

Jakso 4 If you think about it, just do it: Litterointi

Anna: Tervetuloa mukaan kuuntelemaan sujuvaa kansainvälistymistä podcastia. Mä olen Anna.

Taru: Ja mä olen Taru.

Anna: Meidän mielestä kansainvälisyys kuuluu kaikille ja me halutaan levittää tietoa erilaisista kansainvälisistä mahdollisuuksista.

Taru: Tässä podcastissa saat vinkkejä, miten sä voisit hyödyntää kansainvälisyyttä osana sun omaa työtä.

Taru: Here with us are two volunteers from Germany. Could you tell us about yourself, who you are and what have you done in Finland?

Ariana: Yeah, of course. Thank you so much. I'm Ariana. I am 27 years old and I'm from Germany. As you already kindly said. And the last 10 years I spent in Finland as an international volunteer in the European Solidarity Corps program in the Youth Services.

Luisa: Hi, I am Luisa. I'm 18 years old and well, yeah, I'm also from Germany. And I came here last September. I just graduated school in June last year. And then I decided to do a gap year, and I was working in adult services.

Anna: What inspired you to take up volunteering in Finland?

Luisa: I don't think for me, like for me, only the volunteering part is probably important of that question cause I just decided I want to volunteer in general, when I when I graduated or while I was graduating, I was. Applying to different projects in the European solidarity Corps. Yes, and it was not very important for me in what country I'm gonna go. I was just more focused about the project. I mean, I I knew that I want to be in.

Taru: Yeah.

Luisa: Some northern country. But the project was just the more important. Aspect for me and then it, kind of just turned out that it's going to be Finland.

Ariana: For me it was kind of the other way around, so I always wanted to know. I always knew that I wanted to come to Finland to do something there for a while and lived there for a while. And because COVID cancelled my study abroad plans, I figured out the European Solidarity Code would be. My way to go.

Anna: Could you tell us a little bit about European solidarity core? Was it easy to apply through the program, and did you find the opportunities easily?

Ariana: For me it was pretty easy. You have the website that you can just go to and then you see all the different opportunities. And because for me I always knew I wanted to go to Finland, so I just put the filter on and it like just looked up for, I just looked. For. Opportunities in Finland and yes, and then I saw your opportunity and then I applied and. It was fine.

Luisa: Well, it was definitely not hard. I was just a bit stressed because I really wanted to get a project so I. So, I applied to as many project as possible. I think it was like 24 project or something project and it was not hard. Yes, you already said you just go to the website and then I don't know, I just clicked through the different project what kind of projects that are like this economical thing. There.

Social things. They're like. There was one project in Portugal in the Netherlands like there are just so many different ones. And I was.

I kind of wanted to go everywhere, so I kind of applied also everywhere, but then I don't know. We had our interview, and I just felt so good after it. It made me feel so good and I felt so welcomed and I don't know. I thought that just the like, the mentors and the the players, the people there are going to. Keep good care of me, kind of, because it's also very scary to go in another country, of course. And then I thought, yeah, I'm. I'm probably gonna go to Finland, but the application process was not hard.

Anna: The program is meant for everyone so people can get a lot of support or the support that they need. So, what kind of support did you get?

Ariana: We got plenty of support, which is really nice. We got someone who went with us when we had to do, like the immigration stuff when we got. Our security number and everything and we have the workplace mentors, and we have free time mentors, kind of and then we have other free time mentors as well who were like really spend free time with us. So, we really have a lot of support, and we felt like at least for me, I really felt like.

No matter what problems I had or whatever, we could always go to a coordinator, or mentors and we could always like, speak openly about everything that occurred. And that was really, really nice. Yes.

Luisa: Yeah, definitely like something. I think I will keep in mind from that is one of my freetime mentors. We always met in a cafe and then we kind of just sat in the cafe for an hour and we just talked, and it was. It was of course about the project, but mostly it was just talking about the Eurovision or. About feelings about, I don't know, just this very casually talking and just that just gave me the feeling as if people are really interested in me and like also interested about how I am if I'm good, like how I'm feeling, if I'm overwhelmed, if I'm exhausted, if there's just too much going on, if I'm stressed or something, and I just had someone with whom I could talk. And I think that was something that that really helped me to know that. Even if it's not serious, there's someone who really wants to help me.

Anna: Yeah. So, it seems like it's a really safe opportunity for young people because they get a lot.

Ariana: Of support through the program. Definitely. I think even if there are some problems with the hosting organization, there is still your supporting organization which can be really, really helpful, I guess. Yes, I think it's a really safe opportunity.

Luisa: Then there are so many other volunteers you get to know, and they are all in the same situation. Maybe not the same project, but they are all coming to Finland to live abroad in the same country. They are all having the same culture cheques the same. I don't know. I feel the same stress, kind of exhausting Ness. They, well, they feel. That as well.

There is someone who can understand if you're struggling and there's someone you can talk to. So, I don't know. You never feel alone, or at least I never felt alone.

Anna: That's a good thing and a great network to have around you, definitely.

Luisa: I think also for after the project I mean we got to know so many people from just different European countries now. So, if we want to travel in Europe, they're. Just plunging people. We could go to.

Anna: Yeah, family all over Europe. Yeah, that's cool.

Luisa: Yeah.

Taru: So, you are working in workshops, activities for youngsters and adults. Could you tell us about your work?

Luisa: So well, as I already said, I'm working in the adult services. I am working in a recycling centre or second-hand shop. It's mostly about giving people who are who were unemployed for a longer period of time a chance to go back into work life and I am there like some also like supporting kind of but my tasks. Are mostly just decorating the shop. I don't know. We have like a pop-up section. I'm decorating that or decorating the shop window doing social media. Yeah, doing international work, just these are kind of my tasks.

Taru: Quite a lot of stuff you are doing there. Yes. What about you, Ariana?

Ariana: Yes, I am working in the Youth Services, which specifically means that I'm working with two groups, mainly in two different cities and all of them are usually between 17 and 29 years old and unemployed at the moment. And don't have any studying going on. Some of them do and yes. So, in one group we can try to guide them to find new workplaces and we go there with them and try these workplaces out and in the other group, it's more about like getting there at 1st and like finding a plan for yourself. What are you going to do? What do you want to do, ground yourself, whatever. So, this involves of course also talking to the people and.

Just being with them and trying stuff out with them. And yes, spreading awareness about internationality and the Eurovision what no European solidarity and yeah.

Anna: Was it possible to modify the tasks that you are doing during the project, like according to your own interest or.

Ariana: Definitely for me. Definitely. I was so free in, like, thinking about activities to do with the youngsters or like when I really had something else to do that I had to do in Home Office and there was also no problem. And I also joined adult services sometimes and for me it was really, really, really free.

Luisa: Yeah. For me to like I got before I before I came here. I got, like, a timetable with different tasks. And they also told me that I'm gonna kind of switch between the different groups like logistics, ad pricing and decoration team. These kind of things. But to be honest, in the end I didn't really do that because I was mainly like at some point, we decided that it's. I'm good in the decoration team and I'm still doing different tasks like wherever someone needs me, I am but I got my tasks and like also how I wanted it. So like we were just in a talk and we decided it together but. It was different than the beginning then, and I thought it was gonna be at the beginning. But it's a good difference. So, I'm not sad about it.

Anna: Yeah. So, it's nice that you get to use your own strengths, but you also get to learn new things and maybe challenge yourself a bit too.

Ariana: Yes. Definitely, yeah. Yes. Yeah, definitely.

Taru: And also get to know all those youngsters. So yeah.

Taru: And you also live together? Yeah. In Finland. Yeah. And I think it might help you to know what kind of work you are doing and. You can discuss different kind of things at home so.

Luisa: Yeah, I think definitely like I don't know when if there were some problems just because you ohh Ariana, you are in the. Not the same, but you are in a similar situation to me and then. It just helps help me to talk. To you because, yeah, you could. Like, I don't know, understand it better than probably, I don't know. My friends in Germany, they don't really get that cause. Well, obviously they

don't in Finland, they're not working in the same organization as me. So that really helped me. And I think that we both from Germany that was also like a big plus. It's not common like it's not usual, but. I'm happy about it yeah.

Ariana: Me too. Me too. It was really helpful also to just as you said, to have someone who knows every other person basically that you're talking about or whatever and. Has pretty much the same kind of cultural shocks and everything that really helped.

Anna: Yeah, yeah. You get to reflect on your own language.

Ariana: Yeah, that's definitely your own language, your own culture. There's so much you think differently.

Luisa: Yeah. And I think for the beginning, we're going to talk about it later, but just see talking in English the whole time was just extremely overwhelming. And then just coming home and being able to drag in German again there was a relief.

Anna: Yeah, it's really tiring at first. And then you get used to it, yes.

Luisa: I mean, we're recording a podcast in English, so.

Anna: Yes. So, it's really important to get to reflect in your own language because it's sometimes a bit tiring and this is also similar that we found out when we made our research.

Taru: Yeah, in our research, we found out that many professionals in the field of workshop activities and outreach youth work think that they need to be fluent in English to participate in international activities. Do you have any thoughts about that?

Ariana: For real, this is so sad because I think the way I see. And I think the way that it should be seen is that it's just a language and it's just a way to communicate and we are not here to like, have English exams or whatever. We're just here to communicate and like, find a way to do that. And that's the English language. And this is what it's for. And we're all not fluent in it. And some people might be native and some might not, and this is just. The way that we have to communicate with each other, this is something I really wish that people would understand. Also, that it's not about testing them, it's about finding a way to be together. So yes.

Anna: And also, if you never practice or never use your English. It will not get easier. And yeah, as we were saying, it's quite tiring at first, but then you get used to it when you just train your brain to thinking English, talking English yeah.

Luisa: And I mean, of course you make mistakes. Like I just made a mistake, or I don't know, maybe a bit. And maybe it's a bit. OK, maybe it's a bit embarrassing the story, but not really because.

And. I'm like, Ohh Jesus Christ, OK. So yeah, when I came here first, like for the first three months, I guess I said sorting instead of sorting and no one told me until 1 moment, someone told me that it's wrong and like I was my first reaction was like, oh, you could have told me that earlier. That's so embarrassing. But I mean, everyone understood what I'm going to say. And I make so many mistakes, I make my grammar is horrible. It's really not good. But I don't think about it because I'm just talking, and everyone is understanding me and.

I don't know. It's just no one is going to go like out of a conversation being like, oh my God, her English was horrible. Like, how could she even? How could she talk like that? Like no one is going to go out like that except me because I am thinking about that like I'm making the circles in my head. We are not judging anyone for the English, and no one is going to judge us for our English. So, I think that's. Just so important, you need to keep that in mind. It's OK to not to be perfect.

Anna: Yeah. And also, if you don't know how to speak at all, it's important just to connect with people and try to find a way to understand each other.

Ariana: Yeah.

Taru: That's relieving.

Luisa: Yeah. I mean, for example about the Finnish, I didn't really learn to speak and Finnish here because Finnish is just such a hard language and it's so different from German and English. And still I can understand people when they talk in Finnish because I don't know. I try to read their body language, I try to, I know some words and then I I read their body language. And like connect the words and then I'm just going on 5050 what they could be, what they could have said. And then I'm just saying something and sometimes it's wrong and sometimes it's right. But it's working.

Anna: Have you found some tools to cope with Finnish or English that maybe some professionals or youngsters could use if they are not that fluent in English or other languages?

Ariana: Something that I always use still use and will always use. Is the Google Translate app, which is of course like not always 100% right and there are funny mistakes sometimes, but it is just so convenient you can just go and hold up the camera and like, not even take a picture or something and it already translates you what you want to say or what you what you're seeing. Or then when you're in a meeting and you don't have any idea what people are saying. You can just put the. Sound in there and then it will translate it for you and that's nice.

Luisa: Also. Just about the tools I just remember it. I think for me would help me. I also use the Google thread like I use it all the time. The Google Translator app but also the audio thing. When you record voices, but in a meeting, that's sometimes not working because it's just so fast and until you read it then like you were there already on another topic. So, something that helped me a lot is I just talked to them and said that I don't understand anything in the meetings. Is there anything we could do? And then I just got the memo or like they just give me the memo afterwards.

Like I'm just sitting in a meeting and I'm sometimes not understanding anything, but afterwards I get the memo and then with the Google Translator app I just translate it and then I get it. So I think there are so many tools, but I think usually it just helps if you talk to people.

Taru: What advice would you give to the young people considering international volunteering?

Luisa: Something that helped me, as I said, I applied to so many different projects. Just do it. I don't know, just apply to as much as possible and don't take it personal if I don't want to like, that's never take it personal cause it's not your fault. Maybe you're just not fitting to the place. That's OK. But if you really want to do the project, just apply to as many as possible. And then you have. It's better to have a choice than to have nothing at the end, so don't give up. Just try applying.

Ariana: Yeah, same. I would also say just do it if you're thinking about it, then you probably want to do it. So, you should really do it. And I think the one thing you should really look out for is how you feel like, as Louisa already said, that she had a good feeling with the, with the organization that she ended up with in the end. And I think this is just like if you feel like this could be right then maybe it actually is right, and if you are in the project, when you're already in there, the time just flies, so even if it feels like a long time before, like, I don't know if you're going abroad for a whole year or like six months or four months or eight months, everything will seem long at first, but it's not long, just do it. You have plenty of support if you want the support. If you need the support, maybe sometimes it's better to just do it and then in the end if you don't. Like it, you can always go back or whatever, but. Just try it, just try just do it.

Anna: Yeah. And it's nice that there is so many opportunities. So, you don't need to go volunteering if you don't want to. And I feel like having volunteers in the workshop activities is also really good for the youngsters and the people that doesn't want to go or cannot go abroad.

Have you found some kind of impact in the youngsters or adults that you work with?

Luisa: I mean, I don't know specifically for my project now. I mean as I said, it's about giving like adults who were unemployed for a long time the chance to go to work back again. And I think I it could help to have some someone who's not speaking the language who's like with whom. It's maybe a bit complicated to work with. Not because the person is complicated, but just the situation in the language and everything is complicated. And if you are maybe it's overwhelming and stressful at first, if you if you go to work and I don't know you were insecure about work in general and then there's also someone with whom you cannot talk in your comfort language, your native language, but I think at the end. It's like really an experience because it's a new situation that's not in every. So that's something that could help you like to how to cope with stressful situation that seems stressful, but then usually you can find a solution and then it's easy. So, it's maybe like not about just the international aspect, but just in general how to cope with the situation you were not expecting.

Ariana: I think the same thing like we have. Of course we have youngsters who are really excited to have international people there and it's really cool to see that and it's really cool to like be someone that they can discuss all their questions with and some of them really wanted to know something about Germany, where they really saw some, they had some interest in the country, before I even came there and that's kind of cool to like be someone that they can speak English with because there are people who prefer to speak English actually because they speak English so much in their free time that it's cool for them to have someone that they can do that also like face to face when they're going somewhere?

It's also really enriching for like thinking differently about your own country and your own language and your own culture. Like just as it's for us, yes. But of course, there are also people who are not really motivated to do so and who don't really feel comfortable with speaking English. And that's also the thing that you already said, Louisa. Like it's challenging them, and I don't think that's a bad thing. Always to have someone there who is kind of challenging you a bit and who brings different perspectives in maybe. And yeah, I think that I think that's quite helpful for many, many people, yeah.

Taru: What kind of tips can you give to the organizations who are hosting or sending volunteers?

Luisa: Give the volunteers support. I I'm not so sure because I don't know. That was something we talked about, like about the support we got and if you went to make the volunteers feel home and feel safe. Yeah, just give them something. Someone you can talk to. Give them support. Make them feel like cared. Give them. I don't know the feeling that they are welcomed. That's I think that is for me, that was the most important thing and I I still think it is the most important thing.

Ariana: For me also, and I think one thing for example, that really helped me is that when we came here and even before that in the in the interviews we were, or I was told that, yeah, we're going to ask you at some point. What are your favourite colours and whatever? So, when we arrange the apartment for you that we can like, go and do it specifically for you kind of and. And then we came here and we got everything arranged and we had like on our table, we had some specifically finished candies and whatever and.

Was just so cute and you have people who really or we had people who picked us up from the airport also or from the harbour and we went shopping and we had a full fridge when we came here and it was just like we were so cared for even before we got the like, even before I knew that I was accepted, I knew that people here would care for.

And that's something even if you as an organization cannot offer all of this to the people, I don't think that this is typical, and I don't think maybe this is not possible all the time. But I think there are these little things that you can do to make people feel welcome and to lessen the stress that people have before they leave their own country and go abroad. Maybe for the first time in their life.

I think these things are really helpful and they help making the volunteers feel comfortable enough to talk about issues later on or whatever, because I I think like the part of the relationship is really important.

Luisa: I Remember me sitting on the airport because I was so scared and to come here and I Remember me sitting there and then I got a mess, and it was a picture of our apartment. And it was like, like the the rooms and how they were decorated. And I started to cry so much. It was partly because I was. I was afraid. I was scared. I I didn't wanna leave home. But also, because I was so excited. I wanted to go there. I was like, OK, like I don't know. They really want.

It's not that they have a volunteer because it's better that makes the organization looking better, that they have international volunteers, they have volunteers because they want volunteers, they want to have me in that situation. That was, I am gonna start crying.

Anna: How the volunteering has impacted you?

Luisa: Well, I mean, for me, I guess it was a big impact. It had a big impact. I'm just in general like, I mean I just I said I, I just graduated, I was before I came here, I was living at home with my family. I was going to school like everyone. Everything in my life was kind of planned.

Because I don't know. You go to school for 12 years and You don't kind of question it because it's just how it is. And then there was that point where I needed to decide what I want to do after that. Like for myself. It's then it's just about me. And that was scary, but I don't know because I kind of got to know that I am able to care for myself. I'm able to live for myself, I'm able to. I don't know cook food for myself to have a full fridge. Mostly I don't know to clean the apartment, just I don't know the basic living things I got to know that I can't do it got me so much self-confidence.

And also like the English part, I was always so scared to talk in English, like also in school. I was so scared of making mistakes that I have like a huge German accent. I don't know. And then I came here and. Well, no one knew me, knew me talking in in German, so I don't know that just helped me build up and knew me kind of and. Also, because I just talked in English so much because there's basically no other option, I just got way more self-confident in that and I didn't really figure out what I want to do next, but I kind of figured out that I would like to study cause I missed the using my head part because my work of course I think in my work.

Well, when you decorate things, it's not like you don't discuss about current political topics or something like that. That's not that type of work. And that's totally fine. Like, that's what I wanted for this year. But I noticed that I would like to do that again so. But that was maybe a small part, but I think like the most thing I learned is just to trust myself and like that. I yeah, that I can trust in myself.

Anna: Quite big things.

Ariana: Definitely.

Luisa: And I think these are like things maybe yet big, but also small because that's just something you, well, when you at some point I would I need to live alone and then. I need to know that and it's just important. So, these are things that I may be now small but like for the future, they are really important, and they really have an impact on my future maybe.

Ariana: And yeah, it's pretty much the same for me, even though I have lived alone, and I have been out of school for a while and I have had a job and whatever, but like I don't know, it was such a big thing to just quit my job and quit my flat and leave Germany. But this because this is something I always wanted to do. It just showed myself like it just showed me that I can do whatever I want.

And if I really have a dream, then I can pursue it and I can go abroad and I can do it. And I I am capable of doing things and I am capable of. Stuff that I never thought I would be capable of, but I am. And you only learn these things if you when you really try them out. And I think this is something that I really learned from being here.

Anna: Yeah. Wow.

Ariana: It's hard to specify this more because it's just this wide, big thing, and I think I can imagine that even when I come back to Germany, it will take some time to like, really get some things that have changed. And I think this is just like this whole whole overall thing just changed my whole life and my whole like viewing on different things, my whole perspective on different things and I think this is just so huge that it will, I will always have something that I still gained from it, even though it's been in the past.

Anna: That is amazing.

Luisa: Yeah, I think, yeah, I think the biggest thing we both learned is like, yes, trust in ourselves.

Ariana: Like there's this one thing in my mind again that I just want to say, and this is just do it. Like if you if you feel like you might go abroad or if you feel like you might host people, you might want to host people who are from abroad. I think this is just so exciting. And this is just, I don't know, it's just such a great opportunity. And even for people who want to grow abroad.

If you don't have all the possibilities that some other people might have, if you don't have money, if you come from a harder background or whatever, no one cares. It's just fine. The European solidarity core is basically completely free. And this is so amazing about this whole thing and.

I I think coming from a harder background myself, I just want to say just do it and if you feel like doing it, the time will fly way too quickly. It will feel like one second in the end, so. This is what Louisa said in the like before, go with your gut feeling. If you feel comfortable with the with an organization, then maybe that's something you should listen to.

Luisa: Yeah, I think that basically what you said that's very correct. But like also not correct, but like I think so too, what I also want to. Don't stress yourself like about finding friends or because everyone is always talking about yeah, go abroad and then you find nice friends and you need to go into sport clubs to get to know people get to know like take that chance to get to know as many finished people as possible. That's partly true but don't stress yourself. It took me 4 months I guess to get a friend here. So give yourself the time to like, get to know people to arrive. You have time for that.

Ariana: Definitely. And one thing that I forgot to mention, don't stress out about your English or whatever because you don't need to be fluent. Whatever we talked about this so much, right now but still. If you're still thinking, yeah, but my English is really bad. No, it's going to be fine. It's going to be fine. You can still practice and you can practice together with everyone.

Anna: Yes. OK. Thank you for the podcast and thank you for being here.

Ariana: Thank you so much for inviting us.

Taru: Thank you.

Anna ja Taru: Kiitos kuuntelusta ja muistattehan että kansainvälisyys kuuluu kaikille!