

Candidates' Voices: Lidia



"I want to be the head of a big company and the mother of three", says Lidia with a huge grin. "But that's impossible", she adds. Well, I couldn't disagree more. The mechanical engineer, who stems from the coastal town of Gandia in Spain is already the envy of her peers for having worked in Denmark as a racing car designer and she is still just 24. **By Méabh McMahon**

According to a survey carried out by Careers International, one in three women is willing to make trade-offs on behalf of their career. Lidia is one of these women. Although she longs for the hot Spanish sun, tasty tapas and more quality time with her family, the young professional currently resides in the northern European country of Belgium in search of her dream job.

It was back in 2008 in Denmark while on the Erasmus student mobility programme that the penny dropped for Lidia. Something dawned on her that was to stay with her forever.

"You need languages and international experience to survive in this sector",

she says before adding, "Spain is so narrow-minded". According to the young graduate, she will earn three times more money in a foreign country than she would for the exact same position in her native country. "In Spain, nobody would ever expect me to reach a high level post". And it is this mentality that drove the Mediterranean out of her beloved home country.

"Here I will have more opportunities", she says before telling me about her brand new life in Brussels. With a specialisation in power plants and internal combustion engines, her dream is to work in the automotive industry but for the moment, the level-headed young lady works as an au-pair and takes daily French classes while updating her LinkedIn profile and sending out her CV.

"I would like to be doing a masters right now", she says, "and many employers expect that of me but it is just not practical right now. I don't have the financial means". Instead, the pragmatic graduate invests her spare time in learning new languages and participating in courses about thermal engineering and renewable energy.

And the most striking thing about Lidia is her willingness to take off to anywhere in the whole wide world after her career.

"Why not", she says, "there is nothing stopping me".

But five years ago, Lidia was not so open-minded. She picked up this new exciting energy back in 2008 in the home town of the famous author, Hans Christian Andersen. It was in Odense, the third largest city in Denmark, that Lidia really opened her mind about her interpretation of engineering and her professional aspirations. She learnt many new skills about team-work, project management that gave her a new way of approaching engineering. On top of that, Lidia improved her English skills, which were quite limited in the beginning.

However in the end, the dive into the unknown was worth it and the young engineer ended up having a life-changing experience. And much to her delight, Lidia spent six months designing and building racing cars for the Formula SAE inter university contest in Silverstone. And although her team was made up of only males, she never felt isolated or inferior and enjoyed the whole process of searching, buying and building components for these competition cars. Sometimes due to her slim figure, they even used her to test the size of the cars to check if they were compatible with international champions like Alfonso de Portago and Michael Schumacher!

Although she has a technical head on her shoulders and a drive to succeed as an engineer, Lidia adores children. So much so that cannot do an exam or job interview without hearing two words from her younger brother: 'good luck'! It is this love for life as well as her passion for engineering that makes it clear that although she might not know it just yet, Lidia will be one of the many 21st century women out there in 2030 juggling both a top career with a top family!