

## Italian Student Shared Her Impressions about Russian Language, Northern Lights and Participation at Erasmus+ Program

Jolanda CUCUZZA is studying in Rome at Sapienza Università di Roma (Italy). This winter she came to Polytech under Erasmus+ program, because she wanted to change her way of life for a while and test herself – not only with the knowledge of Russian language, but also to become more independent. Like many other students, Jolanda had to continue her studies remotely because of the COVID-19 pandemic. Today in our interview: Russian language studies, getting used to life in Russia, lunch at the northernmost McDonald's in the world and lots of other interesting facts.



**- Jolanda, glad to see you! Tell us, what are you studying at Sapienza Università di Roma? Why did you decide to come to study in Russia?**

-In Italy I study linguistics and intercultural mediation, Russian and French languages, grammar and translation. I decided to study in Russia, because Russian is the main language I study at my home university. Since the very first year of studies, I had a strong desire to get to know this huge country, geographically

close, but culturally far from mine. It was also thanks to my teachers that through their stories and their experiences in Russia, they made me to love this country. Besides, I wanted to perfect my Russian way of speaking and I knew that if I immersed myself into that reality, it would have helped me a lot with the speaking and the comprehension.

**- Did you have any problems while preparing to visit Russian university?**

- I didn't have huge problems. The preparation process is longer than difficult. To study abroad you have to be sure which courses you can follow, and you need to receive official documents that have to be signed with a deadline: a visa and a health insurance. In other words, you have to be highly organized. Also, it's important to keep in contact both with your home university and with the host university

**- Do you remember your first impression of Russia and SPbPU?**

- Of course I do! I have arrived in Saint Petersburg the 6th of February in the night, and it was really cold, in fact, the first thing I thought was: "I'm freezing!" Nevertheless, I was fascinated by the snowy landscape. The second thing I thought, in the taxi from the airport to the dormitory, was the largeness of the streets and the highness of the buildings. I immediately understood that St. Petersburg is bigger than Rome, despite Rome is the largest in Italy. Moreover, when I first entered the Polytechnic University, I fell in love with that building! It seemed like a castle, all white, with large chandeliers and stairways. I also thought how comfortable it was, because a campus and the university is really located in five minutes walking from the dormitory!



**- Was it easy to get used to life in new country?**

- I think it's never easy to get used to life in a new country, especially in the beginning, where everything surrounds you seems totally new and stranger. Each person should have its time to get used in a new country, in a new life, to find his balance. In this case, you have to focus on what you have to do every day (and you have a lot to do!), without thinking with melancholy about your home country or family, but trying to make them involved for example through video calls, and step by step, that university and all those international friends will become your new home. We have built a close relationship with each other!

**- What can you tell about education? What courses did you like most of all?**

- Education in Russia is different from education in Italy. For example, here every student is free to choose if he/she wants to follow the lessons or not, you can pass an exam by studying all on your own, with just the books. While in Russia, going to the courses every day is very important: teachers really care about the active participation of the students during the lessons. Another difference I found, usually in my home university the teachers explain an argument, and just talk all the time, while the courses I took part during the Erasmus+ were definitely more interesting, because we were often able to intervene and tell our opinions. Anyways, I liked all the courses I attended, but maybe the one that I liked the most



was didactics of Russian language for foreigners speakers. I learnt how to teach the Russian grammar to foreigners, and it was really interesting and educational to know the teaching techniques.

**- What places in Russia did you visit? Which of them did you like most of all?**

- Due to the coronavirus pandemic, I was unable to travel within Russia as much as I would have like to. I visited the city center of St. Petersburg, the cathedrals and the Hermitage. In addition, I was able to organize a little trip with my roommate: we went to Murmansk to see the 'Aurora Borealis' (Northern Lights) and it was magical! Despite the snow and the very cold weather, it was a stunning experience. We also had lunch in the northernmost McDonald's in the world! Anyways, I really hope to come back to Russia and to deeply know her in all her many facets.



**- How did you continue your studying while the coronavirus pandemic?**

- My studies while the coronavirus pandemic continued with a much-defined rhythm: we started lessons in the morning until late afternoon with some pauses between lessons, and a break for lunch. At the end of the lessons, we had homework to do for the day after. Our Russian language teacher every now and then sent us links to watch online video tours of different museums in Russia, this

experience I really liked.

**- How did your life change with distance learning?**

- I have to admit that studying while the coronavirus pandemic was really comfortable! You just woke up and can connect to online classes from your bedroom, and don't waste your time on make-up and driving to university! However, during time it became boring because I missed meeting my friends in class, I missed taking coffee with them during the pauses, laughing and joking with them. Anyways, teachers organized the lessons very well to make them interesting, despite everything. Sometimes, it was also funny, because occasionally even pets appeared on camera, and we smiled for little things.

**- What would you advice to students who are planning to study abroad under the Erasmus+ program?**

- I suggest all the students to live and study abroad for a while! I would tell them to study, of course, to be brave, to enjoy every moment, to learn from every experience will come and from every people they will meet, to be curious. Because, as hard as the climb is, the view is wonderful!

**- Jolanda, thank you for the positive and sincere interview! We wish you success and more unforgettable memories!**

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