties in entering Germany when looking for accommodation, a lot of money had to be spent because there is a clear shortage of apartments, which resulted in a lack of money. In addition, it was challenging to bring her husband to Germany, which lasted 3 months. Overall, the process from entry to introduction in Berlin's everyday life took 1 year. In order to get a job in Germany, she did not have any great difficulties, as she completed most of the documents but also her doctorate in Austria, the only difficulty was the German language, which is not a problem anymore. In addition, she stated that one of the biggest problems in Germany is the immigration authorities since there are no possibilities to reach anyone at all. Also, the appointment is a problematic point. Due to staff shortages in authority, there was a big delay, little information and also little English skills made the situation more complicated. In that regard, the interviewee appealed for an urgent solution for the authority's structure, processes, organization and reliability. A lot of help in job seeking in Berlin actually came from the work colleagues in Austria, who initially took phone calls and letters from authorities and insurance companies.

People in Germany are struggling with work-life balance, although this word is of great importance in the country. Overtime, shift work and unstructured times cause much trouble for people. In the end, however, she is very satisfied and happy to be here in Berlin, the most important aspects are the social system and the financial aspects, the settlement as a highly qualified person gives the emigrants a safer and more welcoming feeling. The thought of going back home is not an option because Serbia is not well positioned socially, politically and economically, and her children go to kindergarten here and soon to school, her husband has a job, and she works here and has built a life for her family. Therefore, she sees no better opportunity than in Germany and no decisive reasons for a return home despite missing the rest of the family and homesickness. For about 10 years she has been living here with her family (husband and two children) in Berlin. The interviewee described that she was very satisfied with

her life in Germany, especially more precisely in Berlin "like at home" Berlin is a multicultural city, and you are accepted as you are, regardless of faith or origin. Above all, her job meets her needs, the connection between three languages (Serbian, German, English) and project management and science is given and fulfils her working conditions.

In conclusion, as one can imagine moving to a completely different country, having a different legal system and not getting the desired support is not advantageous. There are still some cornerstones that Germany would have to improve, especially the work-life balance, which applies not only to emigrants but also to German citizens and to use measures and approaches to put them into effect actively. Another problem is the bureaucracy, which makes a considerable effort and causes difficulties for many emigrants. This also includes the gaps in the information needed to build up existence here.