



Simon interviews: Lena, French teacher

Simon: So, I'm here today talking to Lena - who is a, well tell us, tell us what you do.

Lena: So I'm a French teacher for foreigners in Pontivy. People coming to France to live have to complete um, a CIR which is a Contrat d'Integration Republicain, a document that you sign in the OFI in Rennes, the Office for Immigration and Integration, so British citizens now are entitled to sign the contract which means that they can have access to free French classes over a year.

Simon: So this is, this is interesting, this is different from the scheme that I heard about which is it GRETA? Is it called Greta?

Lena: Greta, yeah, which is one of the centres where you can learn French.

Simon: Right?

Lena: But this one is the government one, so basically you need to get an appointment with the OFI in Rennes, then you so foreigners pass a little test which according to the level then we give them a contract of a hundred, 200, 400 or 600 hours of French that they have to complete within a year.

Simon: OK, So let's step back a bit for that. So this is, this is to qualify people to become residents or towards nationality?

Lena: So towards nationality the level B1 is required, um and you will need indeed to show that you have this level, so either with Delf exam or the TCF so you've got 2 kind of national exams. But people who want to live in France, so for the residency card, my main public is refugees, so they have to do this but now because of the Brexit now English people are entitled to have those

Simon: Right, so people who already hold a Brexit card, a WARP card as it's called, Withdrawal Agreement Residence Permit, don't need to do this obviously because that was already in the agreement, but anyone moving here now from the UK would have to do this to get residence status? Right, OK, and they don't have to pay for this?

Lena: No, it's free

Simon: That's interesting. OK. We'll get information on the place, the phone numbers and all the contact details and put them on the website later. But That's really



interesting, I didn't know about that scheme and I suspect a lot of people don't know. So tell me how you came to be doing this?

Lena: Umm, so my original plan was to become a primary teacher for Breton schools. I was studying Breton and Welsh language in Rennes and because I was learning Welsh I went to Aberystwyth for 1 year and then I stayed there as a French assistant in Cardiff. I worked there for 2 years, and decided to do my PGCE course, to become a French and Spanish teacher in the UK. So I trained there for a year and then I taught in a Welsh school for 2 years. Then I wanted to see something different so I moved to Mexico, where I got a job as a ...

Simon: That's a bit different?

Lena: Slightly different. I taught there for 3 years in a Mexican school, well Mexican and British school. So everything was bilingual I was a French teacher there. So for 4 years actually, 4 years there and then I wanted to come back to Europe so I moved to Spain for a year and then wanted to be more of an adventure, so I went to Kenya, so I went teaching there French and Spanish again for 3 years.

Simon: Ok, Wow

Lena: And then finally decided to come back to Brittany.

Simon: Right, So you were raised in Brittany? You're a Breton?

Lena: I was, Yes

Simon: OK, so you've come full circle back .

Lena: Exactly. When I left Brittany for Wales when I was 20 I never expected to come back only 15 years later, so, yeah, I saw this position for a French teacher for foreigners but I didn't know if I would qualify, but I did in the end and I got the job and I'm very happy I teach different kind of nationalities, yes

Simon: So, do you have any words that would help people to ?

Lena: Well, join a group like you did, join a Breton like a dancing group like to integrate more by activities

Simon: Social events?

Lena: Social events, Yeah



Simon: OK, so yeah, get involved is the way around it isn't it?

Lena: Yeah, to focus maybe less on the language cos its good to attend language classes as well but then if you don't practice outside of the course there's not much point. And that's something that we're quite lucky, like when I speak with people not French people not from Brittany, they can't believe how many how busy is our social events life. You realise a lot whether sport or you do

Simon: There's an enormous amount going on

Lena: Yeah you need to join a club or a group but then once you've joined a group then once you've become a member then you get invited to other events

Simon: Of course. Lena, thank you very much for talking to us and when you next set off around the world, come back and talk to us again.

Lena: I will.

Simon: Thank you.

The Ofii's website:

<https://www.ofii.fr> 02 99 22 98 60

The article about the CIR:

<https://www.ofii.fr/procedure/accueil-integration/#partie3>