about us! Episode 3

about: working in Germany!

Transcript:

Alexandra 0:04
Hi everyone, and welcome to another episode of About Us, the podcast by students, for students. I'm Alex, and today, sadly, I am here without Amitoj, but still, I'm not alone. We have a very special guest from the Career Service. If you'd like to introduce yourself,

Katharina 0:22
I would love to. My name is Katharina Lübstorf. I'm part of the Career Service Team here at the University of Potsdam.

Alexandra 0:28
Great. Thank you. So today, we felt that we would talk a little bit about finding a job in Germany and entering the German job market, but specifically from the point of view of international students. Of course, entering the job market during and after your study is something that is challenging for everyone, right? But for international students, there could be many additional factors that make it more complex, and we will discuss this. Okay, from your experience, how would you describe the current job market for international students in Germany or a region such as Berlin/Potsdam?

Katharina 1:03
So I would say we are talking now in summer 2025 and what we are facing actually is an economic recession, and it actually has an impact on almost every sector in Germany, unfortunately. So what we see at the Career Service when we look at the statistics, but also talk with companies or employers in general, is that even those high-performing industries, automobile industry, or pharmacy, or the technology industry, sometimes even decide for hiring freeze or something like that, and it actually has an impact on those who just came to Germany, probably with a perspective to enter the job market and then facing really strong competition when it comes to those English-speaking jobs, for example. But on the other hand, I would say that the labor market is quite dynamic, and when it comes to economic changes like recession, but also growth, you can sometimes see the impact after a few months or after a few years in certain regions, for example. So I really want to encourage every international student to still look for jobs, to not be frustrated about the whole recession situation and continue with looking. Because what I see on job platforms, or when I speak with companies with employers, is that they are still looking for people, that they still have vacancies and this is the whole picture. Great.

Alexandra 2:37
Thank you so much. It's very good to know that it's not all negative. Can you tell us about any specific industries or sectors that are actively looking for international talent right now?

Katharina 2:46
I think the most obvious one is the IT sector, which is still very strong in Germany and also has a lot of potential. What I would also say is, when it comes to international students, we are facing in general a demographic change. We are an aging society, and we need, in almost every sector, people who are willing to come to this country, to stay here and to contribute to the economy in general. To say it more rationally, what you can actually also look for, if you're an international talent, is not only look at the IT sector, for example, but also the public sector in general, which is one of the biggest employers in Germany in general. And they do have very interesting positions and also potential for perspectives for internationals in various fields. And so, of course, in the communication sector, we need international talents. We also need in the service sector, consulting, I'm also thinking about the health sector. So yeah.

Alexandra 4:00
Okay, great. So by public sector, I guess you mean universities, also, people

Katharina 4:06
Of course, at first, when they think of the public sector, they think of universities. But the public sector also is the whole bureaucracy we are facing each day. For example, as an international you have to register yourself at the city, and there are a lot of people working there from various fields with various qualifications for the integration of people in the city, for example. The public sector also has its own research institutes or funds, research institutes, for example, outside of university, which can also be very interesting for internationals, actually.

Alexandra 4:47
Thank you so much. Okay, so we could also talk a bit about the practical side of things, so maybe some tips and strategies, although I'm sure that if someone consults the Career Service, there's a lot of that to share, but maybe we could talk a little bit about this year too. So are there any specific resources or platforms that you would recommend for international students that are looking for a student job or an internship, while they are studying?

Katharina 5:14
Yes, so when we think of job platforms, probably the first things that come to mind are Stepstone, LinkedIn, or Indeed. You can use those huge platforms, but there are also a lot of other job platforms and job newsletters that you can find or that we can also, for example, discuss in a counseling session with the Career Service that are very sector-specific. For

example, they are often provided by professional associations, which we call Fachverband or Berufsverband in Germany, and they have an interest that new talent also will have the chance to find interesting positions. Sometimes they have an organization and the money to do those newsletters or to host those job websites, and there are a lot of them on the internet, especially when you look for jobs, when you're a beginner in German. Platforms like Creative City Berlin, for example, where you can find a lot of jobs in English, or Idealist.org.

So just to give you some examples, it can be really open to see what you can discover on the internet, but probably you need some guidance. So of course, you can always ask us, and we can just discuss that in a counseling session to guide you through this.

Alexandra 6:51
That's great. I actually didn't know about any of these. Well, I know about Stepstone, of course, but not the others, as you mentioned.

Katharina 6:57
And often people use LinkedIn, for example, which I would say is also growing in Germany, and it's a useful network you can visit from time to time. There's also another one called Sing. I don't know if you've ever heard of it. It's from STEM people, very interesting. I can see a lot of jobs posted there. You can also get in touch with employers or alumni from the University.

Alexandra 7:28
And we also have a job portal from the university, right, like the Praxis Portal.

Katharina 7:34
Yes, Praxis Portal. There you can find jobs for students, internships, sometimes advertisements to write your master's thesis at a certain company. We created this website especially for students who are looking for student-related jobs or study-related jobs, actually, that's the term I was looking for, or like an internship, because sometimes it's really hard to find an internship in Germany, and this counts for every student, not only international ones, but also the German ones. The best way to find an internship is actually to get directly in touch with the company. They often don't publish those positions, maybe on their website, but not on those platforms. But we created this job platform, Praxis Portal, so that we encourage companies and organizations in the region to actually publish their vacancies when it comes to looking for interns. You can also use job platforms from other universities in Berlin and Brandenburg. Often, they are free, or you don't have to register. You can just see the job listings and find very interesting job opportunities.

Alexandra 8:57
Yeah, I've personally found those very useful because they are specifically targeted to students. Right. So when a student is making a formal application, and has a CV, we have a

cover letter. Are there any mistakes that you commonly see students making in these documents?

Katharina 9:17
Yes, there are a few mistakes I see people make often, which is based on lack of knowledge about the whole application culture. In Germany, for example, students often structure their cover letter focusing only on academic achievement, which is great, they should continue with that, but often forget that volunteering positions, for example, have very valuable skills or experiences. Also, previous work experience, side jobs, or responsibilities can show what you are capable of in terms of soft skills, which is a huge factor for companies.

Soft skills are important in research, but companies are very interested in your qualifications and what you did in your studies. They also want to know who you are at work, in a team, and how you manage tasks and teamwork. German employers often want proof when you present yourself. You can show that in your CV by describing what you did in your jobs or volunteering work. One mistake students make is not showing the whole spectrum of their practical experience. They just focus on academic achievements. I encourage students to show themselves as a whole, not only academic-wise. Also, sometimes students underestimate the relevance of the cover letter. In Germany, it's not just a narrative presentation of a CV. It's more like an argument where you are the perfect match for the employer. Often, students forget to refer to the company they are applying for and describe why they chose this organization.

Alexandra 12:17
So basically, the cover letter and CV should be customized to fit?

Katharina 12:27
Yes, customize. Of course, it's good to have one CV on your computer with everything you've done. But when you apply for something, sort out what is relevant for the employer. Think about what should be presented in more detail, with certain bullet points describing your role, and what should just be named. This is how you customize applications.

Alexandra 13:06
That's very good to know. Thank you. Can you share a success story of an international student who faced challenges but eventually found a good opportunity?

Katharina 13:15
Yes, there are many success stories. Sometimes we don't hear back from people because they continue with their life. Some come back and write an email saying they got the job. I remember one student from Anglophone Modernities at the Faculty of Philosophy or Humanities and Arts. She was frustrated because she comes from Turkey. She could study here in English and learn German, but when finding a job, she was in competition with those

who already speak German at C1 or C2 level. She was well-qualified and motivated to stay here. In counseling, we discovered she had some shyness about her abilities and qualities. We discussed her individual profile, what makes her unique, and her skills, like organization. She discussed that with her friend, who said she wasn't as good at organizing. I told her that coming to Germany, starting studies, building a network, proves she can organize herself. She realized she could do it. Her friend landed a job at a private university in Berlin mainly doing organization tasks. These success stories show that self-confidence and recognizing hidden talents are important.

Alexandra 17:06
Okay, thank you. So we've almost reached the end of our episode, but I would also like to ask you if there are any upcoming events or workshops or even networking opportunities that students should keep an eye on here, maybe at Uni Potsdam or even outside of the university, if you're aware of any.

Katharina 17:23
Yes, from September, we will start again with our workshop program at the Career Service, which means, on a regular basis, we provide you with crash courses and workshops on how to apply in Germany, how to create a CV, cover letter, what strategies you can use to apply. We also are in cooperation with other offices of the university, for example, the startup service, which also has, if you're interested in founding a company or a startup. You can also visit those workshops, which we publish on our website. We do have, in cooperation with the International Office and the Welcome Center, a picnic series every first Thursday in the month in summer. We will meet on Friendship Island close to the main station. We give impulses on how to learn German, how to find an internship, how to network. This is a very good opportunity to get in touch with new people from the university and also train the networking part, which can feel challenging, and it's a safe environment.

Now, in every autumn, there are two huge events which can be interesting. One is the International Career Day, which we organize with the International Office, faculties, and the startup service, where you can get to know us and get information on finding an internship abroad as an international student. Another, at the beginning of November, is a job fair at Campus Griebnitzsee called Uni Contact. It's organized by students, but we will also be there as a Career Service. You can get to know companies and organizations in the region.

Outside of university, there are many offers in Berlin from other universities. They are open to everyone; you don't have to be enrolled. For example, job fairs from Technische Universität Berlin. In the last week of February, there will be Career Week, where all events, workshops, and crash courses from universities in Berlin and Brandenburg are open. You can participate online or in person, in English or German workshops. It's a week dedicated to career entry, and I really recommend participating.

Alexandra 20:35
Okay, great. There's so much going on. To make it a little easier, we will have some links to these things in our description. But thank you so much. I think that is it for today. That's all we have. Thank you so much for joining us.

Katharina 20:54
Thank you. I also really enjoyed it.

Alexandra 20:59
Well, see you next time. See you, bye!