

Europa-Tage in Detmold

Verona (Italien)

My name is Giuliana Zoccatelli. I am 64 years old and I am retired now. I have worked as a teacher of German and English in secondary schools in Verona for 42 years and in 2007 I met Frau Ingrid Schaefer, a writer and historian from Detmold who came to my school, Liceo Montanari, for a conference about her method of research. After that I was invited to the International Youth Meeting in Detmold in 2009 and also in the following years.



I live in Verona, a town of nearly 300.000 inhabitants in the region of Veneto, in the north of Italy. Due to its position, the history of Verona has always had many contacts with the German history and has attracted many tourists from Germany.

How does Corona affect you and your country?

The lockdown began in Italy on the 10 March 2020 and since then nobody could leave her/his house but for necessity (shopping/health problems). Also walking in green areas was forbidden and police was controlling everywhere. Thousands of people, who were not respecting these strict rules, were sanctioned with very high fines. I couldn't see my daughter, who lives in town with her boyfriend, and none of my relatives. All activities in my associations, (Amnesty International and Centro turistico Giovanile) were stopped and continued somehow in videoconferences. From today, 28 April 2020, we can go out for a walk individually.

What worries me most, however, is the economic situation. Many people will lose their job and the future of young people is uncertain. My daughter Chiara is reacting well, however. She is organizing a platform where hundreds of young people will meet on the 15 of May (on line hackaton) and discuss about their future after the Corona virus pandemic.

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

From 27 April many factories opened and in the next weeks most activities will start again but people have to keep distance of 2 meters and wear masks and gloves. Schools will open in September again. Fortunately most schools were active with video lessons.

As for me, I live outside the city centre in the country, and I have a garden, which helps a lot and really makes the difference. So, I pick up officinal herbs and chat with my neighbours. I can spend most time outside in the sun. I am lucky.

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

As for my experience, I have got closer to my neighbours and all the people in the surrounding areas and this is because I live in the country. People in town have organised some flashmobs to sing together from the balconies at certain times of the day, which was nice. I have also seen on TV that many charities distributed food to the poor or to the homeless but we still have many immigrants who are „invisible“ and have no houses and no rights and work in terrible conditions as slaves. This must be changed.

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

I miss my relatives and my friends the most. I miss shopping or going to restaurants the least.

What have you learned from the crisis so far?

I have learned that you can never plan too far ahead. You must live and enjoy the present, what you have. I have seen blue skies above my head after car and air traffic stopped. Maybe this is the positive side.

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

I hope that solidarity will not be just a word. I hope that Europe will act in a way that nationalist movements will not come to power in the next elections. I hope that we will all meet again in the next youth meeting in Detmold.