

Elaine interviewing Olga

Olga: Here I'm doing a volunteer program that is a program part of the European Solidarity Corps. It's an Erasmus Plus Program from the European Union and it allows me to be a volunteer here in France, in my case for 9 months and here I work in the Lycée Jean Moulin in France, in Brittany and my mission here is to promote international mobility and International solidarity. So since not a lot of students know about the possibilities they don't know a lot of things they can do abroad. They don't know how to go abroad to do a stage to do an internship, to do a volunteering program, to do an exchange. I'm here to talk about these things with them and to inform them about their choices about their possibilities.

Elaine: So, you do presentations to classes do you?

Olga: Yes, yes this is one of the many little things that I do here. I organise presentations and I speak about different programs – for example in my case there is the volunteer program but it's not the only thing that they can do abroad. They can also go on student exchanges. This is a very interesting short period of exchange that allows them to go abroad and to spend some time – a week or two – in another country and to work on an interesting topic for them with other international young people. Also they can do an internship. They can go abroad to do the 'au pair' program. I think everybody knows about that but there are many many different things that they can do- many programs. And I organise presentations for them to inform them about this. It's very important for me to inform them about these things and to make them hopefully want to go abroad and to get to know other cultures, to get to know other countries because this is what I always try to underline the World is so big and France is so small and the European Union is so small and we have to be united. This why actually the European Union organises a lot of international mobility programs for students to help them to fraternise with other people from other cultures, from other countries so it's very important for me to you know to promote this because it's a beautiful idea.

Elaine: Because of your command of English do you help with the English lessons?

Olga: Oh – yes, I actually did some activities in English with students. It was a lot of fun and sometimes English teachers allow me to be there with them during the classes and to interact with students to make them practice their English a little bit. Another thing that I organise actually is the 'Café des Langues' which is an activity that I do once a month. This is just a nice, short moment of half an hour or an hour that I spend with students just talking to them in English- or in other languages. We have German, Italian and English – so it depends on what the students want to practice on that day. And we have a coffee together and we speak English a little bit to make them practice.

Elaine: So I have to ask you because I know you're from the Ukraine originally, so where did you learn English?

Olga: In Ukraine I started to learn it. I started studying it and I remember immediately falling in love with it the moment I heard it. It sounded so like the most beautiful thing in the World, I remember (laughs) I decided that I HAD to learn it and I HAD to speak it hopefully just as well.



Well, it's not perfect still now but I'm trying and my family showed a lot of enthusiasm and they saw me so passionate about it so they supported me and this is where I started and then I moved to Italy when I was eleven and I continued there. And I remember the Professors that saw me so interested in this language gave me additional books to practice and to learn more at home and then of course songs and English movies helped a lot. Eventually when I turned eighteen I started to travel a lot and to practice and go abroad speaking with other people so that helped.

Elaine: Excellent. Your time here comes to an end at the Lycée in June you said. Do you know where you might be heading off to next?

Olga: Well, I have different ideas but I don't like having a plan because in my head this means having just one choice – to have a plan and I have to follow just that path. And I like to have a lot of different things among which to choose. What I love the most is the international environment so I hope to find a job first of all in that field because I studied Political Science and International Relations and I do speak a few languages so I would really like to you know put my skills into practice and to give something back you know because I've been studying and I've been learning and I really want to give back a little bit of what I acquired and I like the idea of working in a Political environment or also to be an interpreter or another idea that I really like is to being a teacher. Because this is also something that I did already during my last years that I've been giving language lessons and I found out that I really like to see you know the progress on the other side and it's something that gives me a lot of satisfaction you know to see that I explain something and it's received on the other side and they put it into practice and then they learn it and they know it so maybe I will move into that direction but I don't know yet exactly.

Elaine: Now when you do move on what memory of Brittany will particularly remain with you? Is it the food, a place you've been or something else?

Olga: I think that the best memory that I will carry with will be the beautiful people that I met because I don't know if you have that in England but in Italy there is this perception of French people that are considered being a little but arrogant. Maybe a little bit mean, you know, and I haven't seen this anywhere! I'm so positively impressed! I've met just the sweetest people ever here. Everybody's so open and if they know that I'm a foreigner and they try to talk to me all the time and they are really sweet. They're really kind. Everybody tries to help, especially in the beginning when my French was way worse than now. And I've seen all these beautiful people trying to help, trying to explain, trying to support. Actually there is lady here also at school that invited me to her home to have lunch with her and to meet her kids and stuff. Everybody is really, really nice.

Elaine: But I think that that is reflected in you in that you come across as a very open person ready to experience the way of life here. And I think that people respond to that. I wish you the very very best of luck. Thank you.

Olga: Thank you so much.