

Europa-Tage in Detmold

Savonlinna (Finland)

Virpi Loikkanen, teacher in Savonlinnan Lyseon lukio (Gymnasium). I have been participating twice in International Youth Meetings in Detmold as a team leader.



Savonlinna is situated in the county of Etelä-Savo in eastern Finland. It is a small town of 33 000 inhabitants. The area is vast and there are lots of lakes and forests.

There are not so many job or studying opportunities, which mean that young people tend to move away. Tourism is an important line of business to Savonlinna, especially because of the famous Opera Festivals, which are held annually in a medieval Olavinlinna castle.

How does Corona affect you and your country?

So far spreading of Corona has been moderate in Finland. The restrictions have big impact on social life, working life and economy.

What are current restrictions in your area and what does your daily routine look like at the moment?

Schools, museums, libraries and so on are closed. Concerts and other public events such as sports events have been cancelled. Restaurants can only serve take away meals. Old people must not meet anyone. Gatherings with more than 10 people are not allowed. On the whole, people should stay at home rather than meet each others.

Some schools will be opened on 14th of May and the Government of Finland is currently making decisions how to loosen the restrictions little by little. Anyway big gatherings (more than 500 people) will be banned for the whole summer. That means cancellation for Savonlinna Opera Festivals as well. As a teacher, I teach online at home. I have a timetable to follow and I discuss with my students and give and read assignments as I did before. It takes a lot of time. I do sports at home or walk outside with my dog. The choir I am attending has cancelled it's rehearsals and performances. Different meetings I should attend are either online or postponed. So I stay at home a lot! Luckily I am allowed to work in an almost empty school building as well. I only shop for food and other household necessities. Every day I spend some time following the social media.

In your opinion, do the restrictions help to bring people closer together or rather divide them?

Both. Many people, especially old and young people are lonely. On the other hand we have a feeling that together we will survive and handle this situation. People are having new kind of connections with each others via Internet. Some of it will stay after Corona time.

What do you miss the most and the least in your current situation?

Live discussions with my colleagues. Meeting my daughters and my parents who live elsewhere. Going to the library. Meeting my students IRL.

What have you learned from the crisis so far?

We need less stuff or activities for a good life. We need people.

Which message would you like to send to your twin cities?

Stay strong! One day we shall meet again!