

María Lillo Felis

I have wanted to be a writer since I was 8. But knowing that writing doesn't pay your bills, I decided to study Journalism, which was supposed to have something to do with literature. As you can see, I'm not a very practical person.

But of course, back then neither I nor my classmates could imagine there was a media crisis hanging over us. I did realize during my Erasmus year at the University of Vienna in 2008, that the other students were more proactive than myself and the rest of the Spaniards there, and that they all had much more work experience than me. In fact, my first work experience was at a small television in my region, during my last semester. It was then that I realized there was something wrong, that the media was essentially rotten. It was then that disappointment took over me. So then, when I finished my studies, I decided to fly to South America. I was there for the whole summer, I travelled from Bolivia to Panama and I tried to get my ideas straight.

In september 2010 I got a scholarship from the Fundación Antonio Gala for Young Artists. I had a whole year just to write my first novel. So I moved to Córdoba, in the South of Spain, and spent the happiest year of my entire life.

After the happiest of times arrived the most difficult ones. For the first time in my life I had to look for a job. I was 23 years old and I had no professional experience.

So I decided to move to Berlin. Because my first novel took place there and besides, everything was supposed to be better in Germany. At least professionally speaking. During the last few years people have always said that you can find "El Dorado" there. But obviously, Berlin is not Germany. Berlin is an island.

During my first three months in Berlin I did an intensive German course and sent CVs everywhere, trying to find somewhere to do an internship. I knew I couldn't find anything better with my German level. But I only got to work for 2 weeks in a fashion shop. Christmas was suddenly there, and with it appeared a great job offer from Spain: working in a small boutique hotel. I always say that one has to go wherever there is work. I was in love with Berlin, but came back to Spain. I was supposed to start the second week of January. But no one phoned me. Weeks went by. It was all a bluff.

It was then that the real difficult times began. I was constantly worried for exactly two months, during which my anxiety levels went through the roof. Of course I kept sending CVs, both in Spain-and in Germany, with similar results. But there was a significant difference: in Spain no one answers back. Sending your CV is like banging your own head against the wall. Jobseekers in Germany are also rejected, but at least they write back to say thank you.

For three months I only had one interview in Valencia, plus three offers from German companies. The problem was that they were all unpaid Jobs. I decided not to accept them because I didn't want my parents to spend more money on me. It would have been pretty shameful, considering my age.

So when the situation had nearly driven me crazy, I went back to Berlin. Berlin... “poor but sexy”. German people always say that. The only solution I could find was to go back as an aupair and keep trying to find a job. Big mistake.

I worked for 3 months. The first family was a nightmare. The second one was really nice. But I had problems with myself. I thought: “María, you didn't study so much and did so many things, just to work taking care of children”. I was really frustrated.

Of course I continued looking for a job. I had an interview in a bilingual school and another one in a dating agency. It's not a joke. That was all. In August the family went on holidays and they told me to go back to Spain. That's what I did. And suddenly, after two weeks in Valencia, I received a call from an advertising agency which invited me for an interview. Actually there were two of them. Just for an internship. They accepted me. My contract was for 6 months and they paid me 250 Euros, which wasn't enough to pay for my room. But it was a start. I had no better options.

After four months I was lucky enough to be hired. So since February I'm working as a copywriter. I work 10 or 11 hours per day. But that's the advertising world for you, or so people say.

Living in Madrid is expensive (more than in Berlin, I would say). I have three months contracts. But I don't want to complain. I have a job. I have a fun job. And when I look around me I feel very lucky. Also very sad. Being young and having a job in Spain is, nowadays, a miracle. Most of my friends have left.