

## Interview from Mr Ioannis Valmas, a Greek miner at a German mine



- **Why did you immigrate to Germany? In which city did you go?**

At first I was working at the coal mine of Aliveri and I left for Germany for a better financial comfort. I went to Herne Nordrhein Westfalen. My first day at work in Germany was in February 7, 1963.

- **Arriving somewhere you need to be attentive and exploring: people, norms, networks, routines, borderlines, niches. Tell us about your experience!**

Since I went there, I noticed that everybody followed the rules and laws. They were all disciplined people. I also found kind people to help me, when I had a language problem.

- **Was it easy to integrate into the German community?**

It was difficult in the beginning. I only hanged out with Greeks. As soon as I got the job at the mine, I made also German friends.

- **How did you integrate and meet people?**

I learned German from my colleagues. Later I went to German breweries frequented by elderly people, who helped me a lot to learn the German language.

- **What is the best way to propose to a good friend to learn the rules of a new country?**

The best way is to choose the right people for friends and try to communicate more with the elderly who are willing to help.

- **Why did you decide to work in a mine?**

Before I go to Germany, I worked at Aliveri mine, as I said, and that was the job I knew. After all, throughout Nordrhein Westfalen most Gastarbeiter (Guest workers) worked in mines.

- **What were the working conditions like?**

The working conditions were much better than in the rest of Europe. Mine safety had been very good since then.

- **Were you or your colleagues at risk?**

They were often endangered by human errors and not by natural disasters.

- **Have you encountered problems with miners from other countries?**

I had a lot of problems. Guest workers from other countries had different habits at work. Until we were well integrated into Germany and the workplace, I had a lot of problems with them, especially as long as I was "colonenfahrer" (shift manager) and in charge of shift workers.

- **Was it easy to make friends at the mine?**

It was very easy to make friends, especially the hardworking.

- **Was the time during your work useful to get in touch with new people? Or did you make friends outside of your workplace?**

Yes, it was and I had time to make good friends outside of my work, as well.

- **What factors have united people in the past in the workplace and especially in heavy industry?**

What united us at work was to work together to make the hard work easier.

- **Did you regret working there?**

No, I did not regret working there.

- **Was the money you received satisfactory? Could they meet the needs of your family?**

Yes. It was.

- **Would you work there again if you were young?**

Yes! Even now I would go!

