

Khaoula Mahzouli



In this series, expats talk about their lives in the Netherlands. How did they end up here? What is their everyday life like, and what do they think of the Netherlands and its culture? In this edition we share the story of Khaoula from Morocco...

“I was born and raised in Morocco, where I studied Mechatronics engineering. For three years, I worked for the only semiconductor company in Morocco, and eventually felt that I had reached a stagnation point in my career, so I looked into working abroad.

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First, I ended up in France. I really enjoyed it, but it wasn't a complete match. In the summer of 2019, I visited the Netherlands for the first time and I really liked it. In terms of culture, what you see is what you get here. I'm the same way.

A year later, I saw an advertisement for a job at Nexperia in Nijmegen that seemed tailor-made for me. From the first interview, it was an instant match. So, in early 2021, I moved to Nijmegen. Even though this was during the Covid lockdown period, the relocation process with Nexperia was very smooth.

I love it here. The city's slogan says it best: Nijmegen is an old city with a young vibe. The buildings can tell stories from hundreds of years ago, but the people are young, fresh, and outgoing. I did not expect people to be this friendly and this open, so that was a positive surprise.

However, I think it's important to distinguish between friendliness and wanting to develop a friendship. In my culture, if you are friendly with someone, it's a sign that you are starting a friendship and you can build on that. But here, I've noticed that people can be very friendly with you, but it's kept at that level.

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The work culture is also quite different from Morocco or France. I wouldn't even say it's a difference in work-life balance but rather a difference in work-life integration. Balance means weighing one against the other. But here, I think it's more about integrating your work life into your personal life.

For example, in Nijmegen, if you have a dentist appointment, you can just go for it and work later. In Morocco, I had to ask for permission, but it was not always possible. I feel like people are more aware and understanding of personal life and encourage you to make it a priority.

“I greatly value the peace of mind that comes with people being friendly.”

Of course, there are some challenges. It's difficult to find a house, for example, and it is expensive, but at the same time, the quality of life and the peace of mind that comes with people being friendly is something I value greatly.”



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